THE SYDNEY RUSSELL SCHOOL

Whole School Attendance Strategy

Approved by Craig Smith, Chair of Governors
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Introduction and Ethos

The Sydney Russell School is committed to providing an effective and efficient education for all students. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence.

For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your son/daughter should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

We will endeavour to ensure that all our students achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that impede full attendance are identified and acted upon as soon as possible.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your son/daughter attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

We are committed to ensuring that all students receive the highest quality education and that through this they are able to develop effectively within **a cohesive, safe and supportive community.**

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Ensuring your son/daughter's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Attendance % at the end of academic year	Number of days absent	Hours of learning missed
95	9	45
90	19	95
85	29	145
80	38	190
75	48	240

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, students and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

• Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment.
• Celebrate and reward good attendance through certificates, prizes, outings and events.
• Support parents who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school.

Parental Responsibilities

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child is in full-time education while they are of Compulsory School Age (5-16). Poor attendance without a valid reason can lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued or legal proceedings being brought by the Local Authority.

School Targets

The minimum level of attendance for our school and individual students is 97%. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we aim for our students to be amongst the best in the country.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This decision is the school's and not parents. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a valid reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time or emergencies. Students who are in danger of becoming a Persistent Absentee (PA) will only have absences authorised if medical evidence is provided.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes for:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after registers have closed without a valid reason.
- Leave of absences in term time which have not been agreed.
- Absences of three or more days due to illness where medical evidence has not been provided.

SRS strategies to support attendance

Whilst any student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems such as this are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your son/daughter is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

The school will work with students and provide support where needed. This might include referrals to external agencies such as Early Help and CAMHS. It might also mean providing support through our internal inclusion offer including well-being and THRIVE.

The school operates a first-day absence response for all students, with additional safeguarding measures for identified vulnerable pupils in line with statutory guidance.

Absence Procedures

If your son/daughter is absent you must contact the school attendance office in the morning to inform us of the reason.

If you are leaving a voicemail, specific reasons for absences should be given (not just “sick” or “unwell”). You must phone for each day of absence even if the reason is the same as the previous day. If we have not received notice of a valid reason with three days the absence will automatically be recorded as unauthorised.

If your child is absent for three or more days at a time or you have received a Medical Evidence letter from the school, you are required to provide medical evidence to cover this period of absence. This can be a copy of the prescription, a copy of the dispensing label of the medication or a medical certificate. Without this medical evidence the school may decide to record the absence as unauthorised.

If you have been issued with a Medical Evidence letter and your child presents to First Aid as unwell during the school day, staff in First Aid will call home to ask you what action you want to take, if any. If you decide to take your child home, you will be expected to provide Medical Evidence for this absence as you would for any other absence from school. We will expect them back in school the following day unless Medical Evidence can be provided.

Medical appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. Where a medical appointment will result in any absence then supporting evidence such as a hospital letter or an appointment card must be shown in advance to the attendance office.

Where a pupil has a long-term medical condition that may impact attendance, parents or carers are advised to keep the school informed of any changes, such as alterations to medication or treatment. This enables the school to maintain accurate records, review support arrangements, and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

In cases involving short-term medical conditions, updated medical documentation must be provided by parents or carers for any temporary arrangements or adjustments to remain in place. Such arrangements will be reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to be appropriate and supported by current medical evidence.

Interventions

The Sydney Russell School is committed to ensuring that all students reach their full potential and achieve the best possible outcomes. In order to level the playing-field, members of staff will often run intervention or booster sessions before and/or after school. Naturally there is a particular focus on students studying for their G.C.S.E and A-Level examinations.

These intervention sessions are compulsory and students will be sanctioned for their failure to attend.

Holidays in term time

Holidays in term time will not be authorised. Any holidays taken will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice. Should the student fail to return without any other contact to the school, following notification to the Admissions and Attendance Service they may be taken off roll after ten school days. Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 Sect. 8 (f) (and amended 2013)

Leave of absence during term time

Only in exceptional circumstances will leave of absence be granted. It should be remembered that ALL such applications are at the discretion of school – this is not an automatic right for parents.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice. Should the student fail to return without any other contact to the school, following notification to the Admissions and Attendance Service they may be taken off roll after ten school days. Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 Sect. 8 (f) (and amended 2013).

