

ST DOMINIC'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

<i>Written by:</i>	Dr Kirsty Glaysher
<i>Reviewed by:</i>	Julian Short, Chair of Governors
<i>Date of last review:</i>	31/01/2023
<i>Date of next review:</i>	32/01/2024

Attendance policy

Introduction

St Dominic's School is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all of our pupils/students. We recognise the importance of regular attendance in maximising the benefit of any educational opportunity. Encouraging and supporting excellent attendance is a crucial part of supporting our pupils/students to learn effectively.

This policy is written with reference to DfE guidance on ['Working together to improve school attendance'](#) and ['Keeping Children Safe in Education'](#) as well as ['Children Missing Education'](#).

Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all members of the St Dominic's School community, including pupils/students and parents/carers, understand the importance of regular attendance at school and their roles and responsibilities regarding attendance. Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between school absence and overall achievement. Poor attendance also affects young people's ability to make and sustain friendships and can interrupt the routine of school life, making it harder to settle when they do attend.

Parental responsibility

Parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age (5 to 18 year olds) with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan attend an establishment authorised by their Local Authority (LA). This includes a legal obligation to ensure children attend regularly and on time. Ensuring regular attendance is essential; permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by law and may result in prosecution.

St Dominic's School will always seek to work collaboratively with families in order to support regular attendance.

Roles and responsibilities

The Local Governing Body (LGB)

The LGB is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school.
- Holding the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.
- Setting annual attendance targets with the designated senior leader responsible for attendance.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the LGB.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils/students.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

Staff

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school.
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Having an oversight of data analysis.
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Liaising with Heads of School and the attendance officer to ensure that calls and meetings are arranged with families to discuss attendance issues.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils/students and families.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Kirsty Glaysher, Vice Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead, who can be contacted via dsl@sdominicsschool.org.uk

The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data.
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Principal.
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Advising the designated senior leader responsible for attendance (authorised by the Principal) when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

The attendance officer is Jo Clayton, Assistant DSL who can be contacted via dsl@sdominicsschool.org.uk

Class teachers/form tutors

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office as follows:

- Morning registration: 08.45 to 09.05 – all tutors accurately record registration in a timely way (noting the close of register at 09.05). If the whereabouts of the pupil/student are unknown between 08.45 and 09.05 the register should be marked with N (reason unknown).
- Afternoon registration:
 - 12.45-13.00 – lower school tutors record registers.
 - 13.35-13.45 - upper school registers are recorded by those leading lesson 5.

If pupils/students are not present by close of registers, staff must be aware of timings associated with the Missing Person procedure.

School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls / emails from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Contact parents and request reasons for absence.
- Transfer calls from parents to the head of school / assistant DSL in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.
- Receive pupils arriving after 9.00 - taxi drivers have been informed not to go to the barrier but to report to the school reception.
- Mark a pupil arriving after 09.05am as L (late) and inform staff that the pupil is now in school.
- Ensure morning and afternoon registers are taken and are up to date during periods 1 and 5.

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every school day on time.
- Notify the school in the event of lateness e.g. delayed transport.
- Call / email the school to report their child's absence before 08.45 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence (unless evidence or notice of longer absence has been provided), and advise when they are expected to return. Earlier notification is preferable; messages can be left on the school voicemail or with office@stdominicsschool.org.uk
- Where possible provide the school with at least three emergency contact numbers for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

Recording attendance

Attendance register

The school will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils/students onto this register.

Staff will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil/student is:

- Present.
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity.
- Absent.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Staff will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age as well as for sixth form students, whether the absence is authorised or not.
- The nature of the activity if a pupil/student is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil/student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils/students must arrive in school by 08.45 on each school day.

Unplanned absence

The pupil/student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 09.00 or as soon as practically possible by calling or emailing the school Office. If a message/email does not outline the reason for absence the school office will contact the family to verify this. As a rule, the school must be notified of each day of absence unless the duration of absence is known (see below).

St Dominic's follows Public Health England guidance, which can be subject to change.

- Please note that we operate **the 48-hour rule** with regards to sickness and diarrhoea. If your child has sickness or diarrhoea, they must not return to school until 48 hours after the last time they have had an episode of either sickness or diarrhoea even if they seem better in themselves. This is to reduce widespread infection and follows the advice from Public Health England.
- If a child tests positive for COVID, we will mark the first day of absence following the positive test with X and subsequent days with I (pupils and students are requested to be absent for a minimum of 3 days commencing on the day after the positive test, or whilst they are too unwell to attend).

If a child is absent for medical reasons, as a parent you can self-certify for a period of 7 days consecutively. After this, or if we are concerned for any other reason, we may ask for medical evidence.

When a pupil/student is absent due to illness, this will be marked as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Should school staff become concerned about the amount of school missed due to illness, information may be shared with external agencies such as Children's Services (see 'Safeguarding' below).

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil/student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Families should inform the school office and their child's tutors to advise of planned absence for appointments. We understand that many of our children have to attend **Medical / CAMHS / therapy** appointments and we ask that you provide medical evidence such as a copy of the appointment letter or forwarded email. We understand that these appointments are often allocated during school hours, though where possible, we ask that the pupil attends school before or after the appointment. For example, if the appointment is at 10:00, then they could come back to school afterwards, or if the appointment is at 14:00, then they could be collected after lunch. We understand that not all appointments are in local areas and that this may not always be possible. Equally, we understand if your child is undergoing certain treatment that it is not possible to return to school on the same day.

The pupil/student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

St Dominic's School recognises that pupils/students' additional needs may include significant health concerns and involve regular or unexpected medical support e.g. admission to hospital or attendance at specialist clinics. School may be able to accommodate some appointments in school, where appropriate (such as remote meetings with CAMHS, Educational Psychologist), meaning that it might not be necessary for a pupil/student to miss school.

We will always seek to work with our pupils/students and their families to support good attendance and, where this is not possible, to support continued learning through initiatives such as home learning programmes.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil/student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

We understand that some pupils/students will have particular difficulties around journeys / traffic or transitioning into school; if the lateness is due to a transport issue, then a note can be attached to the appropriate registration code. The Heads of School and safeguarding team monitor attendance and punctuality and will work with families to ensure that pupils / students attend on time to start their school day. This might also involve working in partnership with the Inclusion Team (see below). Attendance will be recorded in line with any modifications to the pupil/student's provision.

Following-up unexplained absence

Safeguards in place to prevent children missing education at St Dominic's School include:

- St Dominic's School holds a minimum of three emergency contact numbers for each pupil/student, unless there is a genuine reason why this is not possible.
- Any child going missing from education will always get immediate attention from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Staff are trained to be alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concern.
- If notification of absence has not been received by the time the registers close, the school will then phone the primary contact for the child. If contact is not made, for safeguarding reasons, the other two contacts provided will be called. This procedure is followed every day that a pupil or student is absent without reason from school.
- Any unexplained absence of a pupil/student with a Child Protection or Child in Need Plan will be reported to the pupil/student's social worker within one day.
- Where a pupil/student does not present for school as expected, the school will endeavour to ascertain that pupil/student's whereabouts and wellbeing without delay, using all available parent/carer and secondary/emergency contact details. Where no contact can be made with either the pupil/student or any named emergency contacts, a member of school staff may be able to (depending on location) attend the pupil/student's home. If the pupil/student or a named contact still cannot be contacted, the school must report this to relevant personnel in the Local Authority and, where deemed necessary, the police. However, it is acknowledged that in some exceptional, local circumstances, such action may be counter-productive and it is for the school to risk assess such a scenario on the first day. Regardless of this, if a pupil/student is absent for a second consecutive day without notification from a named contact, the school **must** report this to relevant personnel in the Local Authority and, where necessary, the police.
- Staff will always report to the Local Authority the name of any child who has been newly registered to attend the school but does not arrive on the expected day.
- Staff will always report to the Inclusion Service and other relevant agencies, the continued absence of a child known or thought to have been taken overseas if the child does not return to school on the expected return date.
- St Dominic's School maintains accurate attendance and admissions registers (all pupils/students are on both), in line with statutory requirements. This includes paying careful attention to off-rolling pupils/students in association with the Local Authority and knowing, and recording, pupil/student destinations consistently on the admissions register. Where a pupil/student destination is unknown, and unable to be established after significant follow-up, the Local Authority, Inclusion Service and/or Children's Services will be informed.
- Pupils/students will not be deleted from the admissions register. Staff will alert the child's Local Authority immediately if:
 - the pupil/student has been taken out of school by their parents/carers and is being educated outside the school system e.g. home education
 - the pupil/student has ceased to attend school
 - the pupil/student has been certified as medically unfit to attend school or is in custody.

Keeping Local Authorities up to date is crucial so that they can check if children of compulsory school age are missing education, and might therefore be in danger of not receiving an education and be at risk of abuse or neglect.

On the rare occasions that St Dominic's School pupils/students are suspended for a fixed term, the school will confirm this in writing to both the family (and the placing Local Authority where this exclusion exceeds five days). While staff will provide the pupil/student with work to complete during their external suspension (and mark it), St Dominic's School is not responsible for the pupil/student's safety and welfare during their time at home. School will, of course, keep in touch with families and other agencies where relevant, regarding safeguarding issues as for all pupils.

Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels for example, in parent consultation appointments, progress reports and end of year reports.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The Principal will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil/student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil/student is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request as well as the child's attendance to date. School strongly advises that pupils do not miss crucial periods of education such as prior to examinations or assessments or during revision / preparation periods.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the Attendance Policy on the website. The school may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupil/student travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil/student is attending educational provision.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider essential and for which no authorisation has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority

becoming involved. Support will be offered initially but if unauthorised absences continue, the LA has the right to apply a fine or legal proceedings.

