



St George's
School Edgbaston

ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE POLICY

Revised: September 2021



Principles

Education is important and therefore missing school means that children miss out on important learning. Children should be at school on time and ready to learn every day that St George's is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/guardian that could result in legal action by the Local Authority.

The government expects:

- Schools and local authorities to promote good attendance, reduce absence and act early to address patterns of absence
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who attend school do so regularly
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons

All pupils must be registered first thing in the morning and at least once in the afternoon.

All schools have a responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is **below 90%** over a school year. This adds up to missing almost half a term. These pupils are called 'persistent absentees' by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at St George's as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**, which is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school would not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These are an offence by the parent and include:

- keeping children off school without a good reason
- truancy before the register has been marked
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a register mark
- taking holidays that have not been approved by St George's in advance

Procedures

Arrival and Registration

During Covid-19 school is operating entry and exits at different points to assist with social distancing measures.

All children should have arrived at school by their allocated time each day, although Lower School children can enter Morning Care from 8.00am to make a calm start to the day. This must be booked in advanced.

Each Class Teacher/Form Tutor has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. The register is taken twice a day. A day counts as two attendances.

A child arriving after the registration period will be marked as late. If we consider the child is late without a valid reason this will be classed as an unauthorised absence. The afternoon registration is taken after lunch at 13:00 (LOWER SCHOOL) and 13:35 (UPPER SCHOOL).

From the beginning of the new academic year in September 2021, schools will return to using the attendance and absence codes in used before the COVID Outbreak in line with government guidance in both Lower School and Upper School. There will however be an additional new category of 'not attending due to circumstances related to COVID -19'.

Reporting Absence

The school office should be informed during the morning of the first day of a child's absence through illness, giving us details of their absence. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head Master has the overall responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised. If you have not made contact with the school by 09:30, the school will contact you to request an explanation of absence. Without this information the absence will be recorded initially as 'not known' but if no reason is subsequently given this will then be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Parents Contacting School

The answer machines are checked daily for absence messages - Upper School (0121 625 0398) and Lower School (0121 454 0099). Alternatively parents may also e-mail the office with this information:

Upper School: attendance@sgse.co.uk

Lower School: lowschool@sgse.co.uk

Where there is a satisfactory explanation, office staff will change the absence to authorised absence with a note to this effect on the register.

Absences

Every effort should be made to arrange medical or other appointments, such as music exams or routine dental check-ups, outside of school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment. A 'present mark' may still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

Illness

Children will be ill, and while attendance is important no child should be in school if they are too unwell to attend. No child should attend school until 48 hours after they have suffered their last bout of sickness and / or diarrhoea; this is to prevent the bug spreading resulting in more pupil absence.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be an appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Arrangements for absence such as family bereavement and exceptional circumstances

Sudden, serious circumstances do occur when it is impossible for a family to bring a child to school. It is essential that the school is informed of the circumstances by the parent so that the appropriate code can be written in the register. This absence should be for the shortest time possible.

Covid-19

There is an amendment to the 2006 Registration regulations for this academic year. An X code will be used for pupils who need to shield, be in quarantine or for Local Restrictions. This is neither an absence or attendance it identifies that a pupil is unable to attend school due to COVID related reasons. This code category will remain from September 2021 but school will predominantly return to using the attendance and absence codes used before the COVID outbreak.

Holidays:

Please note that a request for a term-time holiday is **NOT** a parental right. Leave may be granted in exceptional circumstances, but arrangements should not be made without the schools agreement in advance. Taking leave without permission is “unauthorised” absence and can be subject to a Penalty Notice fine or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority. Requests for term time absence must be made in writing. Please include the name and year of the child, the dates you need the leave, the reason for the leave and the location you will be travelling to. This will help us assess your request. For Lower School pupils’ requests should be addressed to Mrs Joanne Sadiq (Head of Lower School) or for Secondary pupils to Mr Luke Nicholls (Senior Leader for Pastoral Care).

Occasionally children are sometimes unhappy about attending school. At times families can go through unsettled periods that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties are best sorted out between St George’s, the parents, and the child at an early stage. Please do not give in to pressure to excuse them from attending, as this can give the impression that school attendance does not matter and it may make things harder for your child. Transparent communication between parents and school is vital to resolving any potential problems and ensuring good attendance.

Parents are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, we may offer parents a formal Parenting Contract or refer the child to the (Education Welfare Officer) at the Local Authority.

The Local Authority will also try to resolve the situation by agreement wherever possible, but if other ways of trying to improve the child’s attendance have failed, these Officers can use legal proceedings if required, including Penalty Notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents or pupils may wish to contact the (EWO) themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of St George’s School and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number can be obtained from the Upper and Lower School offices, or by contacting the Local Authority.

Punctuality

Children who are persistently late each morning miss a significant amount of learning; often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents / carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns, and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent / guardian outside the normal hours are signed in or out from the office. The signing in / out register in the office is used in the case of a fire or any other emergency as an appendix to class registers. Registers are checked regularly by the Head Master to ensure they are kept accurately by teachers, and to assess the reasons and incidence of any absences.

Please note: In order to prevent children from becoming Missing from Education, St George's School is legally required to notify the Local Authority of all children removed from our registers outside normal transition times, whatever the reason. Parents are requested to provide St George's with all the necessary information about future addresses and new Schools. Any information St George's holds will be passed to the relevant Local Authorities as required.

Monitoring Attendance

The School has a termly monitoring and reporting system as a way to 'grade' attendance at school. At the end of each term, parents will be informed regarding their child's attendance. In Lower School this will be an attendance certificate/report on coloured paper to celebrate good attendance, or to highlight areas of concern (traffic light system). In Upper School attendance will be reported as a percentage on the academic report. Parent of pupils with concerning attendance will be invited in for a meeting to discuss the issues.

Frequent absence can add up to a considerable amount of lost learning and can seriously disadvantage your child in adult life.

The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Upper School: Luke Nicholls / Brian Duckworth

Lower School: Joanne Sadiq

Summary

St George's School has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Please work with us. If you have any concerns regarding your child's attendance or punctuality please discuss these with your child's class teacher or form tutor in the first instance.

**To be reviewed September 2022
or as and when statutory guidance / legislation changes**