

## Policy: **Attendance**



**Last Approved: FGB 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

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### **Introduction**

Good attendance at school is essential for the welfare and progress of students. The College has developed a system to record and monitor pupil attendance and strategies designed to improve attendance. The College works in partnership with the Educational Welfare Service to address attendance issues and makes use of other support services such as a parent support advisor.

Our College seeks to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful career. Our College will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all of our students.

Our College will give a high priority in conveying to parents and students the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be used whenever there is concern about attendance.

### **Objectives**

- To encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise its occurrence
- To acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- To ensure a consistent approach throughout the College
- To have good levels of achievement and progress by students
- To work with the Education Welfare Service and other appropriate agencies to support good attendance

### **Student Registration**

The College is required to maintain two registers:

- an admission register (known as the school roll and containing a list of all students at the College)
- an attendance register

The Principal is required to ensure that an attendance register for all students on the school roll is taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. For each student, the register must be marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the College site or absent. If the student is absent, the register must say whether or not the absence has been authorised by the College. The College uses attendance and absence codes agreed with the Local Authority.



## **The Law and Attendance**

The 1996 Education Act (s7) places a legal responsibility upon parents/carers to ensure that their child fully attends the school at which they are registered. This means that your child must attend school every day and on time (unless as parents/carers you can prove that the absence was with the authorisation of the school or that it was unavoidable).

If your child has unauthorised absences then the College can make a request to the Local Education Authority (through the Education Welfare Service) to instigate Parental Responsibility Measures. If you have Parental Responsibility, this could mean receiving any of the following:

- A Penalty Notice. Should a Penalty Notice be issued, one notice will be issued to each parent/carer for each child involved. Currently, each Penalty Notice is for £60 if paid within the first 21 days, this increases to £120 if paid between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28th day. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 28 days, then a Magistrates Summons will be issued. Also, if a Penalty Notice has already been issued within the previous 2 years then the Local Authority will proceed straight to Magistrates Summons.
- A Magistrates Summons that could lead to a criminal record, a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment for up to 3 months.
- Education Supervision Order (ESO). The Children Act 1989 allows the Local Education Authority to apply to the Family Proceedings Court for an ESO for any child of compulsory school age, whom it is felt, is not being properly educated.  
The intention behind the ESO is to support parents in fulfilling their legal responsibilities. The ESO is only suitable where the child and the parents/carers are willing to co-operate with the process. If the application for an order is successful the ESO will last for one year, but may be extended for up to 3 years. A Supervising Officer will be appointed by the Court. The role of the Supervisor is to work with the child and family to ensure that an appropriate education is received.

## **The Law and Requests for Term Time Absence**

As of September 2013, an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 came in to force and greater clarity was introduced to the issue of schools authorising absence requests. These changes reinforced the Government's view that every minute of every school day is vital and that students should only be granted authorised absences by the College in 'exceptional circumstances'.

A family holiday is not considered by the Government to be an 'exceptional circumstance' and therefore may not be authorised by the College. If you would like to request 'leave' to be considered for authorisation due to exceptional circumstances, please request, complete and return an S2 from the College office or via College website.

Should you choose to take your child out of College without the authorisation of the College, then Parental Responsibility Measures could be instigated (see The Law and school attendance). For more information, see the DfE website.

### **Authorised or unauthorised absence?**

Authorised absence is absence with permission from the Principal or other authorised representative of the College. This includes instances of absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided (e.g. illness).

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from the Principal or other authorised



representative of the College. This includes unexplained or unjustified absences. The categories of authorised and unauthorised absence are explained as follows:

#### ***Authorised absence***

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical / dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible)
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
- External examinations
- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents

#### ***Unauthorised absence***

- Any type of shopping
- Looking after siblings or unwell parents
- Minding the house
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives
- Truancy
- Attending concerts/events
- Any absence where the College is not informed about it and not approved
- Holidays (without the agreement of the Principal)

#### **When are Absences Unauthorised**

Schools are required to notify the Local Education Authority if a student has unauthorised absences. If the Local Education Authority believes the absences to be avoidable then it can initiate Parental Responsibility Measures (see Law and School Attendance above) against the child's parents/carers.

Unauthorised absences can be acquired when:

- Leave has been requested, but the circumstances are such that the College is unable to authorise the leave (and the leave is still taken anyway).
- Leave is not requested and/or the College has grounds to believe that the child has been taken out of College for an avoidable reason (example – a family holiday, buying uniform, looking after a sibling). Sometimes, there have been occasions when schools have been notified that the student is sick, but the school discovers or reasonably believes that the reason given for the absence is not genuine.
- A child continually arrives late after the registration period has closed.
- The Principal has the authority to unauthorise any absence that they feel is avoidable.

A yearly holiday warning letter/email is sent to all parents to inform of Legal Action if you take your child out of College and no form has been completed.

The absence will only be authorised at the Principal's discretion.

Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the College will inform the parents/carers, notifying them of that position.

If the absence is unauthorised and still taken, the College may request the local authority to consider issuing a penalty notice. Only one penalty notice will be issued per parent/carer per child within a **two-year period**. This means that if you paid a penalty notice and then committed a



further offence contrary to s444(1) Education Act 1996 within the next two years, you are likely to be summonsed to Court for the most recent offence. Parents/carers have the responsibility for ensuring that registered students of compulsory school age attend school regularly. We will work towards ensuring that all students feel supported and valued.

We will send a clear message that if a student is absent, she/he will be missed. We will consult with all members of the College community and the Education Welfare Service in developing and maintaining the whole college attendance policy.

We will encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance. We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive regular reminders about Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance.

Information will be made available to parents/carers and students informing them of attendance rates and related issues. Positive staff attitudes to students returning after absence, will promote the importance of full attendance. Regular evaluation of the attendance policy and procedures by Senior Leaders and the College governors will take place.

Attendance will be an important feature of the College Improvement Plan.

### Why Does Good Attendance Matter?

A good education can be the cornerstone for future life opportunities. Missing school can leave gaps in knowledge and understanding and also place the student at a disadvantage in both their educational development and potentially in their eventual GCSE success.

Beyond qualifications, going to school every day is crucial for a number of reasons:

- It is the best place for students to learn
- It is good preparation for college or work. Colleges and employers expect a history of good attendance
- Parents will know where their children are and that they are safe
- It is the Law

Attendance		Lessons/weeks missed	Impact
100%	=	All lessons attended	Best chance of success
95%	=	47 lessons / hours missed a year	Poor attendance below 95% will impact on learning and achievement. Risk of prosecution
90%	=	95 lessons / hours missed / <b>4 weeks a year</b>	
85%	=	142 hours/ lessons / <b>5.5 weeks missed a year</b>	Very poor attendance. Large impact on learning and achievement. Will be prosecuted unless genuine evidence provided
80%	=	190 hours / lessons / <b>8 weeks missed a year</b>	

Research suggests that **17 missed school days a year = 1 GCSE grade DROP** in achievement.



## College Procedures

This element of the policy is developed by College staff so that there is a sense of ownership and responsibility which will ensure maximum engagement in promoting attendance.

The College operates an electronic system of registration, which enables trends in attendance and absence to be monitored. The data collected is shared with the designated Educational Welfare Officers.

### We ask parents/carers:

- to notify us in advance of known absences via the S2 absence request form found on the college website – this should **be 3 weeks prior to a planned absence** - [https://www.sidmouthcollege.devon.sch.uk/uploads/3/1/6/1/31615835/absence\\_request\\_for\\_m\\_oct\\_18.pdf](https://www.sidmouthcollege.devon.sch.uk/uploads/3/1/6/1/31615835/absence_request_for_m_oct_18.pdf);
- ensure their children arrive on time with the correct equipment and full uniform
- be aware that any person who has the care of a child or who has parental responsibility is responsible for ensuring good attendance
- to contact the College by telephone/e-mail on the **first day and every other subsequent day** of absence and to explain the absence with a note when the student returns to College.

### Reporting Absences

- It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform the College of the reason for a student's absence by 8:30 a.m. **on the day of absence and each and every other day even if consecutive days**
- The College will operate a First Day Calling system. The parents/carers of every absent student will be contacted by the Attendance Officer should a message not be received.
- Any absence where a reason is NOT provided, the Attendance Officer will follow this up by phone call by 10.00am
- If still no reason for absence then this will be followed up by phone call by the Safeguarding Team. In some instances, the Safeguarding Team may do a Home Welfare check
- Parent/carer must give expected date of return
- In the case of 5 or more days of illness, the College should be notified so that teachers can set work. Medical evidence will need to be provided to the College in order for the College to authorise the absence. The EWO will be notified if the absence is unauthorised.
- Where there has been an absence of more than 2 consecutive days and parents/carers have not made contact or cannot be contacted by College, the Safeguarding Team may do a Home Welfare check and if unable to make contact will consider informing the Police
- The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will be informed after 5 consecutive days.

## REASONS FOR ABSENCE

### Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a student has been absent for 3 consecutive days or more due to illness OR where a student's attendance is below 95% and/or the student is regularly away from College due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised.

Medical evidence can be in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication or appointment card showing name of child and date they visited. If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, evidence should be provided. Referral to the School Nurse/Family support may be made to offer advice and support to the family.



## Medical/Dental Appointments

All routine (non-emergency) appointments should be made, wherever possible, outside school hours. Should a child need to have an all-day appointment during school hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the College unauthorising the absence.

## Truancy

It is the legal responsibility of parents/carer to ensure their child attends all lessons as required. Parents/carers will be informed by the Attendance Officer if their child has been identified as truanting from the school. Persistent cases may be referred to the EWO who may consider Legal Action.

## Truancy from Lessons

- Students out of lessons without authorisation will be considered as truanting. Parents will receive a telephone call to notify them. It is the legal responsibility of parents to ensure that their children attend full time education and therefore attend all lessons
- A consequence in line with the College Behaviour Policy will be set for all instances of truancy
- Teachers who suspect truancy from lesson(s) should email/phone the Attendance Officer or Safeguarding Team
- In cases of confirmed/suspected truancy from lessons the Attendance Officer will alert the HoH

## Punctuality - Encouraging Student Punctuality

- Students are expected at their tutor's door at 08.50 ready for registration
- Students are marked L at 08.55 and receive a break time detention. 2 x late marks in a week is a lunchtime detention. 3 lates in a half term is a SLT after college detention
- Students are marked U at 0915 onwards. **This is an UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE** and a break time detention. 2 x late marks in a week is a lunchtime detention. 3 late marks in a half term is a SLT after college detention

**Understanding the importance of being on time:** Students who are always on time are the students who earn the best grades, win scholarships, and get into the top universities. In the working world, employees who are consistently on time are more likely to be considered for promotions. Encouraging good punctuality gets students into the habit of doing things on time!

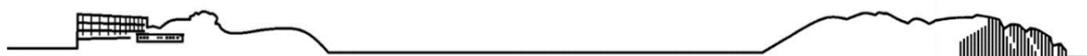
It is vital that students sign in at the front reception office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all students are accounted for.

A register is also taken at the start of all subject lessons by the subject teacher, and any unexplained absences reported back to the College office. If a student is late to the lesson this will be recorded on the register.

Persistent lateness may result in disciplinary action.

## The College:

- publish clear start and finishing times of registration
- provide guidance to staff on the accurate completion of registers. Legally we are required to do this twice a day – AM register and PM register
- Stress the importance of punctuality and the response to lateness
- Promote first day contact between parents and College
- Provide clear guidance on authorised and unauthorised absence



- Develop referral routes with roles and responsibilities for students with emerging attendance problems
- Provide consistent reward/celebration schemes to acknowledge good or improving attendance through assemblies, rewards and celebration including 100% certificates.
- Engage in the target setting process in partnership with the Education Welfare Service
- Inform parents if their child is in danger of becoming Persistently Absent or is Persistently Absent and report these figures to the EWS as required
- Monitor progress towards targets
- Provide governors with information relating to specific pieces of work e.g. truancy sweeps, prosecutions and related legal action
- Work with other agencies i.e. Education Welfare Officers, Connexions personal advisors and alert the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) when a student's attendance causes concern
- Notify the EWO if a student is, or is likely to be, away from College due to medical needs for more than 10 working days
- Have a named person (Head of House for the student) responsible for dealing with students who are unable to attend College because of medical needs
- Ensure that students who are unable to attend College because of medical needs are kept informed about College social events, are able to participate, for example, in homework clubs, study support and other activities
- Encourage and facilitate liaison with peers, for example, through visits and videos
- Supply the appropriate education provider with information about a student's capabilities, educational progress, and programmes of work
- Be active in the monitoring of progress and in the reintegration into College, liaising with other agencies, as necessary
- Include attendance information in the College documentation e.g. the prospectus, reports, home/school agreement
- Record absence figures according to DfES regulations and submit an annual return indicating the number of half days missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence
- A yearly holiday warning letter/email is sent to all parents to inform of Legal Action if you take your child out of school and no form has been completed.

It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to maintain high standards. Responsibility to promote attendance is the responsibility of the whole College community.

### **Attendance Targets**

The College sets annual targets for student attendance. The targets are monitored in partnership with the Educational Welfare Service and governors. An attendance target will be set.



## Appendix A

### ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES- an integral part of Safeguarding at Sidmouth College

#### Objectives

- to encourage full attendance and punctuality
- to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies
- to minimise its occurrence
- to acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- to ensure a consistent approach throughout the College

#### Reporting Absence

Attendance is checked on a daily basis. If a student is absent without a given reason the College (Attendance Coordinator) calls the parents/carers. Parents can inform the College of absence in 3 ways;

1. Send a note in the student planner
2. Call the college **01395 514823**, select the option to report an absence and leave a message
3. Call the college **01395 514823**, select the option to report an absence and speak to our attendance coordinator

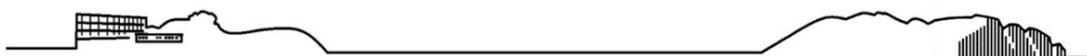
#### Where there are concerns

If a student's absence falls below 97% the College will be seeking ways to support an improvement. The Attendance Coordinator meets H of H weekly to discuss attendance issues and any requests for absence.

Stage	Attendance rate	HOH	Attendance Officer
1	+97%		
2	<97%	Letter 1 sent by HoH approval	Attendance Officer to amend tracking sheet and send letter within 1 day of HoH approval.
3	<93%	Letter 2 sent by HoH approval  Also send letter later in the year if no improvement in attendance	Attendance Officer to amend tracking sheet and send letter within 1 day of HoH approval.
4	<91%	Letter 3 sent by HoH approval if no improvement from letter 2, within 2 weeks.  Parents / carers invited via letter with time to meet parents and offer Early Help and EWO informed.	Attendance Officer to amend tracking sheet and arrange letter and send within 1 day of HoH approval.  If medical evidence is provided saved into SIMS  Arrange and liaise for possible IHCP if medical issues with First Aid invited to meeting



5	<90% and no improvement	Arrange legal meeting with EWO – Fast Track or Penalty notice.  Go straight to this point if no reasons at all have been given for any absences after 10 sessions.	Attend and take minutes
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## Annex B

The Principal will oversee the whole policy;

- Is responsible for reporting on attendance issues to the Governing Board.
- Have oversight of absence requests for exceptional circumstances.

The Vice Principal (Pastoral) is responsible for the operation of the attendance system / the collation of attendance data and;

- Provide the strategic direction for improving attendance levels across the College.
- Will liaise with the Heads of House on a regular basis.
- Will liaise with the Attendance Officer/administrators responsible for attendance and the EWO.
- Set College and internal targets for attendance in conjunction with the EWO (all students should strive for an attendance level of at least 95% or over during an academic year).
- Have oversight of absence requests for exceptional circumstances.
- Provide regular reports on attendance to the Governing Body.

Heads of House should:

- Meet with EWO to discuss action to be taken for students with high persistent absence in each House group.
- Ensure the College escalation process is being consistently followed (see appendix A).
- Promote the importance of regular attendance.
- Organise Attendance Panel meetings with EWO for parents of students with high absence.
- Track House group attendance using SIMs attendance data.
- Monitor the registration process of tutors in conjunction with the attendance administrator.
- Reinforce good practice at tutor meetings.
- Liaise with other support staff on a weekly basis to discuss specific students.
- Attend meetings with EWOs as necessary.
- Heads of House will oversee and should be fully aware of all matters concerning attendance and ensure the escalation process is being consistently applied (see appendix A).
- Ensure the Attendance tracking sheet is completed for individual students with actions
- Refer students to the EWO as necessary.
- Organise the phased reintegration of long term absentees.
- Produce data for tutors.
- Organise action plans for students whose attendance is beginning to cause concern.

The Attendance Officer – (for more details see Job Description);

- Will monitor the completion of all registers
- First day phoning for students who have not arrived at College by 10.00
- Manage incomplete registers to the appropriate teachers and line managers
- Maintain all records of attendance as required by law and for the DFE as required.
- Provide specific attendance data, as and when required.
- Keep staff registers up to date with letters sent to persistent absence students in accordance with the attendance escalation process.
- Oversee reintegration of long term absentees with other staff.
- Organise late detentions.
- Ensure the Attendance Intervention Tracking sheet is completed for students/houses.
- Work effectively and closely with the Heads of House



- Keep staff registers up to date with letters sent to persistent absence students in accordance with the attendance escalation process (see appendix 1).
- Monitor punctuality
- Liaise with outside agencies and arrange meetings
- Produce reports for Governors on the attendance and absence rates of students

The Tutor should:

- Complete all registers promptly on SIMS and ensure all registers are accurate, raising any attendance concerns swiftly with the Head of House if appropriate and necessary.
- Promote the importance of full attendance.
- Consistently apply the Attendance Escalation Process (see appendix A).
- In conjunction with the HoHs impose appropriate sanctions on students arriving late to registrations without good reason.

Teaching staff should:

- Complete all registers promptly at the start of each lesson on SIMS and ensure class registers are accurate, raising any attendance concerns with the Attendance Officer
- Actively promote good attendance and ensure students are supported in catching up on work should they have been absent for authorised reasons.

The Governors should:

- Governor(s) may be given a specific role/ interest in monitoring attendance and / or policies.
- Governors may have a role to play through representation on College attendance panels and at parent's evenings etc.
- Request regular attendance progress reports for Governors' Meetings.

Other Agencies

In addition to The Education Welfare Service, the following agencies may be asked to work with the College to overcome attendance problems:

- Education Behaviour and Support Services
- Educational Psychologist
- SEND Services
- Social Services or Early Help
- Careers and Guidance Service (Careers South West)
- Youth Service
- School Nurse (Medical Services)
- Counselling Services
- Police Community Support Officer
- Action for young carers
- Transport Service Group
- Youth Offending Services

