

Attendance Policy

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Attendance Policy

This policy applies to the whole school, including the EYFS.

At Putney High school we see student attendance as critical to academic success and social integration. We ask parents to familiarise themselves with the GDST Statement on School Attendance and these policy guidelines, and to help us to promote the standards of attendance and punctuality which are essential for an orderly school environment where all pupils can get the maximum benefit from their education.

GDST Statement on School Attendance

Absence, whatever its cause, is detrimental to any student's academic, social, and emotional development. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school, with a cumulative effect. Regular or persistent absence can also indicate a pupil welfare issue.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly. Parents can only allow their child to miss school if they are too ill to go in or they have advance permission from the school. The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make it clear that Heads may only grant leave of absence *in exceptional circumstances*. As is required by law, the school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. The local safeguarding partners will also be informed if absence amounts to a safeguarding concern.

In order to maximize our students' potential, the GDST is committed to ensuring students do not miss out on their education through poor attendance rates. We expect all GDST schools to at least meet the national attendance average, and school attendance rates are monitored accordingly. A member of SLT is expected to review and analyse attendance across the school as a whole on a regular basis, following up on trends or patterns of concern, and reporting to the School Governing Board/GDST as required.

Class teachers and tutors are expected to monitor and review the attendance record of the students for whom they are responsible. An individual attendance record of below 95% must be followed up by the school, as will noticeable patterns, or sudden or unexplained absence.

School Guidelines

Key contacts

The senior leader with overall responsibility for attendance at the senior school is the Head of Senior School and the Headmistress at the Junior School. For day-to-day attendance matters, please contact your child's form tutor. For more detailed support with attendance contact the Deputy Head Pastoral at the Junior School or the relevant Head of Year in the senior school.

Aims

1. To encourage regular attendance and punctuality, thus enabling pupils to take advantage of their educational opportunities.
2. To indicate to pupils and parents that regular attendance is valued at Putney High School.
3. **Note:** Only the school can approve absence, not parents. Absences without a valid reason or where no explanation has been provided are treated as unauthorised.

Objectives

1. To provide an efficient and effective system for monitoring attendance and to provide clear guidelines for staff recording attendance.
2. To report the number of pupil's absences to parents on a regular basis.
3. To work closely with parents and the educational welfare service, where appropriate, to achieve regular attendance.
4. To identify patterns of non-attendance at an early stage and to work to alter these for the better.
5. To ensure that every absence is covered by an explanatory note from parents.
6. To respect the requirements of religious faiths and the customs of ethnic groups where these necessitate non-attendance.
7. To show sensitivity towards the needs and problems facing families where these result in non-attendance, whilst working to achieve regular attendance.
8. To establish clear guidelines for staff, pupils and parents regarding the difference between authorised absence and unauthorised absence and to make these guidelines available.
9. To report on attendance figures to the DFES as required.

Absences and unauthorised absences

All pupils should be in school every day, unless they are unwell or unless they have been given authorised absence, which needs to be approved by the Head.

Leave of Absence

Leave of absence can only be authorised by the Head and may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Parents should submit their request to the Head no later than three days prior to the date of absence. If an absence is authorised in advance parents will be notified and an absence note will not be required on return.

If a pupil is absent for three days or more, then an alert should be raised whether or not the register states the absence is authorised or not. Form tutors must inform Head of Years and Head of Years will then pass the information onto the Head of the Senior School.

The **Head Receptionist** will collate data and produce a report every time a pupil is absent for three days or more and pass this onto the Head of the Senior School and relevant Head of Year.

The **Head of the Senior School** will investigate each of these and confirm that the school is aware of the situation and handling the matter.

Action on School Absence

It is the parents' responsibility to telephone the school concerning the reason for a student's absence on the first day of absence and to provide further information as may be required. If the school is not notified of a student's absence a call will be made to parents. Schools are expected to remain in contact with parents on a regular basis until the student returns.

On the student's return to school, parents must supply a note or email to the student's form tutor/class teacher indicating the cause of the absence. If this is not provided the absence will be investigated and recorded as unauthorised. Parents are informed if absences are recorded as unauthorised.

