



RGS SURREY HILLS

Attendance Policy

Policy Statement

For pupils to benefit fully from the educational opportunities provided by the School, they must have very high levels of attendance and punctuality. The School expects therefore, that all pupils will have high standards of both attendance and punctuality and that parents will support the School in building a culture where all can, and want to, be in School and are ready to learn.

Ineffective registration or poorly executed follow-up procedures can increase the risks of educational under-performance, which can negatively affect personal and social development among pupils. A pupil going missing from School is a potential safeguarding risk and may be an indicator of abuse, neglect or exploitation or in itself may indicate that a pupil is at risk of significant harm. Government research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms; this includes crime and serious violence. Consequently, attendance and registration arrangements are important and must be seen to be regarded as such by pupils, parents and staff.

The School acknowledges the statutory requirements around registration at both am and pm sessions:

Statutory Framework

The legal framework governing School attendance is summarised in *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (May 2022) and *Children Missing Education* (2016) published by the Department for Education (DfE).

The School also complies with guidance published by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) and advice published by the Surrey County Council Education Authority (LEA), regarding school attendance. The School also pays due regard to *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Aims

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

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

- Attendance and Registration;
- Authorisation and Clearance of Unknown Absence and Lateness (including boarders returning home);
- 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 pupil goes missing from School;

Staff, parents and pupils 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. Staff use ISAMS to record attendance at each lesson.

Responsibilities of parents/guardians

Please note that for the purpose of this Policy, a parent means:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

Parents with a pupil of compulsory School age have a legal duty to make sure that their child receives an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special education need they may have. Compulsory school age lasts from the term after a pupil's fifth birthday up to the last Friday in the month of June in the academic year of their eighteenth birthday.

Where a child is registered at a school, parents have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Parents are responsible for informing the School on any occasion when their child is unable to attend due to illness, a medical appointment or work experience, providing the reason for non-attendance. This should be done by emailing reception as far as possible in advance and by the very latest by 8.15am on the morning of the absence, by which time those that are attending School must be on site.

Parents wishing to take their child out of School for exceptional reasons (such as attending a funeral or wedding, religious observance, elective surgery, or involvement in a regional or national extracurricular competition) must seek authorisation for the absence from the School by completing a request using the absence request form in advance of the proposed date(s) of absence. The Headteacher will confirm whether the circumstances meet the definition of 'exceptional circumstances' for which leave of absence may be granted by the School.

Parents are committing an offence if they fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at School or otherwise.

When parents/guardians of boarding pupils are to be away from home overnight during term time, they are required in the contract with the School to inform us of the name and contact number for a temporary guardian. This information should be provided to the Tutor and should be copied to the relevant Head of Year, the Assistant Head Pastoral and House Parent.

The School will follow up daily and immediately all incidents of non-registration where prior agreement for absence has not been discussed.

Further guidance here is issued under the statutory government guidance document Parental Responsibility Measures (January 2015 and subsequent updates).

Responsibilities of pupils

Pupils have a responsibility to attend School when they are fit and well and to arrive at School in time for registration (morning and afternoon) each day during term time. Pupils are expected to remain on the School site for the entirety of each working day.

If, for any reason, a pupil needs to leave the School site during the School day, he/she must first seek and receive permission from the Tutor/Head of Year/Assistant Head Pastoral (for boarders) or, when he/she is ill, the Medical Centre. Permission from the Tutor/Head of Year/Assistant Head Pastoral will normally require a request to be made in writing by the parents in advance.

Failure to attend School regularly or punctually, or failing to attend registration without good reason, or leaving the School without permission constitute breaches of the School's Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions policies and may lead to formal disciplinary action being taken.

Responsibilities of the School

The School has a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve (where relevant) attendance. Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils and is therefore seen as everyone's responsibility in School.

The School has a legal responsibility to have both an admission register and an attendance register. All pupils (regardless of their age) are placed on the admission register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register. Both registers are legal records and all schools must preserve every entry for three years from the date of entry.

The School has a legal responsibility for taking and maintaining an accurate School attendance Register (SR) of all pupils twice each day throughout term time: once at the beginning of the morning session and once in the second (afternoon) session. In addition, teachers are expected to take the register at the start of every lesson. Every entry in the SR must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made. Likewise, a back-up copy of the SR will be retained for three years.

The School is also required to inform the LEA of any pupil who fails to attend School regularly or has been absent without the School's permission. The School has agreed to inform the LEA if, for any pupil, unauthorised absences exceed 5% of their total attendance for the year.

The School will also inform the relevant LEA and/or Children's Services, as appropriate, immediately if:

A single absence, or repeated absences, raises child protection concerns (see the Missing Child Policy and the Safeguarding Policy);

A pupil has ten continuous days of unauthorised absence (other than for reasons of sickness confirmed by medical certification or leave of absence);

A pupil of compulsory school age is to be deleted from the School register when the next School is not known. This may be when the pupil has been taken out of School to be home educated; when the family has apparently moved away; when the child has been certified as medically unfit to attend; when the child is in custody for more than four months; when the child has been permanently excluded.

A pupil of compulsory school age is removed or added to the admission register at nonstandard transitions, i.e. where a compulsory school-aged child leaves the School before completing the School's final year or joins after the beginning of the School's first year.

In the last two cases, the School is required to report the circumstances, as soon as possible after the grounds for deletion are met, to the LEA, or relevant authority in which the pupil lives, and in any event before the pupil's name is deleted from the register. For non-standard admissions, the notification is to be made within five days of the entry on the admission register.

The School recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance and hence, can find it harder than others to attend School. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The School will always work in partnership with parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. This will include making reasonable adjustments where relevant.

The School uses attendance data to identify any patterns of low attendance as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched. The Tutor and Head of Year monitor attendance on a day to day basis, whilst a regular report is made to the Deputy Heads to identify any pupil whose attendance is giving cause for concern. This process allows the identification of any patterns of concern.

The School works to ensure that no pupil has any periods of unauthorised absence. In addition, where a pupil is at or below 80% attendance, whilst the reasons behind the absence will be known, there will be follow up to ensure that attendance improves.

If a pattern of 80% attendance or below is identified, the Head of Year will discuss the situation with the pupil and their parents to understand the barriers to attendance and to agree how all partners can work together to resolve them. The School will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-School barriers to attendance.

If the pupil's attendance does not improve, the Deputy Heads will become involved and will work to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. The School will also seek at this stage to make referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. This will include communication with Surrey's Inclusion Service and where relevant, Children's Services as the School has a duty to ensure attendance of its pupils.

In addition, the School will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a Social Worker or is otherwise vulnerable.

Support may include for example, an adjusted timetable, phased returns to School, involvement of Learning Support and individualised pastoral support. All support will be regularly reviewed. This might also include the involvement of Children's Social Care with an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues. If the absence persists, the School will work with the Local Authority to enforce attendance through statutory intervention.

Registration Procedure

The Tutors of pupils have primary responsibility for registering their tutees in the morning and following up absenteeism and lateness. Tutors will take the attendance register at the start of each session of each School day during the Morning Registration Period. Pupils will be registered for every lesson they attend (not just AM and PM sessions) and absences will therefore be flagged immediately. Those absent (unexplained) will be reported to the School main Reception and the Reception team will follow up with parents.

Where there is absence of either the Tutor or classroom teacher, the Head of Year/cover staff will be expected to take the register. It is important that our system is maintained and the Register Module in ISAMS is fully utilised.

Morning Registration

Pupils should be at School by 08:15, so that they are present for registration (normally in their Tutor rooms, or assembly). Tutors must register tutees within the morning registration period (07.55 to 08.24) using the ISAMS Registration module. Where a Tutor has received communication about a pupil's absence in advance of the morning registration period from their parent their absence should be communicated immediately to reception and a record of the communication retained. Tutees must not be registered present unless they are sighted by the Tutor during the registration period.

Reception will access Absent: Unknown. Active Classroom Support will be used to check absences with classroom teachers within the registered period a child is showing as absent.

If they remain 'unknown' and cannot be located on the school site, the Receptionist will phone the parents and if there is still no contact, they will inform the Tutor, Head of Year and the Deputy Head Pastoral/Deputy Head Academic, who will discuss whether to invoke the Missing Child Policy.

The Receptionist will, if there are other concerns about the pupil, report any concerns immediately to the Deputy Head Pastoral or the Deputy Head Academic.

Lesson Registers

All staff should take a register at the start of their lesson and record it on ISAMS.

Teachers should make Reception aware of pupils who are thought to be truanting or have unauthorised absences. Where these pupils are absent from class and are not in the absence list, the Receptionist should inform the pupil's Tutor as soon as possible and try to contact parent/carer. The Missing Child Policy will be invoked if a pupil is not present as expected in a lesson.

Classroom teachers concerned over the absences of an individual pupil should make the relevant Head of Year aware of their concerns.

Afternoon Registration

Pupils should be present for registration in their period 5 lesson at 13:45.

Tutors must register tutees within the afternoon registration period using the ISAMS Registration module.

Where a Tutor has received communication about a pupil's absence in advance of the afternoon registration period from their parent their absence should be communicated immediately to reception and a record of the communication retained. Tutees must not be registered present unless they are sighted in the room by the Tutor during the registration period.

Activities registration:

It is the responsibility of the member of staff in charge of the activity and a statutory obligation. Registration should be undertaken electronically via SOCS wherever possible.

Those who cannot register their group electronically must send a list to the Main Reception or call for ACS to assist with registration.

Pupils with an off-activities slip obtained through Pupil Reception must attend the 'Off Activities' room and remain there where they will be registered.

Procedures for Clearing Unknown Absences and Lates

Tutors' responsibilities

Tutors must record any absences which will be followed up promptly by School Reception to:

- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken (see Safeguarding Policy)
- Identify whether or not an absence is authorised;
- Ascertain the reason for an absence being recorded;

Codes:

Tutors and Reception follow up must identify the code to be entered in the School Register.

Tutors will use the following codes:

No Reason Yet Provided For Absence [N]
Learning Support [W]
Exam [A]
Music [G]
LAMDA [D]
Library [L]
Illness [I]
Off Site Medical [M]
In Medical Centre [£]
Educational Visit or Trip [V]
Study Leave [S]
Approved Activity [P]
Late - Bus was Late [B]
Holiday Agreed [H]
Holiday Not Agreed [U]
Starting Term Late (Boarders) [Y]
Finished Term Early (Boarders) [T]
Other Authorised Circumstances [C]
School Closed to Pupils [#]
Religious Observance [R]
Internal Exclusion [J]
External Exclusion [E]
Headteacher's Sanction [@]
Overseas Student Awaiting Visa [X]
Parents Being Contacted for Reason of Absence [Q]
Remote School Reason for Absence Followed Up - Covid 19 [+]
Remote School Present - Covid19 [!]
Covid-19 Absence (day pupils) [K]
Covid-19 Pupil Self Isolating at Home [&]
Covid-19 In Quarantine before starting (boarding pupil) [Z]
Covid-19 In Isolation (boarding pupil) [%]
Covid-19 Boarders left due to Covid-19 [*]
Unauthorised Absence [O]

Under this system, an N is first entered when no reason has yet been provided for absence. This is later corrected (ideally within two weeks) using the appropriate code. The N is not allowed to remain indefinitely.

Tutors **must not** approve or authorise a leave of absence. Such leave must be agreed between the Head of Year and the parents in advance, and most (holidays) will need authorisation from the Headteacher. The Head of Year informs the Tutor/Reception of all leave of absence granted.

House Parent/Head of Year must keep a file on each pupil, recording the date and correspondence relating to each absence where appropriate, as listed above. Contact with parents may be by email, telephone, note, or otherwise; but it is important that there is a single record of all contact (for example, an Outlook mailbox folder or paper file). This record must be kept for at least three years and staff should give due consideration to forwarding information when pupils transfer to new Houses and Tutors.

Tutors should regularly liaise with parents as appropriate and especially if their child turns up late. Early communication between parents and Tutors leads to better, more efficient recordkeeping.

House Parents and Heads of Year must act to resolve all absences. In particular, if Tutors are not convinced about an explanation of illness provided to excuse absence they should discuss it with the relevant line manager, who may request that parents provide medical evidence to confirm the illness. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Permission to Leave School: Procedure

When a pupil leaves School during the day, he/she must sign out at Reception. A pupil leaving School must do so through the main School gates. Any pupil returning from an appointment or absence should sign back in at Reception.

Procedures for lateness or failure to register Late arrivals

Pupils arriving late must go directly to Reception to register and explain the reason for the lateness. Pupils will be recorded as Late.

Pupils, through Tutors, may challenge a lateness recording, if they have evidence of, or information about, extenuating circumstances which mitigate the lateness.

Sanctions for lateness and failure to register

If the Tutor is persuaded that there was a valid reason for not signing in on time, then he or she will not issue a detention. A detention is a valid sanction for lateness. Persistent lateness will be dealt with more seriously by senior leaders and line managers.

Tutors

Tutors will raise, investigate and follow up any apparent patterns of absence or persistent or unauthorised absence and lateness and report any concerns to the Head of Year. In particular, if Tutors are not convinced about medical absence, then Heads of Year should assist in seeking clarification with the parents and/or medical professionals.

Consider requests for absence in exceptional circumstances in liaison with the Head of Year. This may only be done in advance and with the number of days specified.

