

SACRED HEART HIGH SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

NOVEMBER 2021

To be reviewed November 2023

*This Policy should be read in conjunction with
all other Sacred Heart High School Policies*

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1 INTRODUCTION

Sacred Heart High School is committed through its Mission Statement to creating a well ordered, stimulating, secure and encouraging learning environment which will support high levels of achievement for all students. There is no doubt, however, that achievement flourishes in a situation where there is not only lively teaching and learning but also one where there are high expectations of all members of the community with regard to attendance and punctuality as well as behaviour.

This whole school policy encompasses all members of the community, staff, parents, and students, in ensuring that excellence in attendance and punctuality is the norm, and states the methods which should be used to achieve this.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Trends

Sacred Heart High School has a tradition of high attendance and punctuality amongst pupils. Research and our own statistics show that there is a clear link between 'attendance & punctuality' and high achievement. In Years 7 - 9 trends show high attendance levels for most pupils. There is however a changing pattern of attendance and punctuality at Key Stage 4 when a growing number of pupils show a marked decline in punctuality and in attendance below our school target of 97%.

The reasons for this are often linked to changing perceptions of the role and importance of studying for examinations which often overwhelms the student leading to a decline in mental health and well-being and subsequent opting out. Once this cycle starts, it is very difficult for the young person to break the pattern which inevitably becomes one of underachievement, failure and even alienation.

Furthermore, there are other social reasons why girls are either absent or late. Very often the student has to assume responsibility for younger siblings going to school or is kept or allowed to remain at home to help with domestic arrangements. In addition, girls are sometimes taken on holiday during term time or are permitted by parents/carers to be absent from school for minor medical reasons.

2.2 Responsibility of Parents and the School

While the responsibility for such absence clearly rests with parents or carers in these cases, the school must do everything it can to make the unacceptability of such absence clear, by establishing an ethos for students where they understand the importance of their own entitlement to full time education and recognise that 97% attendance and 100% punctuality is the norm. Where attendance falls below 90% the school will always take action and in most cases this will include a referral to the attendance team in the Local Authority. The school will do all it can to establish the importance of regular attendance with parents and work with external agencies when needed to support them.

2.3 The Law

The Education Act 1996 as amended requires the parent of every child of compulsory school age to *'cause the student to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have'*

In England, a child's leaving age depends on when they were born. They can leave school on the last Friday in June as long as they will be 16 by the end of that year's summer holidays.

They must stay in some form of education or training until their 18th birthday if they were born on or after 1 September 1997.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This policy aims to:

- develop a whole school approach to attendance and punctuality;
- set out the procedures necessary to achieve this;
- establish as precisely as possible each person's responsibility in this area and thus their accountability;
- reward and celebrate achievement in the areas of attendance and punctuality.

4 AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as 'authorised absences'. Others are not allowed by law and are classified as 'unauthorised' absences, for example holidays in term time.

'Unauthorised Absences' will always be followed up by the school and in some cases parents may be liable to a fixed penalty fine and/or legal action against them if their child has unauthorised absences.

5 WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

All members of the school community need to create a culture in which pupils come to school daily without question and that lateness both in the morning and to lessons during the day, is recognised as a form of truancy and a matter of discourtesy to members of the school community.

The school celebrates and rewards high levels of punctuality (see section 10 below).

Consistent punctuality will be important for the girls in their later working lives and it can only be achieved through consideration to others, and appropriate journey planning (allowing sufficient time for the vagaries of public transport and congestion for example).

The school requires all pupils and parents to sign a Home School Agreement which commits both parent and child to the child's regular and punctual attendance at school.

5.1 Attendance (recorded by Registration)

Tutors are responsible for completing electronic registers accurately:

- each morning from 8.30 – 8.45 a.m. (tutors should be with their forms at 8.25 am) and

at the end of the school day from 2.30 – 2.45pm

On mornings when there is no Year Assembly, an act of morning worship takes place after registration has occurred.

On mornings when there is a Year Assembly, all pupils should line up outside of the assembly location in silence and in alphabetical order, in order to allow the register to be taken quickly by the Form Tutor before Assembly. Form Tutors are expected to be outside of the Assembly location by 8.25 a.m. and are responsible for the good order and organisation of their classes during this time.

Instructions for taking registers are provided in the Staff Handbook and all staff will be given reminders about approaches to registration and the use of codes at the start of each academic year. To record absences relating to COVID 19 this is denoted by an X in the register.

The register is to be taken in silence. There should be no other activity taking place in the room. Tutors must emphasise the importance of the register to all pupils.

If for some reason it is not possible to complete the register electronically, then a paper copy must be made and sent to the Attendance Officer (Mrs Cahill) where it will be inputted electronically as soon as possible.

Procedurally the school is required daily to attempt to resolve all unexplained absence codes in a register; hence the emphasis (see later in section 8 below) on prompt early morning calls from parents regarding absence and follow up notes. Where these are not received, significant work is created for the Attendance Officer in daily tracking down parents and establishing the whereabouts of their children.

5.2 Punctuality

Children are expected to be in school by 8.15am in order to prepare for morning lessons. Punctuality is particularly important because of the legal registration procedures (both in the morning and also after lunch) but also because the registration sessions are used to give out notices and instructions.

If a child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class, discourteous and often embarrassing for the child.

All staff should demand of themselves and of pupils high standards in terms of punctuality to registration and to lessons

Arrival after registration (if persistent) will be marked as unauthorised absence in line with the DfE guidance if there is not a valid reason for this. Parents must communicate this reason to the school

5.3 Keeping Parents Informed

Attendance

The school will ensure that parents are kept regularly informed of their child's attendance level. End of year reports include attendance data but we will additionally notify parents on a half termly basis if their child's attends slips below 95%, even when the school accepts that the absences, perhaps for illness, are entirely appropriate.

These letters are purely for information and are not intended to be critical. We believe that it is important that parents have all the facts to hand when making decisions about whether to allow their child to stay off school and we recognise that severity of symptoms are not always clear cut. The most recent guidance from the DfE states that any pupil absent for 19 days (38 sessions) is considered to be a persistent absentee and is considered as serious

We wish to support our parents in this process, therefore communication with the school is crucial.

Lateness

The table below outlines the sanctions for lateness and steps taken

Number of Lates	Sanction	With whom
Once in a week other than in the case of unavoidable TfL reported, public transport disruption	A 30 minute ' Late Detention ' on the in line with the school's Behaviour Policy. Parents informed via text message	A tutor from the Year Team
Late more than once in a week other than in the case of unavoidable TfL reported, public transport disruption	A 'Level 2' SLT Detention on a Friday (90 minutes) in line with the school's Behaviour Policy Parents informed via text message	A tutor from the Year team/Member of SLT
Failure to attend a ' Late Detention '	A 'Level 2' SLT Detention on a Friday (90 minutes) in line with the school's Behaviour Policy Parents informed via text message	A tutor from the Year Team/ Member of SLT

Consistent Lateness

The school will also write to parents if their daughter is late five times in any one half term, if there isn't any improvement in a pupil's punctuality then parents will continue to be notified until this improves. Such a situation *would* be considered as a concern by the school and we would work with the parents to improve their daughter's punctuality which would include putting the pupil on a Punctuality Report.

6 THE ROLE OF PARENTS

6.1 Telephone Message Early in the Morning

If your child is unwell or unable to attend school for whatever reason, it is vital that you call the school first thing in the morning on **every** day of absence, unless agreed with the Attendance Officer, (or beforehand where possible) to explain why your child is unable to attend.

The only exception to this is if your child has tested positive for Covid. If this is the case, please report this using the Covid email address which is accessed by the attendance officer as well a limited number of senior staff:

covid@sacredh.lbhf.sch.uk

6.2 Follow-Up Note

The telephone message/email must then be followed up by a written note submitted to the form tutor. Such notes can be short but should not simply say '*my daughter was feeling unwell*'. We need more specifics, for example '*my daughter had an upset stomach*'. This is important for our monitoring of absence across the school and the prevalence of any particular condition or outbreaks of similar symptoms across pupils in a Year group that may need scrutiny in relation to the COVID 19 virus

The submitting of the note does not in itself, guarantee that the absence will be authorised.

Form Tutors place notes in the register folders where they can be collected by the Attendance Officer immediately following registration.

6.3 Medical Appointments

We are increasingly seeing girls arriving late, and explaining their lateness as 'I had a medical appointment'. Such cases are routinely recorded as 'lateness' and would remain as so unless proof of an emergency appointment is provided. Routine medical appointments should be made outside school hours.

For any unavoidable medical appointment made in school hours, supporting evidence providing confirmation of the appointment, such as a stamped appointment card, letter or screenshot of text appointment reminder is required. This should be submitted with a signed letter from the parent requesting permission for the absence. Doctors' notes are not required.

Parents can help us by ensuring that medical appointments within school hours are only be made in an emergency. We would otherwise expect girls to visit their GP/dentist either after school or during school breaks.

6.4 Further Communications

Parents can also help us by keeping us updated by telephone or letter if their child has an extended period of absence due to illness and by keeping the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance.

We encourage parents to use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises.

We also encourage parents to enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance and punctuality.

7 TERM TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils' miss as a result of unauthorised activities such as holidays in term time.

There is no 'automatic entitlement' to a certain amount of days off in term time.

7.1 Special Leave

Special 'Leave of Absence' is only allowed at the discretion of the head teacher in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the board of governors.

The headteacher has no legal discretion to allow time off in term time for **holidays**.

It is our policy that:

- Only in exceptional circumstances will a term time leave of absence be granted;
- Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence need to submit a Leave of Absence form well in advance (at least 2 weeks term time notice). This form is available from the school office and is on the school website.
- The Headteacher may ask to meet with a parent to discuss their request and will advise the parent of her decision. If denied and parents decide to take their child anyway they are most likely to be issued with a penalty notice and fined. Any time taken over and above that agreed by the headteacher will be unauthorised and may also incur a fixed penalty notice and fine. See more about penalties in 7.2 below.

- Approval for leave of absence cannot be given without application, or retrospectively.
- Applications for leave of absence in May, June and July will NOT be approved due to whole school assessments/examinations.
- Leave of Absence will not be granted in the first or last week of any term or immediately either side of a half term or other holiday. If a pupil is absent at such a time, medical evidence will be required to authorise the absence.
- Leave of Absence may only be considered where the pupil has an attendance record of over 97% from the start of the academic year to the date of request and the reason for absence is due to exceptional circumstances or in some cases for cultural, religious or emotional benefit for the child.
- The number of Leave of Absences will be recorded by the school. If there is a dip in a pupil achievement or attendance, then further applications could be refused.
- If the school does not agree to authorise a leave of absence request and the child then fails to attend school in the specified period, the absence will be unauthorised. Parents may be liable to a fixed penalty fine or other form of action if this occurs.

Please remember that the more time your child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A good understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom.

7.2 Penalty Warning

If you take your child takes any unauthorised leave in term time or takes extended leave without the prior approval of the school, you may be liable to a £60 Penalty Notice per parent per pupil involved.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The parents may be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of 28 day period, the local authority may decide to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice.

8 PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH ABSENCE

8.1 Basic Safeguarding Principles and Attendance Routines

The Attendance Officer should always act promptly where absence is concerned. All actions taken should be recorded. Pastoral Support Managers, Year Team Leaders member of the Senior Leadership Team should be notified where there are particular concerns.

All absences of a week's duration are to be reported to the Pastoral Support Manager, Year Team Lead with the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership being copied into the email communication

8.2 Recording on SIMS

When a child is not present at registration (and not known by the tutor to be present in school, perhaps in a meeting with another member of staff) the child should be marked as N (unexplained absence) even if the tutor suspects that the child may be unwell. If the pupil is with the Pastoral Support Manager or another member of staff

they should use the facility on SIMs or Edulink One to register the pupil's whereabouts.

The Attendance Officer will check all registers have been completed on line by 8.50am and will enter any paper copies on to the system as soon as possible after that;

Verbal phone messages from parents are noted every morning by the Attendance Officer, and are filed as part of the child's record.

The Attendance Officer will produce absence reports daily by 9.30am so that these can be cross referenced with any messages received from parents and these messages should be recorded on SIMS. However, the Attendance Officer will only overwrite the 'unexplained absence' mark on the register, on receipt of a written (not emailed) absence note from parents/carers when the child returns to school.

If no call has been received to explain the absence, the Attendance Officer should contact the parents, by telephone or by email.

If there is still no response on the day of absence, then the absence is to be recorded as unexplained until a satisfactory explanation is received.