If an absence occurs, it is the responsibility of the student to make up any lost work. If an absence is known in advance, the student must approach individual members of staff for guidance.

Reasons for Absence

Illness

Parents are requested to inform the school on the first day if their child is ill.

Medical and Dental Appointments

Routine visits to the dentist, optician etc., should ideally be arranged during school holidays or out of school hours. Authorisation for medical and dental appointments can be given in an emergency or other unavoidable circumstances.

Bereavement

It is helpful if we are informed of family bereavement so that we can offer students sympathetic support. Absence under such circumstances will, of course, be authorised.

Religious Observance

Absence can be authorised on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which a student's parents belong.

Family/Domestic Problems

Looking after other children, minding the house, or shopping within school hours are not acceptable reasons for absence under the law.

Special Occasions

Exceptional occasions may be sanctioned through authorised absence. Such events might include a sibling's graduation or family wedding. Attending sports events or concerts are not sufficient cause for authorization.

Study Leave

Study leave may be authorised during the official examination period for Years 11 and 13 only. A letter is always sent to parents before study leave commences. Parents are asked to note carefully the dates on which study leave commences.

Although most students prefer to study at home during examination periods, there are always study facilities available in school for those who wish to work in school. Authorisation for absence for studying will not be given for periods outside those indicated to parents.

Study leave is a privilege which may be withdrawn if a student seems unlikely to use the time profitably.

Work Experience

Students in Years 12 and 13 are encouraged to gain work experience during the school holiday periods. In addition to this there may be a period of work experience for specific year groups scheduled on the school calendar. Some sixth form students may also be permitted to carry out work experience during times of the day when they have a study period. This must be agreed with the Director of Sixth Form.

Sixth Form

Flexible day

Sixth formers have a flexible day, recognising their growing maturity and bridging the gap between formal schooling and post 18 study or work. They must attend school every day, arriving in time for morning registration and form time. They must attend all timetabled lessons but will be able to leave the school, during lunch, signing in and out. All regular appointments, driving tests etc. must be scheduled during free periods. Permission to miss taught lessons will not be given unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any student who does not attend lessons or whose progress is not good will have their privileges removed. Should a student be unable to attend school, parents/careers should notify the school in the usual way.

Open Days

Sixth Form students are expected to visit Universities and Colleges during school holidays. However, a maximum two Open Days may be attended during term time if appropriate letters requesting authorisation for absence are brought in.

Interviews

Sixth formers must, of course, attend interviews at Universities and Colleges at the times and on the dates allocated by the institutions. It is essential that they keep their Form Tutors informed of these dates.

Persistent or severe absence

Where absence or a pattern of absence appears to be at risk of becoming problematic, the school will meet with the parents to discuss how to support the pupil and remove barriers to attendance where possible. This may include referrals to external services and other organisations. These actions will be regularly reviewed and stepped up if there is no improvement to the situation. Where a whole family response is appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment. Ultimately if voluntary support is not effective the school will work with the local authority to put more formal measures in place. Persistent or severe absence is always treated as a safeguarding risk.

Students with individual needs

Whilst good attendance is an expectation for all pupils at the school, we recognise that this may be more of a challenge for some students, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, or those suffering from long term medical conditions or mental health issues. The school will allow for these circumstances when working with such pupils and their parents and will develop individualized support approaches that meet their specific needs where appropriate.

Returning to School

Sometimes a student who has been off school for some time finds it difficult to return. In such circumstances it is of paramount importance that parents contact the Head of Year to discuss procedures for supported reintegration.

Punctuality

Students are expected to be prompt for registration at 08:30am, otherwise they must sign in as soon as they arrive at Reception. If they fail to do this the school will assume they are absent. Lateness without reasonable cause will be deemed to be unauthorised absence.

Absence Reporting

We are required to collate our attendance figures and make an official return of our attendance, authorised and unauthorised absences. It is important, therefore, to complete these accurately in the registers so that the reports are correct at the end of each term. In order to distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences, the correct codes should be used. If 'N' has been entered, it is important to follow up the reason for absence and amend the code as soon as this is known.

Letters will be sent home to parents of students with 95% attendance or less each half term.