



## PLYMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

### **Policy:** Attendance (Students)

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**GOVERNORS SUB COMMITTEE:** T & L

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# 1. Aims and expectations

Plymouth High School for Girls is committed to providing a high quality education for all pupils. Research has shown a clear correlation between poor attendance and low academic attainment, therefore it is expected that students achieve maximum possible attendance.

## **The school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:**

- Promoting good attendance and punctuality; and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence, addressing problems affecting attendance as quickly as possible
- Working in partnership with external agencies, and with the agreement and support of parents, to resolve situations beyond the control of parents or pupils which may impact upon attendance

## **The school expects the following from all our pupils:**

- That they attend school regularly.
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will inform a member of staff/tutor of any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

## **We expect the following from parents:**

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually
- To ensure that they contact the school as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that affect the pupil's performance in school.

## **Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:**

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action when notified of a problem. (Confidential means that the member of staff notified will not disclose that information to anybody without the consent of the student or their parent unless they deem that not disclosing information would put the child at risk).
- We will reward good attendance,
- We may impose sanctions for poor punctuality, poor attendance or truancy when appropriate.

**We will also support parents** to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and expect parents to promote and support punctuality in attending registration and lessons.

The expected minimum attendance is 96%.

# 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold. All documents are available from [www.gov.uk/government/publications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications) or [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

### 3. School procedures

#### 3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

It is a legal requirement to take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil 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.**

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

#### 3.2 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.40am on each school day.

Registers remain open for 10 minutes from the start of the morning or afternoon session

A pupil who arrives late but before the morning or afternoon register has closed will be marked as present.

A pupil who arrives after the morning or afternoon register, or lesson register, has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code and recording the number of minutes late.

If the register has been closed then it may be re-opened and the number of minutes late recorded.

However, where a student arrives after the register has closed in the morning, and the tutor group has gone to assembly or the tutor period has finished completely then the student should go to reception to sign in.

Lateness is actively discouraged and students who are frequently late will receive an appropriate sanction. A structured system of sanctions is devised by the headteacher with senior staff and is reviewed annually. An example of a sanction for lateness would be a lunch time detention.

Where lateness to school, or lessons, becomes persistent the Attendance Officer will advise the tutor, Head of Year and Deputy Head and the parents will be contacted.

#### 3.3 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 8.30am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Parents should ring the main school phone number and report their child's absence to the attendance officer together with the reason.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence.

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.

### 3.4 Medical or dental appointments

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences as well as a note in the student's planner and the pupil may be asked to produce proof of an appointment if such absences are seen to happen frequently

Parents should notify the school in advance of a medical or dental appointment by calling the main school phone number and reporting the planned absence to the attendance officer with the reason.

Students must sign out at reception before being collected by parents for any appointment during the school day, and should sign in again if they return during the school day. They are expected to have a note in their planner or other form of proof e.g. an appointment card to show reception when they sign out.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### 3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

#### **When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively.**

- In the first instance if a student is absent and the parent has not contacted the school to explain the absence, the Attendance Officer will call parents on the first day, and each subsequent day, of absence.
- It is the role of the tutor to follow up absences by chasing notes and further contacting parents. Summary lists of unexplained absences are provided by the Attendance Officer once per week and these are monitored by the Heads of Year who intervenes as appropriate
- Where absence becomes persistent or forms a regular pattern, the case will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer for the school and further action planned. This may, in appropriate cases, result in a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.
- After 10 days, unless other action is planned, the parents will be invited to attend a meeting in school. This meeting will include the appropriate staff, Education Welfare Officer, parent and pupil and will aim to identify and solve the problems that are preventing the pupil from attending school.
- If there is no improvement, then the case will be discussed again with the Education Welfare Officer with a view to a formal referral being made to the Education Welfare Service, if one has not already been made at an earlier stage. If a referral had already been made then the case will be reviewed and the meeting used to plan further action.

#### **Reintegration:**

- The return to school for a pupil after long-term absence requires special planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme and follow the guidelines given by the DfES under 'pupil support'.
- Designated staff should be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme. This will usually be the Head of Year, working with the tutor.
- All staff need to be aware that this is a difficult process that will require careful handling and that any problems should be notified to the responsible staff member as soon as possible.
- Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual need and may involve phased, part-time re-entry with support in lessons as appropriate. Support from the SEND Co-ordinator may be required.
- The success of the Pastoral Support Programme will require the involvement of appropriate school staff, other agencies, the young person and parents. Programmes should be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary.
- Staff will be notified of the return of the long-term absentees via e-mail and staff briefings.

### 3.6 Reporting to parents

Parents will receive attendance figures with each reporting cycle.

## 4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances', according to the Education (pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations, September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013. These regulations also state that holidays (even when booked before consultation with the school) are not exceptional circumstances. Parents may not normally therefore take pupils on holiday during the school term. However, each request should be considered individually taking into account the age of the child, previous attendance patterns, parental views and the educational progress of the child. Leave of absence may be granted in some circumstances e.g. parent home from armed forces.

If a request is not granted and the parent takes the child on holiday, the absence will not be authorised. If a request is granted the absence will not normally be for more than two weeks in any school year. If the holiday goes on for longer than agreed, the extra days' absence should be unauthorised.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

**Authorised absence** is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence.

All other absence must be regarded as **unauthorised**

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils 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
- Family bereavements
- Fixed term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated

#### Approved Educational Activity

Where pupils are away from school but are undertaking an approved educational activity, this should be marked in the usual way but are counted as present for calculating data for the DCSF absence return. To avoid confusion in emergency situations pupils who are off site should not be marked as present. The following activities fall within this category.

- Field trips and educational visits both in this country and overseas.
- Interviews with prospective employers and for a place at a higher or further educational establishment
- Courses where pupils attend another school, FE college or training provider for part of the time.
- Pupils receiving approved education off site, or reduced timetable arrangements e.g. those receiving specialist support or those in receipt of home tuition but remaining on the roll of the school
- Study leave when calendared and authorised by the school for examination classes/year groups. Provision will still be made available for pupils who wish to revise in school.

### 4.2 Legal sanctions

#### The Use of Penalty Warnings and Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holidays in Term Time

Parents can be fined for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The LA will not automatically issue a penalty notice for unauthorised absence due solely to a holiday without liaising with the school. However, there may be circumstances where this sanction is appropriate, e.g. where authorisation has expressly not been granted but the child is still absent. The EWS will work with head teachers to agree the most appropriate course of action for each individual case.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice

### **Resolving Disagreements**

Where there is a lack of agreement between the school and the LA as to the appropriateness of issuing a penalty warning letter or a penalty notice, the matter will be referred to the Area Legal Proceedings Panel whose decision shall be final.

## **5. Strategies for promoting attendance**

**Attendance can be encouraged in the following ways:**

- Accurate completion of the registers at the beginning of the morning session in registration and at the beginning of the afternoon session. In both cases this will be within 10 minutes of the start of the session.
- Further in lesson registration during the other lessons of the day to monitor in school truancy.
- Attendance checks at appropriate times.
- A certificate for 100% attendance for each term and whole year.
- All awards to be awarded by the Head of Year, Head Teacher and/or Governors as appropriate.
- Working in partnership with primary schools to identify and support pupils who have attendance problems in the feeder primary as part of any liaison on transition between KS2 and KS3.
- Establishing a mechanism for supporting those parents who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school.
- Sending parents attendance figures with each reporting cycle.

## **6. Attendance monitoring**

The Attendance Officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2). Parents should call on each day of absence unless they inform the attendance officer of the length of expected absence and reasons for this period of absence.

If a pupil's absence goes above 2 days we will contact the parents to discuss the specific reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

## **7. Removal from the school roll**

There are strict guidelines on the circumstances under which a pupil may be removed from the school roll. These are detailed in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (as amended 1997) and in the Schools Administration Handbook (section A2).

### **7.1 Removal from the school roll under circumstances other than those detailed below is illegal.**

- Where a school has been notified that the pupil has been registered as a pupil at another school
- Where a pupil has ceased to attend the school and the parent(s) have satisfied the LA that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than by attendance at school.
- Where the school has been notified by the School Medical Officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state to attend school before becoming legally exempt from the obligation to attend school.
- Where the pupil has been absent without reasonable cause for four academic weeks and the Head Teacher of the school has failed, after reasonable enquiry and consultation with the Education Welfare Service to obtain information on the cause of the absence.
- Where the Head Teacher has been notified that the pupil has died.
- The pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school.
- If a pupil has not returned to school within ten school days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term time.
- Where a pupil will cease to be of compulsory schools age before the school next meets and has been notified an intention to discontinue in attendance.
- Where the pupil has been permanently excluded and this decision has been confirmed by the Pupil Discipline Committee.

### **7.2 Pupils who are missing**

Where it is believed that a pupil has left the area and enquiries have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil, the Common Transfer File should be completed and uploaded to the DfES National Missing Pupils Database.

## **8. Roles and responsibilities**

### **8.1 The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

**The Link Governor is Phillip Braide**

### **8.2 The Headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors, pupils and parents.

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring challenging but achievable targets are set to encourage maximum possible attendance.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **8.3 Deputy Head**

The Deputy Head

- Liaises and supports the Heads of Year
- Oversees the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- Oversees the work of administrative staff especially the administrative attendance officer.
- Ensures that the attendance profile for the whole school is produced.
- Reports to Senior Management Team on attendance matters.

### **8.4 The Attendance Officer**

The Attendance Officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level producing reports for Heads of Year, Deputy Head and Headteacher
- Collates and enters into SIMS the reasons given for absence, or lateness

- Liaises directly with Heads of Year, tutors, Deputy Head, and EWO on all matters relating to attendance to alert them of any patterns or concerns
- Works with the Education Welfare Officer to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Produces certificates for 100% attendance termly and for the whole year

## 8.5 Heads of Year

Heads of Year are responsible for

- Working in partnership with Form Tutors, class teachers and parents to support students in achieving maximum possible attendance
- Monitoring attendance of pupils in their year group, intervening to sanction or reward maximum possible attendance,
- Acting early to address patterns of absence, addressing problems affecting attendance as quickly as possible
- Working in partnership with the EWO and external agencies, with the agreement and support of parents, to resolve situations beyond the control of parents or pupils which may impact upon attendance
- Planning the return of long term absentees in conjunction with relevant staff

## 8.6 Teaching Staff

**Teaching staff are responsible for**

- Completing registers accurately and on time, for the morning and afternoon sessions and in each lesson
- Recording all reasons for absence in the register, or informing the Attendance Officer
- Following-up as soon as possible any unexplained non-attendance, as a pupil's tutor, by contacting parents in liaison with the Attendance Officer, and Head of Year.
- Challenging suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence, as a pupil's tutor.
- To inform their line manager of concerns regarding a pupil's attendance

## 8.7 Reception staff

Reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

## 8.8 Parents

**Parents are responsible for:**

- Contact with school on first day and every subsequent day of absence.
- Provide signed and dated absence notes, giving reasons for all absences.
- Support their child in achieving maximum attendance and in being punctual to school and lessons

## 9. Liaising with external agencies

Research has shown that schools in partnership with the full range of support services have a greater impact on school attendance than when they act alone or when the support services are uncoordinated or disjointed.

Poor school attendance may be a symptom of a wide range of institutional, community, family or individual circumstances. Many of these circumstances will demand expert support beyond the remit of the school or the Education Welfare Service (EWS). It is, therefore, vital that strong partnerships are established with all agencies that work with children and young people. The EWS may be able to help schools establish multi-agency meetings or may be able to advise on how schools can become involved in existing local arrangements.

**These are the main support services:**

- Educational Behavioural and Support Services.
- Educational Psychologists.
- Special Educational Needs Service.
- Social Services.
- Connexions
- Youth Service.
- Local police

#### **Education Welfare Service:**

The Education Welfare Service has been described as the “attendance enforcement arm” of most local authorities (DES 1991) which complements the role of the school.

Plymouth Education Welfare Service will strive to provide a service that recognises the uniqueness of the school and the community it serves.

#### **The EWS can support schools in a variety of ways:**

- liaise with identified school staff
- Where a referral is accepted, undertake home visits, either pre-arranged or without notice as considered necessary.
- Through group work with identified groups of pupils.
- Where necessary instigate legal proceedings on behalf of the LA including parental prosecutions in the Magistrates’ Court and applying for Education Supervision Orders through the Family Court.
- Accept referrals that meet the EWS referral criteria, initiate contact with parents or carers and undertake assessments.
- Plan and review casework.
- Provide feedback to schools.
- Offer strategic/policy advice and support in relation to matters of attendance, the employment of young people and young people involved in performing.
- Support schools in the establishment and management of school attendance panels.
- Support schools in the use of penalty notices and parenting contracts within the provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

## **10. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and Governor’s Teaching and Learning Committee. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

## **11. Links with other policies**

Safeguarding policy

Behaviour Management policy

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day