The Attendance Officer will communicate any concerns to Form Tutors, Year Team Leaders and Pastoral Support Managers. She will also meet with the Pastoral Support Managers weekly to discuss any concerns and be updated on any pastoral/medical issues which may be causing absence.

After three days' unexplained absence, without any contact from home, the Attendance Officer should refer the matter to the PSM/SLT for immediate action with outside agencies as appropriate.

8.3 Dealing with Follow Up Notes

On receipt of a follow-up note, the Attendance Officer recodes the register as appropriate on SIMS including a brief note on SIMS where appropriate to ensure that tutors also have access to this information. Letters are to be scanned and stored electronically.

Where the Tutor / Attendance Officer is not satisfied with the reason for absence (e.g. 'feeling unwell') or notice that the same reason is being used repeatedly, the parent is to be contacted by the Attendance Officer either by phone or letter and records kept of the action taken. Form Tutor should be informed and the matter brought to the attention of the Headteacher who may decide not to authorise the absence.

If a note is still not brought in the child should be sent to the Attendance Officer and contact may be made directly with the parents.

8.4 Half Termly Whole School Attendance Monitoring

The Attendance Officer will run detailed half termly attendance checks to identify those with poor attendance and those who may be a risk of falling below our attendance target. Letters will be sent home as a matter of routine information to any parent whose child's attendance is (for whatever reason) is below 95%. This will not be repeated the following half terms if continued improvement is evident.

The Attendance Officer will liaise with Tutors, Year Team Leads, senior leader attached to Key Stage and Pastoral Support Managers to discuss and highlight particular absence patterns that may be evident for example days when particular subjects/work deadlines occur; or Friday/Monday, last/first days of term; etc.

9 PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH LATENESS

9.1 Recording Lateness in the Morning

Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 11 enter the school in the mornings using their swipe cards at the Bute Gardens Gate. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 enter the school in the mornings through the blue gate at the front of the school. The blue gates and Swipe Card access closes at 8.25am, after which girls must enter school via the main reception on Hammersmith Road (which is the normal entrance for sixth formers). They are then recorded as 'late' by reception staff.

Pupils arriving after 8.25am will be recorded by the Attendance Officer as late unless they have a valid reason. This could include for example major transport problems (which the school would already know about) or an emergency dental appointment for which they have evidence.

A bus simply 'being late', will not *generally* be considered as a sufficient excuse. Girls' need to learn to plan their journey's to allow for such unforeseen circumstances.

Girls arriving after 9.00am will be recorded as 'Unauthorised Late' unless backed up with a satisfactory written explanation. Routine medical appointments will not be sufficient.

9.2 Reporting Morning Lateness

A list of all pupils who report late with their time of arrival and reasons given for lateness is provided daily to Pastoral Support Managers and senior staff. All reasons for lateness should be followed up by the tutor/Pastoral Support manager.

9.3 Recording Lateness to Class

All teachers should use 'lesson monitor' so that there is a record of attendance and punctuality to lessons. This should be completed and saved within the first ten minutes of the lesson;

Teachers should report to the Head of Department / Form Tutor any cause for suspicion or concern.

Teachers should not allow lateness to lessons to go unchallenged, even though the best time to deal with this may well be at the end rather than the beginning of the lesson. If a pupil is late to class then teachers will follow the school's Behaviour Policy with regards to the appropriate sanction.

Like class registers, lesson registers should also be taken in silence and should be regarded as important records of pupil behaviour and progress.

All lates to class **MUST** be recorded .

9.4 Monitoring and Responding to Lateness

The Attendance officer will run regular 'morning punctuality' checks and identify those with poor punctuality and those where patterns may be evident. This will be followed up by Pastoral Support Managers.

Letters will be sent home raising concerns regarding punctuality to any parents whose daughter is late in the morning more than 5 times in any one term.

Such letters may be repeated if the situation fails to improve, and parents may be asked to attend a meeting in school to discuss how we can work together to help improve punctuality.

Heads of Department should monitor lateness to lessons and should offer support to individual teachers as appropriate, especially where the problem is related to behaviour and / or pupils experiencing difficulty with the subject itself.

An improvement in punctuality should be positively rewarded (see section 10). From time to time, it may be useful to set an individual a clear target for improvement, which can be monitored with agreed dates for review.

10 THE USE OF REWARDS

As outlined at the beginning of this policy, the school aims to establish a positive ethos in which excellence of punctuality is celebrated and rewarded. Regular Assemblies and Celebration of Achievement Events will recognise the importance of good punctuality. This will be organised by the Year Team Leaders.

11 RECORD KEEPING

Hard copy official registers for the whole school (divided by tutor group and year) should be printed by the Attendance Officer monthly and retained in an accessible location for a period of three years.

Absence notes from parents and records of any action taken in relation to absences and lateness should also be retained for a period of three years.

12 ADDITIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

12.1 Governing Body

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff.
- annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that its provisions and procedures (including the recording and organising of data) are being effectively implemented.
- nominate or identify a member of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance.
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children, and staff.
- take time at governor's meetings to consider the schools' attendance target and to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of attendance targets for the year.

12.2 School Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team plays a strategic role, ensuring that this policy actively adhered to and is visible through the line management process.

Assistant Heads at each Key Stage have responsibility of overseeing the monitoring of attendance and SLT will ensure that they have sufficient time and resources to give to this job.

All staff but specifically the Senior Leadership Team have a duty to communicate to pupils the importance of this attendance policy and to ensure that they are aware of what is expected of them, see **Appendix 1**

In particular, the Senior Leadership Team will:

- emphasise the shared role of parents in taking seriously the importance of regular attendance and punctuality by their daughters for whom they are legally responsible and accountable.
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement. This is to include competition between forms and year groups over achievement in attendance and punctuality, where children work to support each other for the betterment of their community;
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- coordinate with the Ethos Committee of the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy, its procedures and its effectiveness, with an annual full policy review. This may include spot checks of registers.
- develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.

12.3 Heads of Department

Heads of Department are responsible for

- Ensuring that display within and outside of the classroom makes the physical environment stimulating and welcoming;
- Developing approaches to teaching and learning that support individual pupil needs and thus make the learning environment a rewarding, challenging and interesting one for pupils where all can achieve at the highest level of their potential and want to be in
- Supporting teachers as appropriate in their consideration of attendance and /or punctuality concerns

12.4 All Teaching Staff and Tutors

All staff should be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families.

All subject teachers and tutors can also assist by:

- Making it clear to pupils at every opportunity how much they care about their school attendance and punctuality;
- Reporting to their line managers any patterns in non-attendance or concerns they may have around the attendance of an individual pupil, to support the whole school approach to safeguarding and child protection
- Establishing the importance of keeping to deadlines while at the same time supporting pupils in realistic scheduling and target setting;
- Giving a sympathetic welcome and support to pupils returning from a period of absence, even if they are regular absentees and/or present other difficulties;
- Being ready to talk to pupils about the difficulties they are having in school and in attending regularly;

- Supporting older pupils in the management of coursework, either by discussing with them how to organize workloads or directing them to the relevant member of staff so that strategies for catching up on the backlog of work can be suggested.
- Developing approaches to teaching and learning that support individual pupil needs and thus make the learning environment a rewarding, challenging and interesting one for pupils where all can achieve at the highest level of their potential.
- Always being on time themselves for registration, assembly and lessons

Staff should seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue and contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed

13 RATIFICATION

This Policy has been reviewed and ratified by the Headteacher and Ethos Committee of the Governing Body in November 2021. The Policy and appendices will be reviewed in September 2023.



Mrs M Doyle, Headteacher



Michael Phelan, Chair of Ethos Committee

APPENDIX 1

COMMUNICATION WITH PUPILS



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance and punctuality are taken very seriously at Sacred Heart because they have a direct effect on your well-being and performance. We reward excellent punctuality and will also reward improvements where appropriate.

Girls are expected to be in school by 8.15am and they are expected to be aware of timetables and the school calendar to be sure they know when and what they are required to attend.

At least 97% attendance and 100% punctuality is required and the school will take action if this is not the case.

Absence of 19 days (38 sessions) is considered as being a persistent absentee from school, this is serious and will be dealt with by senior members of staff

Girls should speak to their form tutor or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.

Girls should attend all lessons on time ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable.

Girls should bring a note of explanation from their parents or carers to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen

Girls should follow the correct procedure if they arrive late by reporting to the front reception desk. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, **but it is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.**

A lateness to school will result in a 30 minute detention on the day (a 'Late Detention'). If this lateness is repeated in the same week it will result in a 90 minute 'SLT detention' on the Friday.