

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Introduction

Queen Margaret's promotes a whole school culture that understands the benefits of good attendance, not only for students to get the most out of their school experience, but to provide support for all students with their growth and development. This policy is based on 'Working together to improve school attendance 2022' and the 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance 2022'. The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach is the Senior Deputy Head, Claire Sheard.

This Policy complies with the requirements in:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- Working together to improve school attendance. Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities 2022

Under the legislation parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes. Only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where a reason for a student's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

Holidays during term time are normally refused unless there are exceptional circumstances which will be considered by the Head on a case by case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

The DfE has not provided any guidelines as to what it would consider to be exceptional circumstances, this is solely at the discretion of the Head. The DfE does give guidance regarding children whose parents are in the armed forces and the school follows this guidance in relation to

those students. Where possible, the school has a consistent approach to all leave of absence requests, for example to try to ensure that requests for siblings who attend different schools are met with the same response by each head teacher who receives a request.

Key Points of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence. • Ensure every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled. • Act early to address patterns of absence to listen to reasons offered by families and offer support through the school's pastoral system • Encourage parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age, who are registered at the school, attend regularly and are punctual to their lessons. • Ensure compliance with relevant education laws, regulations and government guidance.
School Attendance and the Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This policy complies with the 1996 Education Act, the Education (student Registration) regulations 2006 and the Education (student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013.
Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If attendance (authorised or unauthorised) falls below 85% in a term it should be reported to the Senior Deputy Head who will discuss with pastoral staff and then contact, usually a phone call, to offer families support and suggest strategies to help raise attendance. • If attendance falls below 80% a meeting between parents/carers and appropriate pastoral staff will be held to discuss student/family circumstances. Actions agreed are documented. • If attendance drops below 75% without a satisfactory reason an email is sent to the parents and further discussion is had with the family and senior staff. This may result in sharing the information with the Local authority (Child Missing in Education) if attendance dips below 50% • Half termly meetings between the Senior Deputy Head, the Deputy Head Pastoral and the Head (minuted) to discuss attendance and any concerns

Children who are absent from education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In line with the school's Safeguarding Policy, the school has a duty by law to report to the Local Authority if a student is absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.
Sponsored students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsored student's attendance will be monitored in line with the Home Office's UKVI requirements. In particular, the School will notify the Home Office if, without reasonable explanation, the attendance rate of any such student falls below 80% for the academic year or such student has 10 consecutive days of unauthorised absences.
The Attendance Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The attendance register is taken at the start of the first session of each school day and at the start of the second session and determines whether the student is present or absent. Absences should be followed up by the school and the school will use the national codes to record and monitor attendance. Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of absence to state the reason for absence.
Preservation and Amendments to the attendance Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every entry in the attendance register must be preserved for a period of at least three years after the date on which the entry was made.
Punctuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanctions for lateness or non-attendance at lessons can be found in the school's Behaviour Policy. Any episode of persistent lateness or an identified pattern of lateness will result in communication home from the school to discuss ways of how this pattern of behaviour can be corrected.
Long term absence for health reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In line with NYSCP's guidelines, students who are absent from school for 15 days or more (one off or cumulative) for a physical or mental health need should be referred to the Medical Education Service. The school should be in receipt of a letter from a medical professional responsible for the care of the student outlining the need for absence and the expected length of absence and should also include recommendations for phased return (including online lessons, distance learning or frequency of attendance at school)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A support plan will be put into place at school to include educational, pastoral and safeguarding support of the student
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy to be reviewed Autumn 2023

The above Key Points are a synopsis and are not intended to replace the policy. The full policy must be read and followed in the event that it needs to be applied. If the Key Points are found to be in conflict with the wording of the full policy, the policy takes priority.

Expectations for Attendance

Good attendance and punctuality are essential to ensure that students make good academic progress and feel part of school life. Full attendance on every school day is expected, along with specific requirements such as **Chapel, Speech Day, Open Mornings and Fixtures**.

Fixtures and sports sessions on Saturday afternoons are a routine part of the school day and absence from sport on Saturday afternoon must have the permission of the Head or Senior Deputy Head, except where extreme circumstances e.g. bad weather prevents the event taking place. The School will notify parents if there are last minute changes to arrangements on Saturdays. Details of fixtures are also updated in SOCS. Where matches are cancelled the school will usually provide alternative exercise which all girls are expected to attend.

Registration is required by law at the beginning of each morning session and during the afternoon session. The process of registration is combined with house time, which allows house staff to touch base with all of the students within the school day.

What is Expected of Parents/Carers?

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Good punctuality is essential to maximise learning and to develop positive behaviours that are transferable to higher education or in the workplace.

Parents should:

- Ensure their child attends daily (or on the days they are arriving from home) and on time
- Keep the school fully informed on all matters that might affect their child's attendance
- Telephone the school or email the house staff on the first day of any absence to provide an explanation for the absence

- Provide proof of medical appointments or illness (e.g. prescription or appointment card) or a letter confirming the reason for absence when the school requests proof of absence
- Make doctor and dental appointments for their children outside school hours wherever possible
- Plan family holidays outside term time
- Make a formal application in writing with sufficient notice to the Head of the relevant for any term time leave of absence prior to proposed dates
- There is an expectation for parents to work with Queen Margaret's School to resolve any attendance issues.

Parents of International Boarders

Parents of international boarders must make sure that holidays are not extended either side of the school holidays. However, in order to accommodate the ease of returning home when taking long-haul flights, students will be permitted to leave school during the day of the last full day of term or half term. They will not be given permission to miss any other days prior to the end of term. Parents of international boarders should also make sure that travel arrangements are such that their daughter is returned to school on the first evening or morning of the half term or term.

Parents are therefore urged to book flights well ahead of the holidays so that they do not encounter problems with limited availability of flights.

Attendance and Punctuality Expectations of students

Students are expected to attend and be punctual for school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

Students should:

- Attend all lessons and all relevant activities when at school
- Students are expected to be punctual and arrive at lessons on time, particularly those which come after a break/lunch
- Students are expected to be ready to learn and organised with the right equipment
- In the case of sickness, students should seek support from the Health and Wellbeing Centre who will make decisions regarding whether the student should stay in lessons, rest in house or go home
- Students who are late are expected to sign in at Reception and can expect sanctions in line with the school's Behaviour Policy
- Students may be asked to bring in proof of illness, sickness or other causes of absence
- Students are encouraged to inform a trusted adult if they are being bullied or if they feel uncomfortable for any other reason while they are in the school environment and this is a reason for poor attendance or punctuality.

Procedures for Low Attendance

On occasions when lengthy absence is known and understood the school will support families to ensure a continuity of education.

Students struggling with punctuality and attendance will be encouraged to improve their record through the school's rewards system and, where appropriate, agreed rewards of particular value to the student e.g. having the opportunity to choose a house activity or some other privilege.

In addition to regular monitoring, attendance statistics are formally checked by pastoral staff and, while the particular circumstances of individual students and families will always be taken into account, parents and carers can expect the following series of actions to take place:

Figure 1 – Procedures for Poor Attendance

Stage	Stage 1
%	Students with attendance below 90% for the academic term
Action	Contact by email or telephone from pastoral staff to advise that the student's attendance is becoming a cause for concern.
Support	Discussion of the student's circumstances and an agreement to improve attendance.

Stage	Stage 2
%	Students with attendance below 80% for the academic year
Action	Meeting between parents/carers and appropriate pastoral staff to discuss student/family circumstances. Actions agreed are documented.
Support	Monitoring and attendance targets put in place. Additional support applied as necessary.

Stage	Stage 3
%	Students with attendance below 75% for the academic year.
Action	Meeting with parents/carers and senior pastoral staff and discuss student's/family circumstances, including possible consideration of amendments to the student's academic and co-curricular programme. School to report/seek advice from the Local Authority.
Support	Agreement of a high-priority attendance improvement plan/pastoral support/counselling.

Stage	Stage 4
%	Students with attendance below 60% for the academic year.
Action	Formal review with the Head. This may include consideration of repeating the academic year and a review of the student's place in the school, in accordance

	with the school's Terms and Conditions
Support	Pastoral support, Education Welfare Officer, GP or counsellor.

Where a student has been through Stages 1 to 3 then improved their attendance only for it to decline again, it is at the discretion of senior pastoral staff to decide which stage of the process the student should be placed upon, involving student and parents accordingly.

Outside agencies, such as an Education Welfare Officer, a GP or a counsellor may be contacted at any stage in order to support the student. Students with a poor punctuality record can expect to receive appropriate sanctions, in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Children who are absent from education

The school will report to the Local Authority if it has a serious concern over a child's attendance or the child has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

Also, the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all children who are absent from education after a period of 10 consecutive days to the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, which has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

Following Local Authority guidance an initial warning letter will be issued which states that absences will be monitored for 10 school days, if attendance improves within the 10 days then at the discretion of the school monitoring can be in place to support the student. If attendance does not improve then parents/guardians will be invited to a Panel Meeting in School, following this a 20 day monitoring period can be put in place. If there is still no improvement the Local Authority will call the parents to a formal caution interview.

This is in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Medically Unfit for School

As part of the school's approach to safeguarding and in line with local protocols, students with a cumulative absence of more than 15 days due to medical or mental health issues will be referred to the Medical Education Service so that additional support and advice may be accessed. Details of the service are available via this link:

<https://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/medical-education-service>

Sponsored Students Attendance

The school will monitor the attendance of any student who is attending the school under a Queen Margaret's sponsored CAS in line with the provisions of this policy. In addition, the school will also monitor attendance of sponsored students and, in cases where attendance drops to 80% for the academic year without reasonable explanation, will report such cases to the Home Office in line with our sponsorship obligations. In addition, the Procedures for Poor Attendance in Figure I shall be amended so that at Stage 2 (students with attendance below 80% for the academic year), in addition to the meeting with parents/carers, there should be a formal review with the Head which will include a review of the student's place in the school, in accordance with the school's Terms and Conditions, Stages 3 and 4 will not apply.

The school will report the absence of a student who is attending the school under a Queen Margaret's sponsored CAS in accordance with the requirement of UKVI which means that the school will notify the Home Office if any such student has 10 consecutive days of unauthorised absences.

The Attendance Register

The attendance register is taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. A register is taken at the start of every lesson. On each occasion it must be recorded whether every student is:

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

- The school should follow up any absences to ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken in line with the Missing Student Policy
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not, and identify the correct code to use.

The codes will be used to record and monitor attendance and absence as shown below.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present

A	Enrichment lesson	Authorised absence
B	Educated off site	Authorised absence
C	Other authorised circumstances	Authorised absence
D	Dance lesson	Authorised absence
E	Excluded	Authorised absence
F	Approved school club/society	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (Agreed)	Authorised absence
I	(On site) Illness (not medical/dental appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Authorised absence
K	(At Home) Illness	Authorised absence
L	Late	Present
M	Medical or dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	Reason for absence not yet provided	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence
P	(On Site) Approved sporting activity	Authorised absence
\$	(Off Site) Approved sporting activity	Authorised absence
Q	Learning support	Authorised Absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Tutorial	Authorised absence
U	Student withdrawn from normal lessons	Authorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip (including residential)	Authorised absence
W	Work experience	Authorised absence

Y	Exceptional circumstances	Authorised absence
*	Bedtime - Homestay/Guardian	Authorised absence
*	Bedtime - Homestay/Guardian	Authorised absence
X	Not required to attend school	Administrative code
Z	Student not on roll	Administrative code
?	Not yet boarding	Administrative code
}	Non-compulsory school age student not required to be in school	Administrative code
#	School closed to students	Administrative code

Further information on the registration process can be found in Appendix I

Punctuality

House staff, teachers and parents share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. Every opportunity will be used for staff to convey to students the importance of punctual attendance. For our students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital every child is at school, on time, every day the school is open and for individual lessons unless the reason for the lateness is unavoidable. The habits we educate students to develop regarding punctuality are the same as the expectations of any higher education institution or future employer in the world of work.

Students Moving to a New Address and/or School

Students moving to a new address and/or school where the parent of a student notifies the school that the student will live at another address, schools must record in the admission register:

- a) the full name of the parent with whom the student will live
- b) the new address
- c) the date from when it is expected the student will live at this address.

Where a parent notifies the school that the student is registered at another school or will be attending a different school, schools must record in the admission register:

- a) the name of the other school

- b) the date of when the student first attended, or is due to start attending, that school.

Preservation and Amendments to the Attendance Register

Every entry in the attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Every amendment made to the attendance register must 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.

Sue Baillie

Head

September 2023

Next review: September 2025

Appendix I

Registration

The School Attendance Register is a legal document registration takes place electronically, from house or classroom bases.

The keeping of attendance data is essential for the care of the students' academic progress and for reporting on it. It is also a welfare matter for the school to know when students are or are not on the premises. All students will be registered; boarding students, day students and Sixth Form students. This ensures a check on students' whereabouts for reasons of welfare or health and safety, and also monitors attendance for pastoral and educational reasons.

The attendance register must be completed at the start of each morning session and afternoon session and at the start of individual periods.

Entries on the system must show whether the student is:

- a) Present
- b) Absent
- c) Attending an approved educational activity outside school (approved by the Head and supervised by a person approved by the Head, and including work experience or sporting activity)
- d) Unable to attend through exceptional circumstances (unavoidable closure of school site or part of it; unavailability of transport provided by school)
- e) Taking authorised absence (granted leave of absence by the Head or person acting on the Head's behalf; unable to attend by reason of sickness or unavoidable cause; observing a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs)
- f) Taking unauthorised absence (if no reason is established when the register is taken; the entry may be corrected later when the reason is established).

The DfE has a standard set of codes for schools to use in registers. Under this system, an N is first entered when no reason has yet been provided for absence, and this is later corrected (ideally within two weeks) with the appropriate symbol (in this case only, overwriting is allowable in an electronic system) and N must not be allowed to remain indefinitely.

It is the responsibility of the senior tutors, tutors and house staff to regularly check the electronic registers, following up any absences and ensure that the system is up to date and accurate, this information will be conveyed to Housemistresses.

SYMBOLS FOR REGISTRATION

- / Present for morning session
- \ Present for afternoon session
- L Late arrival before the register has closed

Attendance codes for when students are present at approved educational or enrichment activities are as follows:

- A Enrichment lesson
- B Educated off site
- D Dance lesson
- F Approved school club/society
- J At an interview with prospective employers ,or another educational establishment
- P (On site) Approved sporting activity
- Q Learning support
- T Tutorial
- V Educational visit or trip
- W Work experience
- \$ (Off site) Approved sporting activity

Authorised Absence from School – Absence codes when students are not present in school are as follows:

- C Leave of absence authorised by school
- E Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H Holiday authorised by the school
- I Illness (not medical or dental appointments) (On site)
- K (At home) Illness
- M Medical or dental appointment
- R Religious observance
- S Study leave
- Y Exceptional circumstances
- @ Bedtime - Home
- * Bedtime - Homestay/guardian

Unauthorised Absence from School:

- G Holiday not authorised by the school or more than the period determined by the Head.
- N Reason for absence not yet provided

- Absent without authorisation i.e.
 - i) Without parental knowledge,
 - ii) Where no written or verbal communication is received from parent/guardian
 - iii) Where the reason is inappropriate

Administrative Codes

- U student withdrawn from normal lessons
- X Not required to be in school
- Y Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- Z student not yet on roll
- # School closed to students
- ? Not yet boarding

REGISTRATION PERIOD

Procedures for House staff taking registration:

1. Student is physically in front of the member of staff at the allotted time: Staff record present using an electronic device
2. Student is not physically in front of the house staff: Staff record N (reason for absence not yet provided)
3. Formal registration closes at 08:20 and 13.35 Monday to Friday and at 08.50 on Saturday
4. Student arrives late but before 08:30/13:40/08:55 (Saturdays): House staff records L (Late)
5. Student arrives after 08:30: student goes to Front Office to sign into the Late Book, explaining the reason for late arrival. The Attendance Secretary will alter the electronic register from N to L (if the reason is deemed to be valid) or N to U (Late after Registration closed and there is no valid reason)
6. House staff must have completed their registers: by 08:30am and 14:00 so that they can begin the task of consolidating the registers on the system to establish which students have still not been seen by that stage and whose absence is therefore unauthorised
7. The school has a responsibility to physically check whether a student who has been marked N is physically present in his/her first lesson before phoning home. At 09:15 and at afternoon registration the house staff will print off a list of those students who are unaccounted for. This list will form the basis of the school's first day contact procedures.
8. First Day Contact: The following steps will be taken to establish the whereabouts of a student who has been identified as absent from registration:
 - a. Check the house signing in book
 - b. House staff will telephone the Health and Wellbeing Centre, the Music Department, the Sport Department, the PASS office and boarding houses
 - c. Lists of students on approved activities will be checked e.g. morning activities, sports fixtures, trips file etc.

If the student remains unaccounted for, a member of staff will go to the classroom of those students who are absent to check if a student marked N is there. If the student is absent from the class, the students will be asked if they know where the student is and a member of the office staff/housemistress will ring home to verify the absence.

Summary of the sequence of events:

- Register in house/signing in book
 - Check signing in book/Health and Wellbeing Centre/Music Department/Sport Department/PASS office/boarding houses/Approved Activity lists
 - House staff to physically check classroom
 - Call home
9. Usually, the N is changed to reflect the appropriate absence code (if authorised). If not believed or time has elapsed then O is entered to denote an unauthorised absence. There are other codes in use as per official DfE attendance codes and it is important that these are used accordingly
10. Written confirmation of an absence must be sought and a copy of the letter/email held on the student file. For any information received by telephone, a note of the call must be made by the house staff and held on the student file.

Additional Information

Educational Visits, Sports Fixtures, Music Lessons and Activities:

- Staff who take students away on a sporting fixture/educational visit before a registration period (AM or PM) must ensure that they take a face-to-face roll of the students travelling to the event and leave or email a copy of this list with Reception for recording on the system
- Where possible, colleagues should avoid organising on site events that cut across the formal registration period. If this is unavoidable, staff must inform all colleagues in Monday briefing and via email.

Consolidation of Electronic Register

- House staff must ensure that electronic registers are kept up to date with no outstanding absences that are more than two weeks old (unless agreed with the Senior Deputy Head)
- Once the electronic system has been updated, a final copy of the electronic register will be printed off, bound and stored for a period of no less than three years. A backup disk is also produced on a monthly basis.

Following Up Patterns of Poor Attendance and Punctuality

Printouts of attendance data will be regularly monitored by Housemistresses, Senior Tutors and Senior Deputy Head. Together, they will identify patterns of poor attendance and punctuality and will actively seek to address the situation with students and parents.

NB: Independent schools continue to have a legal duty to report certain attendance issues to their Local Authority. These include:

- Ten days of unauthorised absence (other than for reasons of sickness or leave of absence)
- Failure to attend regularly
- Deletion from the school register when the next school is not known. In this last case, independent schools are required to report the circumstances as soon as possible to the Local Authority in which the student lives.

Morning and Afternoon Registration Procedure

Students to arrive to register by the following times:

Monday - Friday 08:15 and 13:45

Saturday 08:45

Attendance Secretary to run off the absence list at 09:00 and 14:00

A valid code may already be recorded in advance of an absence i.e. 'M' OR 'I'

Students to sign at reception after 08:30. Office staff to change 'N' to 'L' if reason is valid or 'N' to 'U'

Office staff to check absence against:

- Late Book
- Weekly Calendar, plus: Trips File – to check if a trip is scheduled (may need to contact member of staff or Educational Visit Coordinator)
- Sports Fixtures File/SOCS – to check for up to date list of team members from member of staff or Director of Sport
- Morning clubs
- Health and Wellbeing Centre
- Music Department
- PASS Department
- Library

The school office will then check timetables for those students unaccounted for and will physically check the classrooms. School office will phone home for students not accounted for and were at home the night before. Instigate the Missing Student Policy if the student was boarding overnight.

For students whose parents cannot be contacted or whose parents say they should be in school, office staff will physically inform a member of the SLT in order that a course of action can be agreed and the Missing Student Policy procedures followed if necessary.