



SARACENS HIGH SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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| Responsibility of: | Saracens High School |
| Approved by: | Local Governing Body |
| Date Approved (<i>by above</i>): | 26 November 2024 |
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Attendance Policy

1. Principles:

Attendance is strongly linked to achievement. Good attendance is necessary if pupils are to fulfil their academic and social potential at Saracens High School. Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of all staff, pupils and families.

The following underpin high levels of attendance:

- Good relationships between home and school
- A safe school environment where pupils enjoy attend and achieve success
- Strategies for addressing attendance should be applied fairly and consistently to all pupils regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability and religion
- Early intervention to respond positively to high levels of attendance and appropriately to low levels of attendance. These interventions may involve working with external agencies
- A positive approach to inclusion where pupils with long-term medical needs or disabilities are considered on a case by case basis, and will not be bound by the systems and procedures in this policy

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 legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance.

2. Roles and Responsibilities:

The Local Governing Body

- The Local Governing Body will work with the school to set an attendance target for each academic year. They will ensure that it is communicated to all stakeholders, including families and pupils.

The Principal

- The Principal is responsible for the day to day implementation and management of the policy
- The Principal determines the number of school days a child can be away from school, and when exceptional circumstances apply
- Will monitor school-level absence data and report it to the Local Governing Body at least termly

The Assistant Principal Responsible for Attendance

The Assistant Principal will:

- Lead, champion and improve attendance across the school, setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Communicate the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and families through available channels
- Evaluate and monitor expectations and processes
- Establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence, and make sure they are followed by staff
- Liaise with pupils, families, and external agencies
- Monitor the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

The Attendance Officer

The attendance officer will:

- Contact families on the first day of a pupil's absence and record reasons for absence if the reason is unknown
- Regular review attendance with pastoral leaders, and the Assistant Principal responsible for attendance, sharing concerns with staff, pupils, families, and external agencies, including the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
- Support staff with monitoring the attendance of pupils
- Provide attendance reports as requested by the Assistant Principal responsible for attendance, and other colleagues
- Advise the Assistant Principal responsible for attendance when the local authority should issue fixed-penalty notices

Classroom-based Staff

Classroom-based staff will:

- Support pupils to ensure they attend regularly and will address problems that may lead to non-attendance
- Will recognise and reward exemplary attendance
- Take registers twice daily and in all lessons and record incidents of lateness
- Share their attendance figures with pupils and work with them to improve their attendance

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The EWO is employee of the local authority, who supports the school in implementing procedures to raise the attendance and punctuality of pupils

The EWO:

- Works with families and pupils whose attendance and punctuality are a concern to ensure they attend school regularly
- Where there is insufficient improvement in a pupil's attendance or punctuality the EWO may instruct the local authority to issue families with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) or take court action

Families

Saracens High School acknowledges that families are comprised in many different ways. For the purpose of the policy, the term family or families applies to those adults the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- Natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Families are expected to:

- Ensure that their children attend school regularly, and on time.
- Contact the school if their child is unable to attend for any reason by phoning the school as early as possible on the first day of absence and also advise when the pupil is expected to return to school
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out for the minimum amount of time necessary
- Keep to any attendance contracts that made with the school and/or local authority
- Work with the school and other agencies to address any issues leading to non-attendance.
- Where they believe there are exceptional circumstances for leave of absence during term time, they should apply in writing to the Principal before making any travel arrangements.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance and punctuality, by contacting the pastoral team e.g. Learning Coach or Year Lead.

3. Recording Attendance

Attendance Register

The school will keep an electronic attendance register using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. This applies whether every pupil is present, attending an approved off-site educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. See Appendix C1 for the link to the DfE attendance codes.

School staff may request evidence for an absence, including a doctor's note, a prescription, an appointment card or letter, or other appropriate forms of evidence.

4. Reporting to families

Pupils attendance and absence levels are accessible to families on Arbor.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Authorised absence: It is for the school to determine whether a pupil's absence is authorised or not. Authorised absence is absence that the school has approved and the school may approve absence for any reason that it deems appropriate.

Unauthorised absence: This relates to pupil absence that the school has decided not to approve. Absence is also unauthorised if a reason for pupil absence is not provided to the school by family. This can also include when a family has not provided evidence for an absence when requested by the school.

The Principal will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#).

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the family's religious body to confirm whether the day meets this definition
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)
- If there are exceptional circumstances, for example, a serious family illness or bereavement

6. 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 the Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Hold meetings with families of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent
- 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 consider some of the reasons for absence sensitively
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

7. Fixed Penalty Notices

Regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for pupils registered at schools, academies, or other maintained or alternative provisions. The Principal (or someone authorised by them), local authority or police can fine families for unauthorised absences from school, by issuing a penalty notice. Each parent (within the same family) who is liable for a pupil can be issued with a penalty notice.

Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued

Before advising on whether a penalty notice should be issued, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a pupil has at least 10% unauthorised absence.
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same family in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where families allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion. These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

8. Children missing in education

Government guidelines state that 'where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or 'unavoidable cause'. Staff will refer concerns to a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) before considering taking a pupil off role.

9. Punctuality

AM registration

- Any pupil late to line up in the morning will be considered late and will need to complete the 'reason for lateness' form during break time
- Pupils arriving after 9.00am will be marked as late after the register closes. A note explaining the absence will be required

PM registration

- Registers taken in the afternoon will be used for PM registration

10. Attendance Strategy

Strategies to raise pupils' attendance are in Appendix B. These link with the school's policy for [Behaviour for Learning and Discipline Policy](#).

Pupils will be placed into four groups based on their attendance. These groups are as follows:

1. Attendance greater than 97%
2. Attendance ranging from 94%–96.9%
3. Attendance ranging from 90%–93.9%
4. Attendance less than 90%

Appendix A: Absence and Attendance Codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence. The codes can be found in the [Working together to improve school attendance](#) statutory guidance.

Appendix B: Improving Attendance Strategies

| Time period for action | Action Taken | Responsibility (may also include the SENDCO where appropriate) |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Daily/Ongoing | First day response phone calls or SMS, registers kept up to date. | Attendance Officer |
| | Lesson registration using Arbor Pupils late to lessons and school monitored | Learning Coaches/teachers to take accurate registers |
| | Two and three-day unauthorised absence/ no contact home visits Phone calls and/or SMS home regarding pupils who have had two or three days unauthorised absence | Attendance Officer, Assistant Year Lead, Home School Liaison |
| Weekly | Attendance tracking and analysis | Attendance Officer and Year Lead |
| | Any pupils with attendance dropping lower than 95% to receive a letter/email home outlining the importance of good attendance. This can include 5% of authorised absences to help families understand the importance of attendance. | Attendance Officer |
| | Pupils with attendance dropping to 93% to receive a letter home regarding potential persistent absenteeism and a meeting to discuss barriers | Attendance Officer |
| | Attendance figures shared with Principal in line management | Assistant Principal - Attendance |
| | Pupils to receive positive reward entries on Arbor for 100% attendance and punctuality. | Year Lead or Assistant Year Lead |
| | Update attendance display and Learning Group Celebration | Year Lead or Assistant Year Lead |
| | EWO checks attendance and manages all pupils below 90% attendance. EWO will write to families and have regular meetings to help improve attendance. Where attendance does not improve, fixed penalty notices and court action can be used. | Educational Welfare Officer Educational Welfare Officer Educational Welfare Officer |
| Fortnightly | Penalty notice warning letters to be considered. | Attendance Officer/ Assistant Year Lead |

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| Half Termly | Pupils with 100% attendance for the half term will receive a congratulatory letter The best Learning Coach group in each Year will be recognised in assembly | Year Lead or Assistant Year Lead |
| Termly | Gold (100%), Silver (98-99%) and Bronze (96-97%) rewards awarded to KS3 and KS4 pupils | Year Lead or Assistant Year Lead |
| | Pupils with an improvement of 10% for the term to receive a certificate | Year Lead or Assistant Year Lead |
| | Review progress of pupils on attendance contracts | Attendance Officer/ Assistant Year Lead |
| | 100% attenders for the term to be recognised in the newsletter | Attendance Officer |
| | Articles in the newsletter highlighting importance of good attendance and recognising pupils/ Learning Coach groups with high attendance | Attendance Officer |
| Annually | Pupils with 100% attendance for the Year will receive an attendance award | Assistant Principal - Attendance |
| | Attendance Percentage will be converted into house points for the End of Year house Competition | Assistant Principal - Attendance |
| | The best Learning Coach group in each Year will be recognised in assembly Celebration Assembly | Year Lead or Assistant Year Lead |

Appendix C: Saracens High School Attendance Reward Ladder

