

## STAHS Policies

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### P09: ATTENDANCE

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## **POLICY STATEMENT**

This policy applies to St Albans High School for Girls ("the School" or "STAHS") which includes the Prep School and EYFS setting. This policy is reviewed and updated triennially and is available on the School website.

STAHS believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, and pastoral support can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

The school's attendance manager is Nicola McGeown, who can be contacted via [McGeownN@STAHS.org.uk](mailto:McGeownN@STAHS.org.uk). Staff, parents and pupils will be expected to contact the attendance manager for queries or concerns about attendance.

## **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2022'
- DfE (2023) 'Providing remote education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and related documents:

- Complaints Policy
- Children Missing from Education

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Pupil Mental and Physical Health Policy

## DEFINITIONS

The School defines the terms 'absence', 'authorised absence', 'unauthorised absence' 'persistent absenteeism' and 'severe absenteeism' as below.

### *Absence:*

- Arrival at School after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

### *Authorised Absence:*

- An absence for illness or injury for which the School has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the School has granted leave.
- Religious or other cultural observances for which the School has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency.

### *Unauthorised Absence:*

- Parents keeping children away from school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy from timetabled School activities.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Arrival at School after the register has closed.
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children, or birthdays.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving School for no reason during the day.

### *Persistent Absenteeism:*

- Pupils are identified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10% or more of schooling across the academic year for any reason.

### *Severe Absenteeism:*

- Pupils are identified as a severe absentee if they miss 50% or more of schooling across the academic year for any reason.

### *Truancy*

- Any intentional, unjustified, or unauthorised absence from education. Truancy is a deliberate absence by a pupil and includes 'internal truancy' where a pupil is present in school but is not attending lessons or other timetabled activities and 'external truancy' where a pupil leaves the school site without permission or does not report to school.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Governors** have overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of the attendance policy and procedures of the School.

- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Schools Complaints Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place, and that it is regularly reviewed and updated.

The **Head** is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of the attendance policy and procedures of the School and distributing these to parents.
- Appointing a member of staff to the attendance officer and attendance manager role.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

**Staff**, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for:

- Following the attendance policy, and for ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

**Parents** are responsible for:

- The attendance of their children during term-time.
- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- Promoting good attendance at school and any agreed activities throughout the school year.
- Reporting any absence immediately following school absence reporting procedures (available below and in the Parent Handbook, via the online Parent Portal).
- Ensuring medical, dental and other external appointments are made outside of school hours where possible.

**Pupils** are responsible for:

- Being punctual for registration, lessons and all other timetabled activities.
- Ensuring they are registered at the School Reception if they arrive at School outside of registration time.

## **ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS**

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality and will ensure that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

At STAHS Senior School the attendance target is 96% and above.

At STAHS Prep the attendance target is 97.5% and above.

Pupils will be expected to:

- Attend school every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.
- Attend school and all lessons/activities punctually.
- Attend every timetabled lesson and activity.

Pupils must be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at the start of the school day; therefore, pupils will be expected to be on the school site at least 5 minutes prior to the start of their first timetabled lesson or activity. Pupils will have at least one break and one lunch period each day, and are expected to have returned from break and lunch and be ready to recommence learning at the stated times. The school timetable, including the times of breaks and lunch, can be found on the school website.

## **ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

Full procedures for registration and reporting absence for staff, pupils and parents can be found in the related documents *Attendance Procedures (Senior School)* and *Attendance Procedures (Prep School)*. These are also outlined in the Staff Handbook, Parent Handbook (Senior), Parent Handbook (Prep), and Student Handbook – all available online via the Parent Portal, staff dashboard and student dashboard.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Parents must provide accurate and up-to-date contact details. Parents are responsible for updating the School if the details need to change. Parents must provide the School with more than one emergency contact number.

## **ATTENDANCE REGISTER**

The school uses iSAMS to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

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

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school
- H = Authorised holiday
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- S = Study leave
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

- G = Unauthorised holiday
- N = Reason not yet provided
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- D = Dual registered at another educational establishment
- B = Off-site education activity
- J = At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- V = Educational visit or trip
- W = Work experience
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

Pupils who are absent from school but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

## **PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

Letters will be sent home and members of the Pastoral Team may meet with pupils and their parents to address issues of persistent absence (when attendance at school falls to 90% or below, regardless of the reason). Persistent absence will be handled on an individual basis depending on the circumstances of the particular child or family.

