

Attendance Policy

KEY FACTS:

- **Regular attendance is vitally important for successful academic achievement and well-being**
- **The school will promote good attendance for all, in close liaison with parents and students**
- **Parent/carer(s) have a duty to ensure regular and punctual school attendance**
- **The school will refer persistent absentees to the local authority for support**
- **The school will communicate attendance rates to parents and work proactively with parents to improve attendance**
- **The school will maintain separate attendance and admission registers in keeping with regulations and using DfE national codes**
- **This policy applies to statutory age students and those educated in the early years**

Introduction

It is important that staff, parents and students are familiar with the Attendance Policy to ensure all children achieve their potential. Regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Missing learning time leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and it is well-known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, beginning from the early years.

The legal framework

The Education Act 1996 specifies the legal responsibility of parent/carer(s) statutory school age children to ensure they attend school. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs; either by regular school attendance or education otherwise such as home education.

The same law requires the school to have an admissions register and an attendance register, and to place all children on both registers. Failure to do so is an offence. Specific details are contained within the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006(c) and referred to as such within the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (England) 2014 (Part 3 s15).

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014) requires at section 3.76 a daily record of the names of the children being cared for on the premises and their hours of attendance.

Children missing education who are of compulsory school age are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) later in life. Students at risk of harm or neglect may miss education as a result. The school must take action under the school's safeguarding duties under section 157 of the Education Act 2002 and Part 3 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (England) 2014 in respect of all students. As such, the school must investigate any unexplained absences and follow the local authority children's social care referral procedures accordingly.

School aims

Southbank aims to be an international school that:

- has a broad curriculum with a global outlook, and a strong emphasis on inquiry
- promotes academic rigour and excellence, and enthusiasm for learning
- provides opportunities for students to study other languages, as well as their own, and to become good communicators
- celebrates intellectual scepticism, and stresses the importance of remaining open-minded and reflective
- supports individual needs and develops individual strengths, so that everyone can fulfill their potential
- uses London as a classroom

And to be an open, inclusive community that:

- offers a safe, caring, and supportive environment
has high expectations in all areas
- treats every individual with fairness and respect
- celebrates diversity, and welcomes those new to the school community
- encourages dialogue, and listens to and considers others' point of view
- has strong and effective leadership which makes clear decisions after appropriate consultation
- develops a culture of responsibility, service and accountability
- encourages a culture in which creativity and imagination are celebrated.

Link between attendance and achievement

There is clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement, as well as a strong link between truancy and antisocial behaviour:

- of students who miss more than 50% of school, only 3% manage to achieve five A* to Cs including English and maths.
- of students who miss between 10% and 20% of school, only 35% manage to achieve five A* to C GCSEs including English and maths.
- of students who miss less than 5% of school, 73% achieve five A* to Cs including English and maths.

Parent/carer(s) responsibilities

- encourage regular and punctual attendance, being fully aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure that the child in their care arrives punctually, prepared for learning
- provide clear reasons for any absence which ensures the school can code the absence properly and accurately
- contact the school on the first day of the child's absence as early as possible and preferably before the start of the school day
- avoid making arrangements to remove children from school during term time
- respond helpfully and positively to any enquiry made by the school to ascertain the reason for any absence, including any safeguarding matter

School Responsibilities

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence (attendance below 90%)
- Ensure every student has high levels of attendance so s/he can access the education s/he is entitled to
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Encourage parents to ensure their child attends all learning opportunities regularly and punctually
- Keep accurate and efficient records of attendance and registration at school including attendance at all after school and before school activities

We achieve this in the following ways:

- teachers take the register at the beginning of the school day in the primary schools and at the beginning of each lesson in our secondary school. A register is taken at least once for all students in the afternoon.
- mark all children not present by the designated time, taking account of absence notes
- follow up first day absence with a telephone call to the parent/carer(s)
- monitor attendance and lateness and implement strategies for promoting improved awareness of attendance such as year groups or vulnerable children, as required, including the use of formal letters home
- report on patterns of attendance to our Safeguarding Governance Committee (SGC) to safeguard and promote the welfare of students
- specifically monitor any persistent absence (individual attendance below 90%)
- proper use of the DfE national codes to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations, including preservation of the entries on both the admission and attendance register for a period of three years after it was made
- only the Principal or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence
- close discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to identify children causing concern, including interviewing children and parents regarding any unsatisfactory attendance.
- implementing any agreed improvement strategies such as referral to the Local Authority attendance services and/or children's social care in accordance with the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures.
- provide parent/carer(s) with the timings of the school day and the calendar via the school website and any other usual method such as the school newsletter, in advance

Children at risk of missing education

A child missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. The school always informs the local authority of any student who is going to be deleted from the admission register. This includes situations where they have been taken out of school by parents and are home educated, or are in custody for more than four months, or have ceased to attend school because they have a medical condition preventing them from attending school, or have been permanently excluded by the school or an unknown school destination. The school deals effectively with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions to help identify any risk of abuse or neglect. This includes any possible sexual exploitation or extremism risk and helps to prevent any future risk of absconding or truanting. In accordance with the school safeguarding policy, staff are alert to

the signs and triggers to be aware of including travelling to conflict zones, Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage.

The school informs the local authority of any student who fails to attend school regularly, or has been unauthorised absent for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at intervals agreed and consistent with the local authority's policy and procedure.

Late arrival

It is essential that if a student arrives late, s/he signs in at Reception so our systems remain fully updated in case an evacuation of the school is necessary and in order that we know exactly where every student is at all times.

Leaving school early during the day

Students are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by a member of staff or their known parent/carer; or to attend a school visit, an off-site scheduled lesson, or a sporting fixture. Exceptions are made at our Westminster campus where most students are able to leave the premises during lunch breaks. See *Supervision Policy – Westminster* for details.

If a student has to leave the school during the day for illness or a parent is required to collect him/her for a medical appointment, s/he is also required to sign out at Reception and for the parent/carer(s) to have requested permission from the school in advance.

Requests for absence from parent/carer(s)

Schools, not parents, authorise absence. Requests to the school for granting permission for leave of absence to a student during term time must be made in writing in advance directly to the Principal. The Principal is only able to authorise leave of absence where exceptional circumstances relate to the application. Authorised leave is unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday.

We ask that parents make contact with the school each day the child is going to be absent for ill health reasons in order that the school can keep records updated and importantly, so that the school can be kept informed of their progress to full health and anticipated return date. If necessary, the school may ask for medical evidence of any illness. We expect any absence for illness to be evidenced by a note from the parent/carer(s) as soon as possible.

An absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without the permission of the Principal in advance.

Persistent absentees

Persistent absentees are those students with attendance below 90%. The school will contact the parent/carer(s) if their child's attendance approaches that threshold. The following action may be taken:

- use of school data system to consider any patterns in absences
- invite the parents in to school to discuss the reasons for the persistent absences with the student's class/form teacher/Advisor/Deputy Principal. Discussion may center on the short and long-term effects of their child missing school
- establishment of an action plan to ensure an increased level of attendance
- a record of the student's absence sent to their next school.

If attendance does not improve the school will contact the local authority in accordance with local authority procedures.

Maintaining records and reporting to the authorities

The school's attendance register kept by means of a computer is backed up, in the form of an electronic copy, at least once a month.

Monitoring and review arrangements

Attendance rates are reported regularly to the Cognita Board. The Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Governance Committee (SGC) receives regular performance management indicator reports on student attendance as well as any patterns or trends of persistent absence from school. The Independent Chair scrutinises admissions and attendance registers for compliance and safeguarding purposes.

Ownership and consultation	
Document sponsor (role)	Director of Education
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Specialist Legal Advice	None
Consultation	Principals at Glenesk, Duncombe, Milbourne, NBH Prep, St Margaret's, Akeley Senior, Hydesville.

Compliance	
Compliance with	Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE 2016 The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 Part 3 Paragraph 15 Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE September 2014 The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Audience	
Audience	Heads and school staff

Document application	
England	Yes
Wales	No
Spain	No

Version control	
Implementation date	01.09.2016
Review date	May 2017 (01.09.2018)

Related documentation	
Related documentation	School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy School Attendance, DfE October 2014 Children Missing Education DfE 2013 School exclusion procedures