



Attendance and Extended Leave from School Policy

Swakeleys School for Girls

Date Approved:	22 November 2022
Revised	March 2024
Date of Next Review:	23 November 2023

1. Rationale

- The purpose of this document is to outline Swakeleys School For Girls and 6th Form at Swakeleys' position on attendance through an elaboration of:

child and young person's entitlements
the legal framework
responsibilities of parents, Swakeleys school and the Local Authority

- In drawing up the policy, statements have been informed by either statutory requirements.
- Attendance at school is clearly an important pre-requisite for a successful and fulfilling school career. Prolonged absence, irregular attendance and lack of punctuality can all serve to undermine educational achievement and result in considerable long-term disadvantage to children and young people. Students who do not attend regularly may be placed at considerable risk and, in some cases, may be drawn into patterns of antisocial or criminal behaviour.
- It is recognised that students may have difficulties in attending regularly for a variety of complex and often inter-related reasons. This may include the student's medical history.
- It follows that the Local Authority, Swakeleys School For Girls, parents/carers, student and the community at large need to work collaboratively in order to maximise attendance. In pursuit of this key task, a positive approach is needed which promotes access to education within an ethos which values learners, promotes equal opportunities and encourages the involvement of students and their parents/carers.

2. Objectives

There are legal obligations on:

- parents to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, to send them to school regularly once they are on roll at a school
- The Department of Education to provide education and to enforce attendance
- Swakeleys School For Girls to register attendance, support attendance through pastoral work and notify the Local Authority of irregular attendance, unauthorised absence or any student who has unauthorised absence of 10 days or more.

3. Success Criteria

The following lists the responsibilities of key persons in promoting attendance.

Parents	Swakeleys School For Girls
to meet the needs of any child in their care	to provide an education suitable to the child's age, aptitude, ability and special educational needs
to provide an education that is fulfilled through state provision, private schooling or education other than at school	to provide a welcoming and safe environment which encourages attendance and promotes the full potential of the child
to ensure regular attendance of children of compulsory school age	to contribute sensitively to the child's social, emotional and moral development
to meet any social and emotional needs which affects access to education; these needs can be met either by the parent/carer or in partnership with other people/agencies such as Connexions or social services.	to establish good and effective communication links with parents/carers and to work collaboratively in meeting the child's needs
to ensure a good attitude to learning – this could be achieved by ensuring punctuality, appropriate dress and by fulfilling expectations of Swakeleys eg. homework	to clearly state the school's expectations of parents/carers and children and make it explicit what they can reasonably expect from school, including help available within school and elsewhere
to work in partnership with Swakeleys and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing school about significant changes or influences in the child's life which may impact on learning	to promote both good attendance and the welfare of the child to establish good working practice with the the Local Authority.
	to work collaboratively with other agencies to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties eg. Social Services
	to keep accurate and up to date records on children's attendance and punctuality as required by legislation
	to notify the Local Authority in accordance with legislation, of irregular attendance or of continuous absences that are not covered by a medical certificate

Implementation

Swakeleys School For Girls

- The Deputy Head with responsibility for attendance will negotiate and agree an annual target for attendance (authorised, unauthorised and persistent absence) with the Head, Year Learning Co-Ordinators and form tutors. The target should be 95% or more. Attendance is now a very important performance indicator and is used by OFSTED when inspecting schools.
- Staff at Swakeleys School For Girls will provide a positive pro-active ethos which places high value on attendance and punctuality. All school staff have a responsibility to personally model good practice in this area.
- Swakeleys School For Girls is legally obliged to accurately record students' attendance. Once, first thing in the morning and once during the afternoon session.
- The records of attendance need to be 100% accurate. These will be reviewed by the Home School Liaison Officer, the Deputy Headteacher and the WPA Education Welfare Officer. These records of attendance may be used as legal evidence in court in the event of a prosecution with the Head Teacher called to attest to their accuracy.
- Swakeleys School For Girls must differentiate clearly between authorised and unauthorised absence.
- 1st day contact in the event of absence without reason will take place using 'Truancy Call'. This will be recorded by the Attendance Officer and shared with the relevant school staff.
- Electronic registration will be used to monitor attendance and punctuality to lessons.
- The Home School Liaison Officer will make contact by telephone with any student causing concern. In addition, a written letter of concern is issued to all students when attendance falls below 95%. This is followed by a meeting with the Home School Liaison Officer and the Year Learning Co-Ordinator. In cases that are a cause for concern, the Home School Liaison Officer may make a home visit in conjunction with the Safer Schools Officer. Where no improvement is made, a referral is made to the WPA Education Welfare Officer.
- Should the form tutor have concerns about a student's attendance (informed by agreed attendance targets and tracking of patterns), this should be shared with the Year Learning Co-Ordinator at regular weekly held meetings. The Year Learning Co-ordinator may make a referral to a learning mentor, if appropriate.
- The form tutor will ring home to discuss concerns for improvement.
- Administrative staff will provide weekly data comparing Year Groups and form groups within year groups. The Deputy Headteacher will use this to identify groups of concern and areas of good practice. This data will be shared with the staff and students.

- The Home School Liaison Officer will meet with Attendance Support Team once per term to discuss any students with attendance concerns.
- The Deputy Head will oversee, via LG, Year Learning Co-ordinators and form tutors, Swakeleys School For Girls' rewards and sanctions around attendance and punctuality.
- Year Learning Co-ordinators will meet with students on a weekly basis if their attendance creates a cause for concern in that week.
- Habitual poor attenders, where the above procedures have been followed, may receive the following supportive measures for consideration:- reduced curriculum or work experience.
- Swakeleys School For Girls will convene an 'attendance panel' when deemed necessary in partnership with the WPA Education Welfare Officer. Parents and poorly attending students will be invited to attend. After discussion, outcomes may include a parenting contract, a Fixed Penalty Notice or review period. Failure to adhere to the outcomes of an attendance panel may lead to a prosecution in the Magistrates Court or a fixed penalty.
- Swakeleys School For Girls, in line with all other schools in Hillingdon, will refer to any requests made for leave during term time as "Exceptional Leave". The school will not authorise exceptional leave except under very unusual circumstances. Any student with attendance below 95% will not be authorised exceptional leave in any circumstances. Any student with evidence of truancy will not be granted exceptional leave. If a parent/carer takes their child out of school without authorisation for exceptional leave, this may be reported to the Attendance Support Team and the Service can issue a Fixed Penalty Notice upon the parent/s care/s of the children. Failure pay the fixed penalty notice may result in legal proceedings being initiated. Students in key transition and examination years are unlikely to be granted exceptional leave.
- If a pupil who is considered "at risk" does not attend school, and contact cannot be made with a parent/carer to explain this absence, the school will notify the police and social care via the MASH team.
- The school will use the Stronger Families Assessment to access local help as appropriate to each case.

The Governors will NOT authorise leave for the following:

- Holidays taken in school time. The only exception to this is when Swakeleys school holidays differ from Hillingdon borough holidays and parents have another child in education in Hillingdon with different holidays. In this instance a request should be made to the Headteacher in writing requesting exceptional leave at least 4 weeks in advance.
- House moves
- Day trips/long weekends
- Waiting at home for workmen
- Looking after other family members
- Taking siblings to school

This policy was ratified by the full governing body 22nd November 2022

- Requests for travel abroad to visit family

The Governors MAY allow exceptional leave on reasonable grounds providing that there is written evidence and a letter of request is sent to the Headteacher. Such grounds may include:

- An immediate family member bereavement and/or funeral
 - The wedding of a close family member
 - An interview at college/for employment
 - An approved and licensed performance accompanied by the appropriate licences from the LA and requested at least one month in advance. (Up to 15 days each year unless the person responsible for the performance provides alternative education e.g. a tutor)
- For weddings and funerals of close family members 1 day only will usually be authorised.

Each case will be considered on an individual basis. When students fail to return from extended leave within the agreed timescale Swakeleys School For Girls will seek advice from the Participation Team and then take appropriate action which could include removing a student from the school roll.

Students

Students are responsible for making sure that their own punctuality and regular attendance is maintained at the highest level.

They should attend all of their lessons on time, equipped and ready to learn.

- ◆ When they return to school following an absence, they should give their form tutor a note from their parent explaining the reason for their absence.
- ◆ Students have a responsibility to follow school procedures should they arrive late for registration by signing the late book giving the reason for lateness.
- ◆ Students who experience difficulties which may prevent them from attending school regularly should speak initially to their form tutor. Students will then be offered prompt and sympathetic support.

Parents

Parents are responsible for making sure that their child attends school on a regular basis.

- ◆ If a student is prevented from attending school by reason of sickness or unavoidable cause, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school of the student's absence. This should be by telephone on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence and confirmed in writing. If Swakeleys School For Girls does not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, the absence will not be authorised and this may be shown on their child's report. It is at the Headteacher's discretion whether an absence is authorised.

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- ◆ Parents should avoid, if possible, making routine medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours.
- ◆ Parents must provide appropriate medical evidence if their child requires treatment in hospital or is deemed to be too ill to attend school. In cases where absence is persistent absence will not be authorised without this evidence which should state that the student is unfit for school and give a clear date range.
- ◆ Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time.
- ◆ If a student does not return to school for a further 10 days following any authorised period of exceptional leave (max 10 days), they may be removed from school roll following a CME (Child Missing In Education) referral. On their return home, a new school application must be made and a place will be assigned on the Swakeleys School For Girls' waiting list.
- ◆ If a student is absent for a continual period of 4 weeks without any notification from the parent/carer, the school, after reasonable enquiry, have the right to remove the student from their school roll once appropriate enquiries have been made in conjunction with the Local Authority. The school will inform the Attendance Support Team and this action could also result in the student being put onto the missing child register.
- ◆ Parents should inform the school of any significant change or influence in their child's life which may impact on attendance or learning.

4. Evaluation

The Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for attendance, along with the Year learning Co-ordinators, form tutors and Attendance/Home School Liaison Officer, will regularly monitor school attendance through attendance reports and the attendance report.

The Home School Liaison officer will meet regularly with the Attendance Support Team. The Pastoral and Curriculum Committee will take governor's oversight of attendance.

Rewards & Sanctions

Rewards aim to recognise and encourage good/improved attendance and punctuality. Rewards come in these different forms:

- ◆ Termly and yearly individual certificates for 100% attendance
- ◆ Termly certificates for 97% attendance
- ◆ Termly certificate for improved attendance
- ◆ Half Termly attendance league
- ◆ 100% non-uniform Friday

The following list of **Sanctions** aim to discourage absence from School which undoubtedly has a detrimental effect on a student's progress and attainment:

- ◆ Implementation of a first day of absence telephone call response system
- ◆ Zero Tolerance detention
- ◆ Alternative Provision

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5. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Pastoral Committee every two years. The next review is due in October 2024.