In the event of persistent unauthorised absence, the Head may act to suspend, exclude or otherwise remove your child from the School if, in the reasonable opinion of the Head, the removal is in the School's best interests and/or those of your child or other children. Please see the Parent Contract and the School's Behaviour Management Policy for further information on suspension, exclusion and required removal.

## **SEVERE ABSENCE**

Members of the Pastoral Team will meet with pupils and their parents to address issues of severe absence (when attendance at school falls to 50% or below, regardless of the reason). The local authority (Herts County Council) will also be informed along with other appropriate services so that suitable support can be considered, and education provided/accessed. Severe absence will be handled on an individual basis depending on the circumstances of the particular child or family.

In the event of continued unauthorised absence, the Head may act to suspend, exclude or otherwise remove your child from the School if, in the reasonable opinion of the Head, the removal is in the School's best interests and/or those of your child or other children. Please see the Parent Contract and the School's Behaviour Management Policy for further information on suspension, exclusion and required removal.

## **TRUANCY**

All staff will be concerned about the regular attendance of pupils, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. At STAHS, all pupils are expected to be in their classes from the beginning of the school day through to the end of the school day.

Any pupil with permission to leave the School during the day must sign out at reception and sign back in again on their return. Signing in and out may be done through the School's InVentry system at the direction of reception staff.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the Head will be notified and they (or an appropriate member of staff delegated this responsibility) will contact the child's parents to assess the reasons behind the child not attending school.

In the first instance of truancy, in addition to any sanctions applied to the pupil in accordance with the School's Behaviour Management Policy, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken. Further action may include a review by the Head of the child's position in the School, and could result in the suspension, exclusion or required removal of the child from the School.

## **MISSING CHILDREN**

Pupils are not permitted to leave the School premises during the school day unless they have permission from the Head (or an appropriate member of staff with delegated authority to issue such permission). In the event of a pupil going missing during the school day, the School will initiate the Missing Pupil Procedures outlined in the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and related documents.

## **TERM TIME LEAVE**

The School's aim is to prepare pupils for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed.

Leave during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, for example bereavement or serious illness. Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.

If term time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions as outlined above in the Truancy section.

## **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

When absence is due to exceptional circumstances, the 'Y' code will be used on the attendance register. Exceptional circumstances include when a pupil is unable to attend because:

- Transport (public or School coach service) is not available and the pupil's home is not within walking distance.
- There has been widespread disruption to travel services which has prevented the pupil from attending.
- The pupil is in custody and will be detained for less than four months.

## **REWARDING GOOD ATTENDANCE**

School trips and events are a privilege. Where attendance drops below 90%, these privileges may be taken away.



## MONITORING AND REVIEW

Attendance and punctuality is monitored regularly by the Attendance Manager, Tutors, Form Teachers and/or Housemistresses/masters. All unauthorised absences and instances of lateness are followed up on in accordance with the School's Behaviour Management Policy and this policy.

The Deputy Head Pastoral or appropriate Senior School or Prep School Leadership Team member will review attendance and lateness by percentage for all pupils in the Senior and Prep Schools once per half term, and will report concerns to the Head. In the event that a pupil's attendance falls below 90% in any one school year, the Head may, at their discretion, instruct the DSL or other appropriate member of staff to inform the local authority of the pupil's persistent absence.

This Policy will be reviewed triennially in Trinity Term by the Head and Executive Team, and will be ratified by the Education Committee of the Governing Body. In the event that a change to this policy is required between reviews, the review cycle will be altered to allow the change to be made and the policy ratified by governors.

Any changes made to the policy will be communicated to all members of staff.

## POLICY INFORMATION

Policy and related documents	
Document title	Availability
P09: Attendance	Website
Attendance Procedures (Senior School), related document	On request
Attendance Procedures (Prep School), related document	On request
Register of Attendance, related live document	Not available

Policies and related documents as indicated are available request from [info@stahs.org.uk](mailto:info@stahs.org.uk)  
St Albans High School for Girls, 3 Townsend Avenue, St Albans AL1 3SJ. Tel: 01727 853 800

This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.