

St Paul's Cathedral School
Attendance Policy
School Policy No. 17

AIMS & PRINCIPLES

St Paul's Cathedral School is a Christian, co-educational community which holds to the values of love, justice, tolerance, respect, honesty, service and trust in its life and practice, to promote positive relationships throughout the school community and where the safety, welfare and emotional well-being of each child is of the utmost importance.

The school aims to instil a love of learning through a broad curriculum. It aims to give each pupil the opportunity to develop intellectually, socially, personally, physically, culturally and spiritually. All pupils are encouraged to work to the best of their ability and to achieve standards of excellence in all of their endeavours.

Through the corporate life of the school, and through good pastoral care, the school encourages the independence of the individual as well as mutual responsibility. It aims to make its pupils aware of the wider community, espouses the democratic process and encourages a close working relationship with parents and guardians.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy applies to all pupils, including those in EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage).

The Head is responsible for ensuring that pupils attend the school, recording their attendance and ensuring that absences are followed up appropriately. Day to day responsibility for attendance matters is delegated to the Deputy Head.

Parents have a duty to ensure that, where their child is of compulsory school age, they receive an education and, if their child is registered as a pupil at a school, that they regularly attend school.

Local authorities must put in place arrangements to identify and safeguard children who are at risk of missing education.

1. Rationale

To fulfil its duty of care, it is crucial that the school know where our pupils are. This applies whether the pupils are on site or being educated elsewhere.

We recognise the strong link between attainment, wellbeing and attendance and the important partnership between parents and the school in ensuring that pupils in our care achieve their potential, both socially and academically. The school is committed to working with children and their parents to achieve the highest level of attendance possible. In School attendance is subject to various education laws and this policy is written to reflect these laws, recognising the following:

- guidance 'School attendance: Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (Department for Education, May 2022),
- 'Keeping Children Safe in Education, (September 2023),
- 'Children Missing Education' (Department for Education, September 2016)

The importance of attendance for pupils is promoted through the pastoral system, PSHE, Assemblies and Form times.

Owner: Deputy Head
Created: January 2024
Next Review: January 2026

2. Following this policy, the school aims to:

- Foster a climate where regular attendance and punctuality are valued by the whole school community.
- Promote high levels of punctuality.
- Reduce further the numbers of authorised absences.
- Promote the support networks in place to help pupils to achieve excellent attendance and therefore achieve their potential.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

3. To promote the above aims:

- All parents/carers are made aware, by distribution of this policy, of their responsibility to send their children to school on time and to provide reasons for absence or persistent lateness.
- Pupils are made aware, through form times and assembly messaging, of what is expected of them.
- Electronic registers are taken twice daily at the beginning of each session by the Form Tutors or relevant teachers. Paper registers will be provided should the electronic registers fail.
- Registers are accurate and personal details are kept up to date.
- Staff concerns about absence and/or punctuality are reported to the relevant Head of Year and or Deputy Head.
- Staff, where appropriate, share and update information.
- Those pupils causing concern are monitored and strategies developed.
- Negative issues affecting attendance or punctuality are addressed appropriately and support is put in place.
- Support is offered to pupils returning to school after extended periods of absence.
- Staff use the procedures for irregular attendance and punctuality consistently and fairly.

4. Assistance

Owner: Deputy Head

Created: January 2024

Next Review: January 2026

The school recognises that there will be situations where a pupil's attendance may fall below the expected levels due to illness, family circumstances and other unforeseen circumstances. In these cases we will always endeavour to work with families to provide support for pupils and their families. The Form Teacher is the primary point of contact for parents and pupils in supporting attendance. If a child misses school it may be due to an issue school and parents are unaware of and it is important to identify the issue and provide early intervention. SPCS has a wide range of support systems in place within the school's pastoral care system. These include support from teachers, Heads of Year, Medical Team, Learning Support, the School Chaplain and the Safeguarding Team. All will liaise with key staff and parents in supporting pupils who may be struggling.

5. Procedures

- The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Education.
- Form Teachers or appropriate subject teachers will only mark as present pupils who are in the room at registration, both morning and afternoon.
- A separate register is completed for children arriving at school before 8.30am.
- The School Office will amend the register to record the presence of those who are late or who have been attending an early school activity such as music.
- Parents are asked to notify the School Office when their child is absent, preferably before 8.15am. This can be by phone or email office@spcs.london.sch.uk
- Any absences which have not been reported to the School Office before 9.15am, will be checked by the school office to see if the student is in school. If they are not, the School Office will ring home to find out the reason for absence. It is therefore important that the school is made aware of any changes to parents' contact details.
- The School Office will alert the relevant pastoral staff, to include the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Form Teacher, if a child is unaccounted for, i.e. because the parents cannot be contacted. Where relevant staff will follow the school's Safeguarding Policy and all related policies and procedures for children who go missing in education.

Owner: Deputy Head

Created: January 2024

Next Review: January 2026

- Chorister parents are asked to contact the resident team on the duty phone – 07708 048244 to notify them of any absence.
- While daily registration follow up arrangements pertain to day pupils, the principles apply to boarders also.
- Any pupil arriving after 8.50am must register with the School Office.

6. Absence

6.1 Expectations

The Deputy Head Pastoral meets with the City of London Education Welfare Office (EWO) once every half term to monitor attendance. Any pupil with an attendance of 90% and below will be considered a concern. At this point, the Deputy Head will investigate and may meet with parents and, if necessary, put in place extra support, in addition to any pastoral measures already in place. If deemed appropriate, the school may liaise, in collaboration with the parents, with external services, such as the pupil's GP and/or Local Authority Early Help services.

Our expectations for attendance are:

- 97-100% Expected
- 95-97% Emerging cause for concern
- Below 95% but above 90% A cause for concern
- Below 90% A serious cause for concern

In line with our expectations for attendance the following table outlines our school procedures. The information below is discretionary and based on individual pupil circumstances.

Attendance below 97% but above 95%	Emerging cause for concern. Deputy Head to review attendance with Head of Year and Medical Team to determine if any cause for concern and if necessary ask Form Teacher to have a discussion with pupil.
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Created: January 2024
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Attendance below 95% but above 90%	Cause for concern. Deputy Head to review attendance with Head of Year and Medical Team and to review reasons given for absence. Discussion with pupil and Form Teacher and if necessary email/phone call home from Form Teacher/Head of Year.
Attendance below 90%	Persistent Absence. Serious Cause for Concern. All attendance below 90% is reviewed by Deputy Head with City of London EWO. Where clear and acceptable reasons for absence are not established an email home from Head of Year and meeting with parents organised with a support plan put in place. A rationale will be recorded by the DSL for any action taken based on attendance figures.
Attendance below 85%	In consultation with EWO Deputy Head/DSL and Head of Year to meet with parents and review or instigate support plan for pupil.
Attendance below 75%	Ongoing intervention in consultation with EWO.

6.2 Authorised and Unauthorised absences

The Heads of Year will monitor attendance and punctuality on a weekly basis, any concerns being raised with the Deputy Head.

If appropriate, staff should follow the school's Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy and all related policies and procedures for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions. Wherever there is a suspicion of possible abuse, neglect or radicalisation, staff will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Staff should be particularly aware of the needs of SEN and disabled pupils as they can be impacted by matters such as bullying and child on child abuse without outwardly showing any signs. Concerns will also be raised for those pupils who are persistently absent from school, including persistent absences for part of the school day.

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Created: January 2024
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Authorised Absence

Requests concerning matters other than illness, such as absence for family reasons, should be addressed to the Head.

- The Head may authorise absence if:
 - the child is medically unfit to attend (although if the child is off for long periods the school might ask for proof from the doctor);
 - the parent has sought the advance permission of the school e.g. for a religious observation;
 - the child has an emergency medical or dental appointment;
 - the child is involved in an off-site educational programme;
 - the child has been excluded;
 - the child has an off-site examination;
 - the child is visiting a senior school; or
 - exceptional circumstances, and only when agreed in advance. This can include a request for a family holiday during term time, but only in exceptional circumstances and only in advance.

- Excessive amounts of authorised absence can be damaging to the pupil's learning and wellbeing and the school will therefore only authorise absence sparingly and after careful consideration.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where there is no explanation given or the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable. Absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory;
- family holidays which are taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge and/or are in excess of any time agreed with the school;
- lateness when the child arrives after the register has closed and fails to offer a satisfactory explanation;

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Created: January 2024

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- when the school does not agree that absence should be authorised;
- where no supporting documentation can be provided when it has been reasonably requested and would have been reasonable to do so; or
- where the School has reason to suspect that the reason for absence is not genuine.

Where absence is not authorised, parents will be informed in writing by the Deputy Head or Head, and where appropriate invited to discuss the circumstances to avoid repetition.

Repeated unauthorised absences will likely result in breach of the contractual Terms and Conditions agreed between the school and the parent and could put a child's place at the school at risk.

6.3 Frequent Absence and Lateness

A pupil becomes persistently absent when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level can have a considerably impact to any child's education and wellbeing.

- **Lateness** – Punctuality is equally important. Form times from 8.40-9.am, and assemblies, are an essential time for the pupils to bond with their peer group, receive important messages for the day and celebrate with the school. It is also a time for the pupils to make sure they are organised and set up for their day. Frequent or persistent lateness will be monitored by the school office, Form Teachers and the Deputy Head/DSL. The Deputy Head/DSL and or Form Teacher will speak to the pupil and, if appropriate and necessary, the parents.
- **Continuing absence** -should a pupil be absent for more than one day without parents contacting the school, this will be treated as a matter of concern with potential safeguarding issues.
- **Ten Days' Absence** – Following the DfE guidance, May 2022, the school will contact the local authority if 'any pupil fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.'
- **Frequent Absence** – where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absence, the Deputy Head, will speak to the pupil and, if appropriate, the parents. The school may liaise, wherever possible in collaboration with the parents, with external

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Created: January 2024

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services or professionals, such as the pupil's GP and Local Authority Early Help services. The school has a duty of care to all of its pupils and absence from school may be an indicator that they may be in need of additional support. Such absences could indicate underlying issues, such as bullying, stress and anxiety of work and exams, friendship issues etc., which must be addressed.

7. The Role of the Form Teacher

Form Teachers are the first point of contact for parents and pupils and have a key role to play in supporting members of their form, along with the relevant Head of Year, in all matters relating to attendance and punctuality.

Pupils who have been absent for a period of time will be supported by their Form Teacher and Head of Year to catch up on work. If, whilst absent, it is deemed appropriate for a pupil to complete work, the Form Teacher will coordinate this and arrange for work to be sent home, in consultation with the Deputy Head Academic, who will advise on and oversee any necessary support required for a pupil to catch up on missed work.

Once the pupil returns their Form Teacher will meet with them and help draw up a plan to catch up on any work as required.

Form Teachers will monitor and support pupils in their forms who are persistently late by setting targets and helping them to meet them. The Head of Year should be kept informed throughout via the weekly Year Group Meetings.

8. Publication of Attendance information

SPCS has a legal duty to promote attendance and to publish its absence figures, if required by the DfE. Parents are sent information concerning their child's attendance at the end of each reporting period.

The school is often asked to disclose information on attendance and punctuality when writing references for pupils.

Trends in attendance are regularly monitored and reviewed by the City of London Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

The Deputy Head keeps Governors updated about attendance trends at least annually via the Safeguarding Report to Governors and discusses any concerns over attendance figures with the lead Governor for Safeguarding at their termly meeting.

9. Conclusion

We want every pupil to make the very best of their St Paul's Cathedral School experience and work to ensure that every lesson counts. Every school day is valuable to every child, socially and academically. Absences are inevitably disruptive. We expect our parents to support us in our aim to keep authorised absence to a minimum by:

- Ensuring their children attend the school during term time when they are medically fit to do so.
- Avoiding unnecessary absence wherever possible.
- Contacting either their Form Teacher or the Deputy Head if they have any questions about attendance or are aware of any underlying issues relating to attendance.
- Restricting holidays and special family occasions to the published calendar dates.