



St George's
School Edgbaston

ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE POLICY

Revised: September 2024



Principles

Education is important and all students have the right to full time education, missing school means that children miss out on important learning and personal development opportunities. Pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

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 and actively promote and nurture a child's overall wellbeing. Leave of absence can only be granted for strict and specific circumstances (see DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024)
- 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
- Schools to have a clear vision and culture regarding attendance expectations in school, with clear strategies for improving, incentivising and maintaining good attendance, have effective systems for tackling absence in partnership with families, using relevant data to inform procedures and effective and consistent monitoring of attendance.

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.

The DfE has produced new parental guidance on the topic of deciding whether or not to send your child in to school if ill:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Our school procedures and policy have been developed and written with DfE statutory guidance "working together to improve school attendance" (August 2024) carefully considered.

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 leave that have not been approved by St George's in advance

St George's School is a Rights Respecting School and supports the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The following Articles were considered when writing this policy:

Article 3: Best Interests of the child

Article 28: Right to education

Procedures

Arrival and Registration

All children should have arrived at school before the start of the school day:

Prep School Morning Registration: 08:30 (students can enter Morning Care from 08:00 to make a calm start to the day).

Senior School Morning Registration: 08:25 (students can enter Morning supervision from 08:15 to make a calm start to the day).

All students are expected to be in school for the duration of the whole school day.

In Prep School, Key Stage 1 students finish at 15:20 and Key Stage 2 students finish at 15:30.

In Senior School, all students finish the school day at 15:35.

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 (in Prep School this is 08:40 and in Senior School 08:35). The register closes at 09:00 in both Prep and Senior School, at which point the child is recorded as absent. The afternoon registration is taken after lunch at 13:00 in Prep School and 13:35 in Senior School.

All registers are taken electronically and attendance codes used in school are in line with newly revised guidance within “working together to improve school attendance” (2024).

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 Headteacher(s) have 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

Senior School: 0121 625 0398

Prep School: 0121 454 0099

Alternatively, parents may also e-mail the office with this information:

Senior School: reception@sgse.co.uk

Prep School: lowerschool@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 wider 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.

Requesting a Leave of Absence

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. Leave of absence is only permitted for strict and specific circumstances outlined in the new DfE guidance August 2024.

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 in line with the new national framework (to ensure nationwide consistency) 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 Prep School pupils, requests should be addressed to Mrs Joanne Sadiq (Head of Prep School), or for Senior pupils to Mr Luke Nicholls (Head Teacher).

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. Parents should 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 and effective collaborative work between parents and school is vital to resolving any potential problems and ensuring good attendance in line with “Moments matter, attendance counts”, campaign guidance (DfE 2024).

School will however be particularly mindful of students absent from school due to mental or physically ill health, SEND and / or disability and look to provide additional support to those students and families where possible.

Parents are expected to contact school staff and to work in partnership 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 “Attendance 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 Senior and Prep 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 Headteacher(s) 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

Any unexplained non-attendance will trigger a phone call from the school on the first morning of the absence to ascertain the reason for the child not being present at school. If contact is not made, staff will make further attempts to ascertain the child's whereabouts.

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 if there is a concern regarding their child's attendance. Attendance will be reported as a percentage on the academic report. Parents / carers of pupils with concerning attendance will be invited in for a meeting to discuss the issues where school will

look to support parents in removing any potential barriers to good school attendance for their child. Frequent absence can add up to a considerable amount of lost learning and can seriously disadvantage your child in adult life. Persistent absence is one step away from a child missing from education (severe absence) and could potentially indicate a safeguarding concern. Wider Support Services may be contacted to formalise approaches to improving attendance.

If the school's formalised interventions and support do not bring the desired attendance improvements, the Local Authority may decide to sanction further legal interventions, prosecution, or fixed penalty notices to protect the child's right to an education.

The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Senior School:

Luke Nicholls (NichollsL@sgse.co.uk)

Prep School:

Joanne Sadiq (SadiqJ@sgse.co.uk)

Summary

St George's School has a legal duty to promote good attendance and communicates the importance of good attendance with all of its school community. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. The school is required to provide the Local Authority with information on pupils who fail to attend school for a continuous period of 10 days, if it is unauthorised, or for a period of 15 days due to illness. This policy was written in conjunction with the Equality Act 2010 and information and guidance given by the DfE "Working Together to Improve School Attendance" 2024, KCSIE 2024 and "Moments Matter, Attendance Counts", DfE 2024. 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 2025
or as and when statutory guidance / legislation changes**