

St George's School, Bourton

Attendance Policy

General principles

Good attendance means that children usually make good, consistent progress in their school work.

St George's School expects good attendance from its pupils, in order for them to make the most of the opportunities that the school has to offer. We rely on our partnership with parents to ensure that this is achieved.

We would ask parents to help the school by notifying us of all absences on the first day, and always to ensure that any absence is covered by a note on your child's return to school. Any absence which is known in advance, such as family holidays, should be requested to the school in writing beforehand. A written response will be given. Holiday requests will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. It is not expected that any children should miss school for holidays on a regular basis.

The school day

Our school day starts at 8.50am. Registers are marked shortly after this. Pupils who are not present for registration will be marked as absent initially. If they arrive before 9.10 am, this will be changed to present but late. Any pupil arriving after this time will require a letter of explanation.

Information for Parents/Carers

- Parents have a legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents must notify the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- A pupil's absence from school will be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received.
- Attendance issues will be raised with parents through Parents' Evenings, school reports, assemblies, newsletters, meetings with parents and/or letters.
- Parents will be promptly informed over concerns about attendance and given the opportunity to discuss this with a member of staff.
- Attendance will be discussed with individual pupils if there is a level of concern or pattern of absence and with parents if necessary.
- Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support.
- All families will inevitably go through periods when life can be very challenging. This could be to do with a family bereavement, redundancy and debt, children's challenging behaviour etc. In these circumstances it is important that you talk to staff in confidence as to how this might be affecting your child's ability to focus at school, their behaviour and attendance. It may also be that a Common Assessment might be a supportive

way forward. A Common Assessment is a way of gathering information and appropriate agencies together to see what kind of support is needed. This is something that happens with you and can only be done with your consent.

- Children and young people who are unable to attend school because of medical needs have access to as much education as their medical condition allows so that they are able to maintain the momentum of their education and to keep up with their studies.
- An explanation of the CAF process should be given so parents and carers understand how this can support them.

Pupils

- Pupils should be aware of the importance of maintaining their attendance at the highest possible level. This is achieved through positive strategies and rewards which include certificates for annual attendance over 99% and announcement of the best attending class in assemblies and newsletters.
- All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Attendance will be monitored using individual attendance records.

Holidays in Term Time

This continues to be a difficult issue for schools, particularly given the cost of family holidays during the school holidays. However, children and young people should attend school 190 days (380 sessions) a year and could miss a substantial part of their education if they do not. Under current regulations, schools have discretion to grant leave of absence for up to 10 days (per school year) for family holidays during term time. However, this does equate to missing 5% of school in any one year.

No parent can demand leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday as a right. Only in 'exceptional circumstances' may the amount of leave granted exceed in total more than 10 days a year. Furthermore, despite a widespread misconception among parents, there is no 'entitlement' to 10 days term-time holidays each year.

Each request for holiday absence should be considered individually. It is the responsibility of the head teacher and the governors to decide whether or not to grant the leave of absence. When making the decision the following factors should be considered:

- The pupil's absence/attendance record.
- Amount of time requested and when it was made.
- General welfare of the pupil and ability to catch up.
- Circumstances of the request.
- Proximity to SATs and public examinations.
- Purpose of the leave and its educational value.
- Religious holiday and festivities.

The procedure for requesting leave of absence should be available to parents. Clear advice should be included within the school prospectus and attendance policy.

If parents take their child away without permission or even fail to apply for it the absence should be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

The appropriate register symbol should be used.

F – Extended family holiday (agreed)

H – Family holiday (agreed)

G – Family holiday not agreed (or days in excess of agreement)

Extended Trips Abroad During Termtime

In deciding whether to grant extended leave of absence, schools should consider the particular circumstances of each individual case. It is important that schools show an understanding of the parents' perspective whether or not they are able to agree to the request for absence.

Schools should ensure that all parents are aware of the school's attendance policy.

Only in very exceptional circumstances should a school grant leave of absence during term time, however you may wish to consider the following in reaching your decision:

- A visit involving family overseas has an entirely different significance than the normal associations with a holiday.
- Visits may be very important in terms of a child's cultural identity and self-esteem as they grow up.
- Parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweighs the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school – maintaining family links in extended family situations may involve greater significance and greater pressures in some cultures than it does currently in many western cultures.
- The reasons for parents making a visit may be, for example, family illness or bereavement. It is less easy for parents to undertake these normal and necessary activities where long distances and high costs are involved.
- If it is possible to include school holidays in the leave of absence so as to limit the amount of term time the pupil is absent.
- Governing bodies may wish to consult with local minority groups.

NB: Schools need to be aware that any Ofsted judgement on the impact of prolonged absence on pupil achievement is highly unlikely to take mitigating circumstances into account, other than in the most exceptional of cases.

Parents should be informed of the regulation on removal from the school roll if the child does not return on the agreed date. Parents should be asked to contact the school if the return is delayed. Schools should ensure that they have a contact number in the UK so that they can make enquiries if the pupil does not return at the agreed time.

Failure to return on the agreed date

When granting leave of absence for an extended trip overseas, schools should ensure they have a date when the pupil will return to school. Regulation 8 (f) details in what circumstances pupils may be removed from roll if they do not return by the agreed date.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006

– Regulation 8 (f) states that this applies -

‘In the case of a pupil granted leave of absence exceeding ten school days for the purpose of a holiday in accordance with regulation 7(3), that —

- i. the pupil has failed to attend the school within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted;
- ii. the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and
- iii. both the proprietor and the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is.

Penalty Notices

In certain circumstances Penalty Notices can be an effective alternative to prosecution for poor or non school attendance and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

The main thing to consider is whether or not issuing a penalty notice will be effective in terms of that pupil attending school. There is evidence locally to show that a Pre Warning Letter can have a significant effect on improving attendance.

While Penalty Notices are initiated by the Local Authority, Head teachers must gain agreement from the governing body as stated in the School’s Attendance Policy before such action can be agreed.

Non payment of a Penalty Notice will lead to prosecution. It is important therefore that all appropriate procedures and actions have been carried out before a Penalty Notice, including consideration of a CAF.

All correspondence will take account of different languages assisted by using the translation service via Dorset Direct. This contact can act as a broker and put callers in touch with appropriate translators.

Member of staff with Lead Responsibility for this policy:

Mr Salisbury

Approved by Governing Body on:

Policy due to be refreshed by: