P13 Student Attendance Policy

Contents

1. Introduction

For students to benefit from the educational opportunities provided by the School they must have high levels of attendance and punctuality. Ineffective registration or poorly executed follow-up procedures can increase the risks of truancy and educational under-performance, which can negatively affect personal and social development among students.

A child going missing from school is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect or in itself may indicate that a student is at risk of significant harm. Consequently, attendance and registration arrangements are of the utmost importance and must be seen to be regarded as such by students, parents and staff.

As a School we want the whole school community – staff, parents/carers and students – to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

The school acknowledges the need to ensure that accurate and up-to-date attendance statistics are kept. The responsibility for good attendance is shared between the school, parents and students. Each of these groups is required to understand the expectations which the policy contains.

2. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure students have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

  It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a student's attendance: guidance for schools

4 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The governing board

The governing board has delegated the approval of this policy to the Principal.

4.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents through all available channels

4.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with students, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Working with the parents of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for students with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where students with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a student with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the student's needs
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school)

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr T.Burns, Vice-Principal, and can be contacted via 01923 331100 or info@purcell-school.org

4.4 House parents and form tutors

House parents are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information into the school's MIS (SIMS).

4.5 Office Staff/houses

The school office staff will:

- Manage communication from parents/carers/guardians regarding absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system (SIMS) and inform houses of absence
- Manage communication from parents/carers/guardians regarding absence requests (see appendix 2 - student absence requests) and
- Transfer calls from parents/carers/guardians [and students] to the houses where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

4.6 Parental responsibilities

- Parents are expected to ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed, equipped and in a fit condition to learn
- Parents of registered students have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis
- Parents are responsible for informing the school on each and every morning when their child is unable to attend due to illness by emailing studentabsence@purcell-school.org and copying in the Houseparent by 08:40
- Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for students during school hours. If unavoidable, the request for authorisation should be made to studentabsence@purcell-school.org
- If a student wishes to be absent from school for an external musical commitment such as a concert or a competition, this should first be discussed well in advance with the Head of Instrumental Department and/or Director of Music. The parent or guardian must make a detailed absence request by email, 14 days in advance, to studentabsence@purcell-school.org
- Parents wishing to take their child out of school for exceptional reasons (e.g. wedding, funeral, religious observance) must seek authorisation for the absence from the School by making a detailed absence request by email, 14 days in advance, to studentabsence@purcell-school.org. Parents should not book holidays during term time
- Parents of overseas students should avoid booking flights before or after the ends and beginnings of terms. If this is unavoidable, absence should be requested to studentabsence@purcell-school.org.
- Should the parent/carer/guardian of a boarder be away from home overnight during term, they are required to inform the School of the name and contact number of a temporary guardian. This information should be provided to the Houseparent.

4.7 Student responsibilities

- All students are expected to all their lessons, rehearsals and activities at the timetabled or designated times
- All students are expected to be punctual to school, lessons, rehearsals and activities

- All students are expected to be ready to learn and actively participate
- Failure to attend school or any school commitment, failing to attend registration or leaving school without permission constitute breaches of the School's Behaviour and Sanctions Policy and may lead to formal disciplinary action.

5. Recording attendance

Statutory Registration (morning and afternoon) is undertaken in Houses. Any unexplained absence must be immediately investigated by House staff (see below).

Responsibility for the day-to-day monitoring of attendance falls to classroom teachers, tutors, subject teachers, and boarding staff. Teaching staff should ensure that class registers are accurately completed as they are a legal document and are used for health and safety purposes and should be kept for a minimum of date +6 years.

5.1 Attendance register

The school will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all students onto this register.

The school will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

The school will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

The school will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The Timings of the School day are published in the School's Handbook for Parents and Guardians and the Student Handbook. All parents and students are asked to familiarise themselves with the

pattern of the School day and (in the case of Day Students, in particular) ensure that students are enabled to attend at the prescribed times.

Details of school closure days and any days when the standard timings might be adjusted, will be advertised to parents significantly in advance. If there is a reason for an emergency school closure this will be communicated with parents via SchoolPost.

Day students must arrive in school by 08:30 on each school day.

Morning Registration occurs in boarding houses before 08:10 for boarders and 08:40 for day students. Afternoon Registration takes place between 1300:1320, Monday to Friday.

Boarding staff follow up non registration immediately at close of registration. Boarding staff must register students present or absent using the appropriate SIMS codes. Only where absence has been authorised or appropriate communication has been issued from the parent should any other codes be used.

Students must not be registered as present unless seen by staff. At the close of registration, house staff will locate students who have failed to register or phone parents (day students). If there is no valid excuse for lateness, sanctions should be applied. Registers will 'close' at 9:00 and 13:40 respectively. If a student fails to arrive before the registers 'close' they will be marked 'absent'.

5.2 Unplanned absence

Student's parents must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 08:40, or as soon as practically possible, by notifying the school [admin/office] staff, who can be contacted via email on studentabsence@purcell-school.org.

The school will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than [e.g. 5] days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

5.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. If a student wishes to miss school for any reason, a parent or guardian must make a detailed absence request by email, 14 days in advance, to studentabsence@purcell-school.org.

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and will always be addressed, initially by the teacher for whom the student is late. Teachers should report persistent lateness to the student's tutor and/or Head of Department (as appropriate). A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

The school day starts at 08.40am: students are expected to have registered by that time. Students will receive an N code if they are not present within the registration period. At 09:00 the registers are officially closed in accordance with regulations; if a student arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

Lateness is monitored across both AM/PM registers and during lesson times and appropriate support / sanctions put in place where and when necessary.

5.5 Following up unexplained absence

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance rate falls below 90% from October half term, for whatever reason. Absenteeism of this level will considerably damage any child's educational prospects and we will need the parents' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA [persistent absence] mark or is at risk or moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully by our Houseparents, the DSL and Vice-Principal.

Parents will/may need to come into school and meet with respective staff on a regular basis to discuss their child's attendance and the progress being made.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

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

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a legitimate reason, such as:

- Sickness
- Medical appointments which are unavoidable
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Exceptional family circumstances – bereavement
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition
- Attending a Student Referral Unit
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

This list is for illustrative purposes and is not meant to be exhaustive.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. The Principal, Vice-Principal, Houseparents and/or DSL will make the final decision regarding the classification of an absence. Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping students out of school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day (including boarders leaving the site without authorisation)
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping
- Looking after other children and/or parent unless registered as a carer
- Birthdays
- Day trips and holidays (unless deemed an exceptional circumstance by the Principal) in term time
- A pet going to the vet/death of a pet

This list is for illustrative purposes and is not meant to be exhaustive.

Issues concerning regular attendance will always be investigated as they may be symptoms of a wider problem. If staff are concerned that a student may be reluctant to attend school or that they may be prevented from doing so, they must report this to the School's DSL. Parents are asked to contact the School at an early stage if their child is experiencing difficulty in attending school. The School will then engage in a supportive, unified approach with the student, their family and external agencies (if appropriate) to resolve the issues.

6.1 Exceptional Leave for students with musical excellence

Students who are performing at a national level (e.g. NYO, NCO) or entering competitions (e.g. BBCYMY) may receive additional leave or adaptations to their timetable in order to support them with their accomplishments. Where this is required, this will be assessed by the Director of Music who may require the organisation concerned to confirm the student's participation.

6.2 Sanctions

The school will use a range of sanctions to change the behaviour patterns of those students who are regularly late to school according to age and personal circumstances.

6.3 Fixed Penalty Notices

The School does not envisage any circumstances in which it would issue a Penalty Notice unless so advised by the Local Authority. Should it do so, the School would act entirely in accordance with the advice provided by the Local Authority and comply with Department for Education guidance.

6.4 Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the Local Authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice (6.3) may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

6.5 Approval for term-time absence: Holidays during Term Time

Students are attracted to The Purcell School because of the unique musical opportunities it provides, supported by a rigorous academic programme. It therefore follows that any protracted absence from the School will significantly impede an individual student's progress. Whilst every individual request will be judged on its own merits, in general the School does not authorise students to be absent for holidays within term time. The School asks parents to support its work (and the progress of their child) by not arranging family holidays while the School is in session.

6.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance % is shared to parents during each report cycle.

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

Only the School can authorise an absence, not the parent/carer. When a pattern of absence begins to cause concern, parents/carers will be contacted by a member of staff who will seek to work with parents/carers to resolve poor attendance.

When a student/'s attendance is a cause for concern, parents can be invited to an Attendance Panel to discuss any difficulties they are experiencing in ensuring regular school attendance.

7.1 Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

In order to support students who are absent or returning to school a number of supportive actions will be put in place, bespoke to the individual needs of the student. These will be overseen and monitored by the designated senior leader responsible for attendance.

7.2 Modified timetables

Occasionally it is necessary to modify a child/young persons' timetable. These should be rarely used and only when absolutely necessary, such as reintegration after a period of illness.

Modified timetables should never be used to manage behaviour, to avoid suspension or to prevent permanent exclusion. When considering a modified timetable schools will consider:

- The medical evidence available to support the need for a modified timetable (where medical evidence is not available, but the school believes a modified timetable is necessary, this should be reviewed every two weeks)
- The impact on progress and how this can be mitigated
- How work will be set and reviewed when children/young people are not in school
- How the time spent in school will be increased to facilitate full time attendance
- Any reasonable adjustments that can be made in school to facilitate full time attendance
- That the child/young person has the opportunity to attend any events on days/times they are not in school
- Take into account the views of all stakeholders, including other agencies who are involved in safeguarding the child/young person
- A modified timetable agreement should be for as short a period as possible and should not be for any more than six weeks

8. Attendance monitoring

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level. Specific attendance information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Attendance data is a standing item during each Senior Leadership Team meeting where weekly / termly data is discussed, led by the designated senior leader responsible for attendance.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

8.1 Procedures

The School's strategic objective is to aim for an overall rate of 95% across the school. Houseparents will have an overview of attendance within their House and will liaise closely over attendance issues with the Vice-Principal to monitor the attendance of all students in Years 7 – 11. The attendance of Sixth Form students is the responsibility of the Head of Sixth Form, however this is also strategically overseen by the designated senior leader responsible for attendance.

8.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to [class teachers/form tutors], to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
- Discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
- Explain the help that is available
- Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
- Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Policy author / reviewer:	Policy date / review date:	Next review due:
T.Burns	September 2021	September 2022
T.Burns	Autumn 2022	Autumn 2023
T.Burns	Autumn 2023	Autumn 2024
T.Burns	September 2024	September 2025

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	student arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	student is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	student is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	student is on an approved work experience placement

B	Attending any other approved educational activity	student is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	student is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	student is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	student has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	student is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

		Absent – other authorised reasons	
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	student is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes	
R	Religious observance	student is taking part in a day of religious observance	
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	student is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)	
E	Suspended or excluded	student has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made	
		Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause	
Q	Lack of access arrangements	student is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school	
Y1	Transport not available	student is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available	
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	student is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by	

		a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	student is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every student absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	student is unable to attend as they are: · In police detention · Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or · Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	student's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	student is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school

N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	student has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective student not on admission register	student has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays