



# Prince Albert HIGH SCHOOL



# Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Version created - November 2023  
Review date - November 2024  
Approved by CEO – December 2023

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## Rationale

To ensure through robust systems and procedures, all PACT pupils are adequately safeguarded. The content of this policy is in line with Keeping Child Safe in Education 2023.

## Development of good practice

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable students to broaden their potential. The attendance pattern for all students is monitored weekly, with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained.

It is important that each student attends school regularly and on time. Parents/carers have a vital role to play to support and encourage good attendance & punctuality, fulfilling their legal responsibility. School encourages parents to work in partnership to ensure their child receives a full education.

To encourage high attendance across school, both staff and students will work within a framework of good practice that's supportive and encouraging, consistent across the trust and in line with local and DFE guidance.

School will continue:

- To develop supportive strategies to encourage attendance.
- To maintain parents, students and staff awareness of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- To develop strategies to improve punctuality.
- To raise levels of student attainment.
- To maximise opportunities both in school and later life.
- To develop strategies to reduce authorised and unauthorised absences.
- To develop an efficient monitoring system.
- To develop and communicate procedures for attendance and punctuality to all key staff within the Trust.
- To develop and create opportunities for both parents and students to raise concerns and work together in addressing attendance issues.

## Notes of Guidance and Good Practice

- Regular attendance at school is an important legal responsibility which is shared amongst schools, parents and the LA. This is further emphasised by the Pupils Act 1989 which highlights the need for schools to work in partnership with parents and the support services of the LA to promote and maintain the regular attendance of all pupils.
- New 'Keeping Pupils Safe in Education' guidance (September 2023) gives updated guidance regarding pupils who are missing from education and refers to pupils as Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or repeat occasions.
- This includes pupils, where the school has not been informed of their whereabouts and it is ongoing or a regular occurrence.

Keeping Pupils Safe in Education, September 2023 also refers to Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities (September 2023).

This guidance summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, head teachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils, and parents. These requirements are contained in:

- The Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) Regulations 2007
- Section 10 of the Pupils Act 2004
- Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996
- Section 437(3) of the Education Act 1996
- Section 443 of the Education Act 1996
- Prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and penalty notices under section 444A (as amended by section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003)
- Section 447 of the Education Act 1996
- Section 47 of the Pupils Act 1989
- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996

## Student registration: The statutory requirements

Parents, schools and the LAs share legal responsibilities in respect of school attendance:

Parents of children of compulsory school age must ensure that they receive an efficient and suitable full-time education (Section 7 Education Act 1996)

All Schools (other than independent schools for boarders only) must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session, a student should be marked present or absent. (Pupils, Registration Regulations 1995)

LAs must ensure that parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations as to their children's education including, where necessary, by action through the Courts. (Sections 437-448 Education Act 1996)

School should ensure that registers are properly kept. (Pupils' Registration Regulations 1995)

Schools are required to collect and publish data on their rates of all absences for the preceding year. "All schools must distinguish in their attendance registers between authorised and unauthorised absences of students of compulsory school age; school prospectuses and annual reports must include specified information on rates of unauthorised absence."

(The Pupils' Registration Regulations, the Education (School Information) Regulations 1981) (The Education (school Curriculum and Related Information) Regulations 1989)

## Early Intervention

Encouraging attendance & good punctuality is an integral part of the class teacher's role. Class teachers will receive support from the School's Pastoral Lead, Head of School, or Deputy Head, where necessary. The early intervention may also include access to mentoring support. Early intervention is aimed at school and parents/carers working in tandem. It may also mean the school will work closely with the Local Authority to ensure good practice, seek advice, and refer to agencies for support. An early response to developing patterns of absence can be most effective. The circumstances of the student must determine the nature of communication regarding attendance. School will be particularly sensitive to issues of linguistic differences in regard to communication and cultural differences.

## Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

Every absence from school has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences must have a valid reason, such as illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' as been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily (i.e. birthday treat, shopping trip etc.)
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school late, 30 minutes after the register opens, without good cause.
- Holidays or extended leave in term time (please see guidance below)

## Illness and medical appointments

When a student is unwell, parents must contact the school before 8:15am on the first day of absence. This is to ensure school knows that the student is safe.

As part of our safeguarding procedures, the schools Pastoral Lead will endeavour to contact the parent/carer if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence. Failure to contact the parent/carer within 3 days, a home visit will be carried out by 2 members of staff. If there is still no contact with the parent/carer, and school have not been able to establish the safety of the student, school may ask the police to do a safe and well check at the home. For students with safeguarding concerns, this may be done on the first day of absence.

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointment outside of school hours
- An appointment letter is required for all appointments made within school hours
- If it is necessary for a student to be out of school for this reason, the student should be returned to the school directly after the appointment
- If a student is absent due to vomiting from a viral illness, they should not return to school for the next 48hrs after the last bout of sickness

## Term Time Holidays

The PACT has adopted the new LA guidelines (Updated September 2022). We UNAUTHORISE ALL term time holidays or extended leave. This is due to the significant negative effect these have on a child's progress. All requests will be looked at on an individual basis and in some exceptional circumstances, some days may be authorised by the Head of School.

The pupils only attend school for 195 days out of 365. This leaves 170 days for holidays. We encourage parents to take their holidays during these 170 days. If parents do take their child on extended leave, this will be unauthorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. If a parent plans to take their child/ren out of school for extended leave, then parents will need to fill in an extended leave contract (available from the main school office) in addition to speaking with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

If the pupil is female and from a female genital mutilation (FGM) practising or affected community then the Head of School or Pastoral Leader will use direct questioning to ascertain whether 'cutting' of the girl will be undertaken during this leave. The Head of School or Pastoral Leader will then take the information from this meeting and refer to the police and Children's Services, if needed.

In some circumstances, if a pupil does not return to school in the timescale originally given by parents, or there has been no return date given, a letter will be sent advising a date that we expect them to return by. If the pupil does not arrive back on this date, and we have had no contact from parents, then we refer them to the LA Child Missing in Education Team.

A penalty notice will be issued if a child is taken on unauthorised extended leave.

## Lates

If pupils arrive at school after the opening of the register, the lateness will be recorded. An unauthorised absence will be given to children arriving 30 minutes or more after the register is opened unless there is an evidenced medical appointment or an exceptional circumstance through the Head of School's discretion, that may require a more suitable authorised mark.

Truancy:

Teachers are responsible for taking a register within the first 5 minutes of a lesson. They must then ensure that internal truancy is followed-up. Support to clear corridors quickly after break times or lesson change overs will be in place. Head of Year/ Pastoral Lead and SLT will patrol every form-time to clear corridors and ensure students attend promptly. External truancy will be assessed on an individual basis and parents/carers will be informed immediately. A pupil risk assessment will be implemented wherever necessary, and sanctions maybe issued in-line with the schools Behaviour policy. If the truancy continues, additional significant safeguarding concerns are identified, the school will liaise with Local Authority, implementing early intervention and refer to external agencies where appropriate.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the student, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, the school will consider what type of support is necessary: early intervention, isolation and/or the Fast-track process which may result in a penalty notice.
- A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parental condoned absence, excessive holidays in term time and persistent late arrival at school.

## Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

It has been proven that poor attendance and punctuality directly affects attainment levels. School has strategies in place to promote good attendance and punctuality and expect all staff to promote these strategies within their classroom.

- Talk regularly to students about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Promote the school incentives for attendance and punctuality within the classroom – gentle competition between classes and individuals will help to ensure and promote regular attendance and punctuality.
- Referrals must be made to the Pastoral Leader as soon as possible so support can be sourced promptly.
- Dental and medical appointments should be taken out of school hours wherever possible and if any absences are taken during school hours for such reasons evidence will be required before the appointment date.

## Role of the Pastoral Leader and Attendance Team

The Attendance Team and the Pastoral Leader monitor attendance regularly, looking closely at lateness, absences in each year and persistent absentees, through information given on the registers and through communication from members of staff, parents, and pupils in school.

Phone calls and/or text messages are made every morning of absence. If no contact is made with the parent/carer within 3 days, a home visit will be carried out by 2 members of staff. If there is still no contact with parent/carer and school have not been able to establish the safety of the pupil, the police will be contacted to complete a safe and well check at the home. If a child is absent from school and their whereabouts is unknown, we have a duty to carry out reasonable enquiries jointly with the local authority to ascertain the whereabouts. This may include a Child Missing in Education referral.

If there are any on-going absence or punctuality concerns, the pupil's home is contacted either through a phone call, a home visit or by sending a letter. These can be conducted by the Attendance Admin or Pastoral Leader. For families with safeguarding concerns, home visits and intervention will be conducted by the Pastoral Leader. This may be on the first day of absence. If there is no improvement in the pupil's attendance or punctuality, parents are asked to come in and see a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

School has in place the Fast-track process which fines parents for persistent unauthorised absence. Each parent or person with parental responsibility may receive a Penalty Notice for each child. (A copy of this information can be found on the school's website). If there is still no improvement, a referral may be made to Social Services on the grounds of neglect. In some circumstances, if a pupil does not attend school for a period of time, and after checks, school are unable to locate where they are, they will make a referral to the Children Missing in Education Team as stated in the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance.

## Strategies for Improving Attendance and Punctuality

Pupils with an absence percentage of under 90% will be monitored and parents/carers may be invited in for a meeting to discuss their child's attendance. The Pastoral Leader will communicate and support the families in trying to bring about an improvement. Failure to improve following all avenues of support may result in Fast-Track intervention.

## Parental Responsibility

Parental Support:

Parents/guardian have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly and arrives on time.

The role of the parent/guardian in supporting the school's efforts in securing high levels of attendance and punctuality is critical. At PA High, staff will maintain close, effective, and positive relations with parents and ensure that they are contacted at an early stage to deal with unexplained absences.

Parents will receive advice and support from the school where appropriate from the Inclusion/Pastoral Teams.

Parents are expected to support school by:

- Informing school of any absences by a telephone call, message, note, or visit to the school between 7:45am to 8:15am.
- Discussing with the school any concerns or difficulties that may affect their child's attendance or punctuality.
- Take holidays during non-term time periods.
- Work with their child to support the PA High attendance policy.
- Discuss with the school their parental, legal responsibilities regarding school attendance and punctuality.

The school day finishes at 3.10PM. At the end of each full day, all students are expected to be off school premises by 3.15PM with the exception of students attending wrap around provisions, detentions and meetings with SLT. Friday afternoon school will finish at 2.20pm and all students are expected to be off site by 2:30PM, except for Friday enrichment programs, wraparound provisions, Friday Detention and/or meetings with SLT.

## Role of Students

Students must attend school regularly so that they can benefit from their education and be part of positive social interactions with peers and staff. Research shows that students who miss out on lessons and lack a pro-active learning culture may be vulnerable to falling behind and potentially damaging their chances for future successes. Students with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school which is something PA High endeavour to challenge and overcome. Students should:

- Be aware of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
- Be engaged in improving their own attendance and punctuality
- Be aware of the expectations, incentives and the support on offer regarding attendance and punctuality
- Be proactive in raising concerns related to their safety, attendance and punctuality, wherever possible

## School, Trust Board and Academy Committee Representatives

The school will provide a supportive environment which welcomes all children regardless of language, culture, religion, gender, or special educational needs.

There should be a consistent approach to all attendance & punctuality procedures.

- The school will inform their Academy Committee/Trustees, teachers, parents, and students of strategies used to maintain and improve attendance & punctuality.
- Provide information in relation to attendance matters for their Academy Committee/Trust Board members, parents, DFE, LA and School Admissions (Fair Access and Attendance Service).
- Set targets for attendance, annually, to support the reduction of all authorised and unauthorised absences.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

- Review and evaluate the policy annually
- Analyse on a regular basis attendance and punctuality data
- Monitor the effectiveness of long- and short-term interventions
- Present attendance figures on a termly basis to Trustees
- Be aware of factors that will affect the attendance figures, such as Eid, pupil mobility and unauthorised absences

## Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or more regularly in the light of any statutory updates or in response to changes in guidance.