

Attendance Policy

Introduction

For students to benefit from the educational opportunities provided by the School they must have high levels of attendance and punctuality. Ineffective registration or poorly executed follow-up procedures can increase the risks of truancy and educational under-performance, which can negatively affect personal and social development among students. A child going missing from school is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect or in itself may indicate that a student is at risk of significant harm. Consequently, attendance and registration arrangements are of the utmost importance and must be seen to be regarded as such by students, parents and staff.

As a School we want the whole school community – staff, parents/carers and students – to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

The school acknowledges the need to ensure that accurate and up-to-date attendance statistics are kept. The responsibility for good attendance is shared between the school, parents and students. Each of these groups is required to understand the expectations which the policy contains.

Aims

This policy aims to provide a clear, consistent and cohesive framework which conforms with statutory requirements and promotes high levels of attendance and punctuality of students at the School, as well as outlining clear procedures for identifying and addressing situations where students fail to attend regularly or punctually, or go missing.

Procedures and lines of responsibility within the School are clear as regards:

- Attendance and Registration;
- Authorisation of Absences (including Exeats) and Lateness;
- How sanctions are used to reinforce expectations of attendance and punctuality;
- How and when to report concerns, including identifying and addressing any situation where a student goes missing from School.

The policy aims to ensure that:

- Staff, parents and students are aware of, understand and can readily comply with statutory regulations and School rules governing attendance;
- Absences and instances of lateness are identified and recorded systematically and accurately and followed up quickly and appropriately in ways that promote high levels of attendance and punctuality and enable action to be taken quickly to identify and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- The School fulfils its responsibility to notify the local authority when student register or deregister outside standard transition times.

With regards to attendance we aim to:

- Provide a safe learning environment;

- Monitor and assess attendance and implement interventions to improve any identified areas of weakness or concern;
- Ensure attendance and punctuality remain priority for all those associated with the school, including students, parents, teachers, governors;
- Ensure that roles and responsibilities regarding attendance are clearly defined and understood;
- Ensure that the management of attendance and absence is consistent ;
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students;
- Ensure the School operates a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance-related data;
- Maintain open, transparent and positive relationships with families when managing absence requests and/or attendance issues;
- Implement a system of rewards and sanctions for attendance;
- Promote effective partnerships with external agencies as appropriate;
- Agree a strategy of reintegration for any student who has been absent from School for some time.

Statutory Framework

This Policy operates within the following statutory framework and guidance:

- The legal framework governing school attendance is summarised in [*School attendance: Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities*](#) (2019), published by the Department for Education (DfE).
- Guidance published by the ISI forming parts of the Independent Schools statutory regulations (ISSRs)
- Keeping Children Safe In Education (2019)

The School Day

The Timings of the School day are published in the School's *Handbook for Parents and Guardians* and the *Student Handbook*. All parents and students are asked to familiarize themselves with the pattern of the School day and (in the case of Day Students, in particular) ensure that students are enabled to attend at the prescribed times. Details of school closure days and any days when the standard timings might be adjusted, will be advertised to parents significantly in advance. If there is a reason for an emergency school closure this will be communicated with parents via *SchoolPost*.

Parental Responsibilities

- Parents are expected to ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed, equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- Parents of registered students have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis.
- Parents are responsible for informing the school on each and every morning when their child is unable to attend due to illness by emailing studentabsence@purcell-school.org and copying in the Houseparent by 08:40
- Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for students during school hours. If unavoidable, the request for authorisation should be made to studentabsence@purcell-school.org

- If a student wishes to be absent from school for an external musical commitment such as a concert or a competition, this should first be discussed well in advance with the Head of Instrumental Department and/or Director of Music. The parent or guardian must make a detailed absence request by email, 14 days in advance, to studentabsence@purcell-school.org
- Parents wishing to take their child out of school for exceptional reasons (e.g. wedding, funeral, religious observance) must seek authorisation for the absence from the School by making a detailed absence request by email, 14 days in advance, to studentabsence@purcell-school.org. Parents should not book holidays during term time
- Parents of overseas students should avoid booking flights before or after the ends and beginnings of terms. If this is unavoidable, absence should be requested to studentabsence@purcell-school.org.
- Should the parent/guardian of a boarder is to be away from home overnight during term, they are required to inform the School of the name and contact number of a temporary guardian. This information should be provided to the Houseparent.

Student Responsibilities

- All students are expected to attend all their lessons, rehearsals and activities at the timetabled or designated times
- All students are expected to be punctual to school, lessons, rehearsals and activities
- All students are expected to be ready to learn and actively participate
- Failure to attend school or any school commitment, failing to attend registration or leaving school without permission constitute breaches of the School's Behaviour and Sanctions Policy and may lead to formal disciplinary action.

School Responsibilities

The School will:

- Ensure a legal register is taken at designated times during the school day (morning and afternoon). Every entry must be preserved for three years after the date of the entry. A back-up copy must be retained for three years. The register must be kept from the first day of agreed/notified attendance; if the student fails to attend on this date the School must establish the reason and mark the register accordingly.
- The School will notify Hertfordshire Local Authority within five days of adding a student's name to the Admissions Register at the start of any year other than the usual transition points.
- Where the parent notifies the school that the student will live at another address, the school must record in the admission register:
 - The full name of the parent with whom the student will live
 - The new address
 - The date from when it is expected the student will live at this address.

Where a parent notifies the school that the student is registered at another school or will be attending a different school, the school must record in the admission register:

- The name of the new school
- The date of when the student first attended, or is due to start attending, that school.

The School will also inform Hertfordshire Local Authority and/or Children's Social Care (CSC), as appropriate, immediately if:

- A single absence raises child protection concerns (see the Child Protection Policy);
- A student has ten days of unauthorised absence (other than for reasons of sickness or leave of absence);
- A student of compulsory school age is to be deleted from the Admissions Register under any of the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Student registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, as soon as the grounds for removal is met and no later than the time at which the student's name is removed from the register.
- Keep accurate records relating to student attendance and monitor data closely to ensure appropriate communications and intervention work is implemented where necessary.
- Provide students/students with a safe and stimulating educational environment.
- Support and communicate with parents regarding attendance issues on a whole-school level and on an individual basis. Promptly respond to any issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- Be sensitive to the needs of individual parents in the way in which attendance issues are addressed, recognising family circumstances.
- Work in close partnership with the school's Attendance Improvement Officer when necessary

Governor Responsibilities

Governors will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance
- regularly review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents and students to implement these effectively
- ensure there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, students and staff
- to regularly review and discuss attendance any significant issues
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance
- ensure that senior leaders make the necessary referrals to the local authority and other relevant agencies in individual cases of non-attendance

Monitoring Attendance

Statutory Registration (morning and afternoon) is undertaken in Houses. Any unexplained absence must be immediately investigated by House staff (see below).

Responsibility for the day-to-day monitoring of attendance falls to classroom teachers, tutors, subject teachers, and boarding staff. Teaching staff should ensure that class registers are

accurately completed as they are **a legal document and are used for health and safety purposes** and should be kept for a minimum of date +3 years.

Where a class teacher or instrumental teacher identifies a student as absent from class without authorisation, they must inform House Staff in the first instance. It is the House Staff's duty to investigate and locate the student. If House Staff are unable to locate and/or make contact with the student, they should inform the School Office who will inform SLT. SLT may then implement the Missing Student Policy.

If a class/instrumental teacher is unable to contact House Staff, they should inform the School Office, who liaise with SLT.

The Principal has overall responsibility for the Attendance Policy and for liaising with the Governors, to whom a report on attendance will be made regularly. The general responsibility for daily implementation of the policy lies with the Deputy Principal, together with Houseparents, and the Head of Pastoral and Safeguarding, who will contact parents and co-ordinate contact with outside agencies.

Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a legitimate reason, such as:

- Sickness
- Medical appointments which are unavoidable
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances – bereavement
- Attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition
- Attending a Student Referral Unit.

This list is for illustrative purposes and is not meant to be exhaustive.

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 Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. The Principal, Deputy Principal, Houseparents and the Head of Pastoral and Safeguarding will make the final decision regarding the classification of an absence. Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping students out of school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day (including boarders leaving the site without authorisation)
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping
- Looking after other children and/or parent unless registered as a carer
- Birthdays
- Day trips and holidays (unless deemed an exceptional circumstance by the
- Principal) in term time

- A pet going to the vet/death of a pet

This list is for illustrative purposes and is not meant to be exhaustive.

Issues concerning regular attendance will always be investigated as they may be symptoms of a wider problem. If staff are concerned that a student may be reluctant to attend school or that they may be prevented from doing so, they must report this to the School's DSP. Parents are asked to contact the School at an early stage if their child is experiencing difficulty in attending school. The School will then engage in a supportive, unified approach with the student, their family and external agencies (if appropriate) to resolve the issues.

Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)

If, despite the School's best efforts as outlined above, difficulties persist, the school may refer the student to the Attendance Improvement Officer at Hertfordshire Local Authority. The school will work in partnership with the allocated AIO to improve attendance for an individual student and the whole school. The AIO will try to resolve the situation by mutual agreement, but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers have the authority to issue Penalty Notices or pursue prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

AIO's work independently of the School. As such, they are available to give impartial advice and parents and students are able to contact them directly for information and/or guidance. The Hertfordshire Attendance Duty Team can be contacted through sending an email to AttendanceDutyWest@hertfordshire.gov.uk

For any student who has 10 consecutive days off absence or 10 irregular days of absence, the school has to submit a 10-day Absence Form to the AIO. The AIO will then work with the school and family to address any attendance issues.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The School does not envisage any circumstances in which it would issue a Penalty Notice unless so advised by the Local Authority. Should it do so, the School would act entirely in accordance with the advice provided by the Local Authority and comply with Department for Education guidance.

Holidays during Term Time

Students are attracted to The Purcell School because of the unique musical opportunities it provides supported by a rigorous academic programme. It therefore follows that any protracted absence from the School will significantly impede an individual student's progress. Whilst every individual request will be judged on its own merits, in general the School does not authorise students to be absent for holidays with term time. The School asks parents to support its work (and the progress of their child) by not arranging family holidays while the School is in session.

Procedures

The School's strategic objective is to aim for an overall rate of 95% across the school.

Houseparents will have an overview of attendance within their House, and will liaise closely over attendance issues with the Head of Pastoral and Safeguarding and Deputy Principal, meeting as

prescribed by the Deputy Principal, to monitor the attendance of all students in Years 6 – 11. The attendance of Sixth Form students is the responsibility of the Head of Sixth Form.

Registration

Morning Registration occurs in boarding houses before 08:10 for boarders and 08:40 for day students. Afternoon Registration takes place between 1300:1320, Monday to Friday. Boarding staff follow up non registration immediately at close of registration. If a day student arrives late they are permitted to sign in using Inventory to allow quick access to classes.

Boarding staff must register students present or absent using the appropriate SIMS codes. Only where absence has been authorised or appropriate communication has been issued from the parent should any other codes be used.

Students must not be registered as present unless seen by staff.

At the close of registration, house staff will locate students who have failed to register or phone parents (day students). If there is no valid excuse for lateness, sanctions should be applied. Registers will 'close' at 09:00 and 13:40 respectively. If a student fails to arrive before the registers 'close' they will be marked 'absent'.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and will always be addressed, initially by the teacher for whom the student is late. Teachers should report persistent lateness to the student's tutor and/or Head of Department (as appropriate).

Managing Lateness

The school day starts at 8.40am: students are expected to have registered by that time. Students will receive an N code if they are not present within the registration period. At 09:00 the registers are officially closed in accordance with regulations; if a student 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.

Sanctions

The school will use a range of sanctions to change the behaviour patterns of those students who are regularly late to school according to age and personal circumstances.

Leaving and returning to School during the School Day

If a student needs to leave the school during the school day the following procedures must be adhered to:

- Students will require an email request from a parent
- If authorised, this will be recorded in SIMS
- Students must sign out of the boarding house

On returning to school the student must:

- Sign in

The School Office and boarding houses will provide this information in the event of a fire drill

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance rate falls below 90 % from October half term, **for whatever reason**. Absenteeism of this level will considerably damage any child's educational prospects and we will need the parents' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully by our Houseparents, Head of Pastoral and Safeguarding and Deputy Principal.

Parents will/may need to come into school and meet with respective staff on a regular basis to discuss their child's attendance and the progress being made.

Exceptional Leave for students with musical excellence

Students who are performing at a national level (e.g. NYO, NCO) or entering competitions (e.g. BBCYM) may receive additional leave or adaptations to their timetable in order to support them with their accomplishments. Where this is required, this will be assessed by the Director of Music who may require the organisation concerned to confirm the student's participation.

Reduced Timetable

For a student who has a reduced timetable (meaning that they are not educated full time on the school site) the school has a responsibility to submit a reduced timetable form to Local Authority. This form has to be agreed by both the school and the parents and then by the Local Authority.

Truancy

Truancy is recorded as an unauthorised absence. A number of systems are put in place to inform students that this behaviour is unacceptable. A record will be made in the student's school file.

The school follows the following procedures for following up truancy:

- The Houseparent will phone a parent to inform them of the truancy and the student will spend the next school day supervised in internal suspension.
- The local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) is informed of the truancy.
- The student will be placed on an Attendance Report and will make up the work they have missed. Support will be offered to the student who has truanted from lessons if necessary.
- The PCSO and AIO will work with the school on serious cases of repeated truancy.

<i>Policy author</i>	<i>Policy date/review date:</i>	<i>Next review due:</i>
Paul Bambrough	January 2020	January 2021