Persistent & Severe Absenteeism

A student becomes a 'Persistent Absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more of school sessions whatever reason. A student becomes a 'Severe Absentee" (SA) when they miss 50% or more of school sessions. Absence

at either level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this

We monitor all absence thoroughly. In order to avoid students becoming persistent absentees and to improve attendance to school, we use our attendance escalation procedures (P8-10).

Attendance Escalation Procedure at KS1 & KS2

STAGE 1

Attendance hits the stage 1 intervention threshold

Strategies appropriate at this intervention level:

- Phone call from Senior Attendance Manager to remind parents/guardians of their parental and legal responsibilities including how to report absences. Parents are reminded of the stage 2 threshold and future requirements for Medical Evidence. Record details of conversation where relevant.
- Appropriate interventions/support put in place to support students.

STAGE 2

Attendance hits the stage 2 intervention threshold

Strategies appropriate at this intervention level:

- Parents issued with medical evidence letter.
- Senior Attendance Manager to review if a home visit is appropriate.

STAGE 3

Six sessions (3 days) of unauthorised absences after medical evidence letter has been issued

Strategies appropriate at this intervention level:

- Meeting held with parents and Head of Primary Phase.
- Parents issued with final warning letter.
- Senior Attendance Manager to review if a home visit is appropriate.

STAGE 4

Two sessions (1 day) of unauthorised absences after final warning letter has been issued

Fixed Penalty Notice

Strategies appropriate at this intervention level:

- Agree with Attendance Manager that a referral is an appropriate action to take.
- Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) warning letter issued if ten unauthorised sessions in a ten week period.
- If there is any other unauthorised absence after this, Attendance Manager will prepare all relevant legal documentation and send to Local Authority for consideration for a FPN to be issued.
- Deputy Head of Year/Attendance Team continues to support student and parents throughout.

Court Proceedings

Strategies appropriate at this intervention level:

- Agree with Attendance Manager that a referral is an appropriate action to take.
- If there is no improvement, Attendance Manager will get a court warning letter issued.
- If there is still no improvement, Attendance Manager will prepare all relevant legal documentation and send to Local Authority for consideration for Court Proceedings.
- Deputy Head of Year/Attendance Team continues to support student and parents throughout.

Attendance Escalation Procedure at KS3 & KS4

<table>
<tr><th>STAGE 1</th></tr>
<tr><td>Attendance hits the stage 1 intervention threshold</td></tr>
<tr><td>Strategies appropriate at this intervention level:
Supportive phone call from Attendance Manager to identify any barriers to attendance, and remind parents/guardians of their parental and legal responsibilities including how to report absences. Parents are reminded of the stage 2 threshold and future requirements for Medical Evidence Record details of conversation where relevant. Early Help Referrals will be made where appropriate.
Meeting may be held with student and Attendance Manager to discuss attendance, understand circumstances and identify any support depending on the length of absence.
Appropriate interventions/support put in place to support students. This may include an Attendance Support Plan (ASP).</td></tr>
<tr><th>STAGE 2</th></tr>
<tr><td>Attendance hits the stage 2 intervention threshold</td></tr>
<tr><td>Strategies appropriate at this intervention level:
Parents issued with medical evidence letter.
Review of interventions/support put in place.
Attendance Manager/Deputy Head of Year to review if a home visit is appropriate.</td></tr>
<tr><th>STAGE 3</th></tr>
<tr><td>Six sessions (3 days) of unauthorised absences after medical evidence letter has been issued</td></tr>
<tr><td>Strategies appropriate at this intervention level:
Meeting with Deputy Head of Year (Telephone/Online/Face-to-face). Early Help Referrals will be made where appropriate.
Review of interventions/support put in place.
Parents issued with final warning letter.
Senior Attendance Manager/Deputy Head of Year to review if a home visit is appropriate.</td></tr>
<tr><th>STAGE 4</th></tr>
<tr><td>Two sessions (1 day) of unauthorised absences after final warning letter has been issued</td></tr>
</table>

Fixed Penalty Notice	Court Proceedings
Strategies appropriate at this intervention level: • Agree with Attendance Manager that a referral is an appropriate action to take. • Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) warning letter issued if ten unauthorised sessions in a ten week period. • If there is any other unauthorised absence after this, Attendance Manager will prepare all relevant legal documentation and send to Local Authority for consideration for a FPN to be issued. • Deputy Head of Year/Attendance Team continues to support student and parents throughout.	Strategies appropriate at this intervention level: • Agree with Attendance Manager that a referral is an appropriate action to take. • If there is no improvement, Attendance Manager will get a court warning letter issued. • If there is still no improvement, Attendance Manager will prepare all relevant legal documentation and send to Local Authority for consideration for Court Proceedings. • Deputy Head of Year/Attendance Team continues to support student and parents throughout.

Attendance Escalation Procedure at KS5

STAGE 1
Attendance: <96%
Strategies appropriate at this intervention level: • Head of Year meets with student. • Appropriate interventions/support put in place to support student. • Phone call to parents/guardians by Head of Year. • Parents issued with medical evidence letter.
STAGE 2
Attendance 94% - 90%
Strategies appropriate at this intervention level: • Meeting is held with parents/guardians with Head of Year • Review of interventions/support put in place. • Student placed on report to Head of Year (minimum 10 days). • Letter from AAVP Sixth Form.
STAGE 3
Attendance < 90%
Strategies appropriate at this intervention level: • Report to AAVP Sixth Form (minimum 15 days). • Independent study for 1hr every day after school. • Meeting is held with parents/guardians and AAVP Sixth Form. • Review of interventions/support put in place. • Final warning letter from Vice Principal. • If there is still no improvement, removal of exam entry funding.

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Punctuality

The Sydney Russell School values punctuality to school. Being punctual allows a positive and orderly start to the school day. Good punctuality is also an important life skill which will serve students well when they move into the world of work.

Managing Lateness at KS1 & KS2

Students must be lined up in the school playground (Parsloes Avenue entrance) by 08:50. If students arrive after this time then they will be classed as late to school and must report to Reception (Fanshawe Crescent entrance). Persistent lateness will be referred to the Attendance Team.

Managing Lateness at KS3, KS4 and KS5

Students must be in their form rooms by 08:35 each morning. If students arrive to their form rooms after 08:35 then they will be classed as late to school. The doors in the Atrium will close at 08.30 and any student not on site by this time will be deemed Late to School. All students who are Late to School must sit a thirty minute detention after school on the same day. Any student arriving after 09.00 will be deemed Severe Late to School and will sit a sixty minute detention on the same day.

Exceptions will only be made for valid reasons such as medical and dentistry appointments. If your child arrives late to school as the result of attending a medical appointment, supporting evidence such as an appointment card or hospital letter must be shown to their Deputy Head of Year (KS3-4)/Head of Year (KS5) in advance or Front Reception staff when signing in.

Reasons such as traffic, public transport delays, going back to get something left at home or feeling slightly unwell in the morning will not be considered valid reasons for lateness and will still result in a detention.

At 09:10 the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

Students who are persistently late will be placed on Late Report to a designated member of staff. This is a mechanism to monitor and support students to improve their punctuality. If your child is on report please

ensure you sign the relevant section each night. The report protocol will be clearly explained should the need arise.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body

The Governing Body will establish in consultation with the Principal, staff and parents the strategy for the promotion of good attendance and punctuality and keep it under review. The Vice Principal will report on attendance termly to governors

The Senior Leadership Team

The Principal and Senior Leaders will be responsible for the implementation of the strategy on a day-to-day basis. Senior Leaders will ensure that the school meets the legal requirements for all aspects of school attendance. Senior Leaders will ensure that parents and students are aware of their legal responsibilities regarding attendance at the point of admission. This will be supported in the signing of the Home-School Agreement

The Attendance Team

The Attendance Team will be responsible for ensuring that class teachers keep accurate registers in a timely manner. The Attendance Team will regularly meet with the Attendance Leads to discuss attendance issues highlighted by the school's monitoring system.

Attendance Leads

The Attendance Leads for each phase will monitor attendance and punctuality for their phase or year group. They will lead in the implementation of the Attendance Escalation Procedure for any students whose attendance drops below expectations. This will include working with the students and parents to identify any support needed to improve attendance and punctuality.

The Attendance Leads for each phase are:

- KS1 & KS2 – Head of Primary Phase
- KS3 & KS4 – Deputy Heads of Year
- KS5 – Head of Year

Form Tutors & Class Teachers

Form tutors and class teachers will take responsibility for ensuring registers are completed accurately and promptly. They will also support the Attendance Leads by working with student and parents to improve attendance and punctuality.

Summary

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and students to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.