Examples of unauthorised absence include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school to go shopping, to care for a sibling, for a family birthday.
- Refusal by the student to attend an allocated session.
- Absences that have never been explained.
- Children who arrive too late to get a mark.
- Illness without medical evidence.
- Holidays in term-time.

If a child is reluctant to attend school, parents/carers must communicate this as soon as possible to their school's Senior Leadership Team in order that support strategies can be put in place.

Parents/carers can support their child's attendance by:

- Ensuring regular and appropriate bed times, appropriate to the age of the child.
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before.
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly.
- Retaining open and honest communication with the school.
- Having a positive attitude towards school attendance.

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay the directed amount within the given timeframe. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Principal, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.
- Where a suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Strategies for promoting attendance

We fully understand that many of our children and young people have complex needs which can affect their wellbeing and this may sometimes affect their ability to attend school. We are sensitive to these needs and will remain as supportive as possible. We also know that even

the healthiest of children can become ill. However, we also need to ensure that our pupils attend school to enable them to achieve and make the best possible progress.

In order to improve attendance, there are many actions that we might take which tend to be very individualised. Often the first step is to contact the parent/carer by letter and may be followed by a meeting in school.

The Safeguarding Team reviews the attendance of all pupils and students and monitors those with attendance of less than 95%. Attendance, and associated actions by the school, is RAG rated as follows:

100-95	Tutor, with praise and positive reinforcement.
94-90	Tutor, with praise and monitor/consider extra support in school.
80-89	Tutor to contact parent to discuss attendance concern, discuss/review support in school to address possible obstacles.
70-79	Heads of School/Assistant DSL, to contact parent to discuss attendance concern, attendance letter (requesting evidence if required), set up Attendance support plan.
0-69	Heads of School/DSL/Assistant DSL, with Inclusion Team Referral, additional support, parent contact/meeting and attendance support plan review.

The school also works closely with **Local Authority Pupil Inclusion Officers**. Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 7 days in a 6 week period will be notified to the Inclusion Team. This is a legal requirement.

Attendance monitoring

Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil/student level.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Pupil/student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils/students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils/students and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil/student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil/student misses 50% or more of school. The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils/students who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

Safeguarding and confidentiality

St Dominic's School has a duty to effectively safeguard all our pupils/students. Supporting regular attendance is part of this safeguarding duty. Poor attendance and unexplained absence can indicate a possible safeguarding concern including (but not limited to) physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect, female genital mutilation (FGM), child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, substance misuse or peer on peer abuse.

St Dominic's School staff will always seek to work with families to minimise absence and ensure clear communication regarding any absence that might occur. Where safeguarding concerns are raised, these will be managed in accordance with the Child Protection Adult Protection & Safeguarding Policy.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Principal and approved annually by the Local Governing Body.

Related policies and procedures

Anti-Radicalisation Policy
Child Protection Adult Protection & Safeguarding Policy
Suspension Policy
Positive Behaviour Policy
Remote Education Policy
Safeguarding and Wellbeing Offer
Supporting Students with Medical Conditions in Education Policy
Missing Person Policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Request for School absence form

Request for School Absence Under Exceptional Circumstances

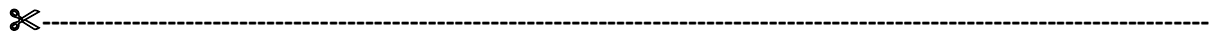
Please complete this form if you are applying for holiday or other leave (not medical appointments).

As parents, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school. During the academic year, pupils are at school for 190 days and at home for 175 days.

Please be aware that by law Principals may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Principal is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Please complete and submit this form as early as possible and **at least 2 weeks** before the beginning of the requested absence if you want the Principal to consider your request for your child's leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. We may ask for proof to back up your request. A copy will then be sent to you to indicate whether this request for leave of absence is authorised or unauthorised.

We have a responsibility to report persistent absence to the Local Authority which **may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice**. Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority in accordance with Surrey County Council's Code of Conduct. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in you being served a summons to appear at the Magistrates Court. The Principal will consider the reasons for the request carefully and will notify you of the decision.



Request for school absence

Please complete all the specified details and return to the School Office. A letter with the outcome will be sent by email/to your home address.

Pupil or Student name: _____

Tutor group: _____ **Year: Group:** _____

First date of absence: _____ **Last date of absence:** _____ **Total No**

of Days Absence: _____

Reason for absence: _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

Printed name of parent/guardian: _____

Contact number and email: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY:

Attendance Record Check:

No. of days absence: _____ Reasons _____

This Absence Request Approved by Principal?

Yes No Reply Sent Date _____

Comments: