



# Sydenham High School

GDST  
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

## Whole School Attendance Policy

This policy applies to the whole school, including the EYFS.

At Sydenham High School we see pupil attendance as critical to academic success and social integration. We ask parents to familiarise themselves with the GDST Statement on School Attendance and these policy guidelines, and to help us to promote the standards of attendance and punctuality which are essential for an orderly school environment where all pupils can get the maximum benefit from their education.

### **GDST Statement on School Attendance**

Absence, whatever its cause, is detrimental to any pupil's academic, social and emotional development. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school, with a cumulative effect. Regular or persistent absence can also indicate a pupil welfare issue.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly. Parents can only allow their child to miss school if they are too ill to go in or they have advance permission from the school. The Education (pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make it clear that Heads may only grant leave of absence *in exceptional circumstances*. As is required by law, the school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. The local safeguarding partners will also be informed if absence amounts to a safeguarding concern.

In order to maximise our pupils' potential, the GDST is committed to ensuring pupils do not miss out on their education through poor attendance rates. We expect all GDST schools to at least meet the national attendance average, and school attendance rates are monitored accordingly. A member of SLT is expected to review and analyse attendance across the school as a whole on a regular basis, following up on trends or patterns of concern, and reporting to the School Governing Board/GDST as required.

Class teachers and tutors are expected to monitor and review the attendance record of the pupils for whom they are responsible. An individual attendance record of below

90% must be followed up by the school, as will noticeable patterns, or sudden or unexplained absence.

## **School guidelines**

### **Key contacts**

The senior leader with overall responsibility for attendance at the school is Elyse Waites, Deputy Head Pastoral. For day-to-day attendance matters and more detailed support with attendance, please contact the school's Attendance Officers, Neil Tytherleigh (Senior) and Harmonie Dixon (Prep). For any ongoing attendance matters or concerns please ensure you contact the Head of Year.

### **Punctuality**

Pupils are expected to be punctual at all times. If a pupil is late for registration, they will be marked as Late on the register. Lateness without reasonable cause will be deemed to be unauthorised absence. Lateness after 9.30am will be deemed as an absence and will require a note of explanation from a parent.

#### Senior school

If a pupil is late on more than 3 occasions per half term, parents will be contacted by their daughter's form tutor. If a pupil is late more than 5 times per half term, they will receive an after school detention with the pastoral team. If a pupil arrives after 8:50am, they will need to sign in at Reception, if they fail to do this, the school will assume they are absent, and will contact parents.

### **Leave of absence**

Leave of absence can only be authorised by the Head and may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Parents should submit their request to the Head no later than three days prior to the date of absence. If an absence is authorised in advance parents will be notified and an absence note will not be required on return.

### **Action on school absence**

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school via phone or email concerning the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence and to provide such further information as may be required. If the school is not notified of a pupil's absence contact will be made to parents. The school will remain in contact with parents on a regular basis until the pupil returns.

On their return to school, parents must supply a note or email to [prep@syd.gdst.net](mailto:prep@syd.gdst.net) (Prep school) or [absence@syd.gdst.net](mailto:absence@syd.gdst.net) (Senior School). If this is not provided the absence will be investigated and recorded as unauthorised. Parents are informed if absences are recorded as unauthorised.

When a Senior school pupil is absent, they should have a return to school meeting with their tutor or Head of Year regarding any work missed. If an absence is planned in advance, the pupil must approach individual members of staff for guidance.

## **Reasons for absence**

### Illness

Parents must inform the school on the first day if their daughter is ill.

### Medical and Dental Appointments

Routine visits to the dentist, optician etc., should be arranged during school holidays or out of school hours. Authorisation for medical and dental appointments can be given in an emergency or other unavoidable circumstances. All requests need to be made at least 2 days in advance to the Head of Year and Attendance Officer and are accepted at the discretion of the Head.

### Bereavement

It is helpful if we are informed of family bereavement so that we can offer pupils sympathetic support. Absence under such circumstances will be authorised at the discretion of the Head of Year.

### Religious Observance

Absence can be authorised on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which a pupil's parents belong.

### Family/Domestic Problems

Looking after other children, minding the house, or shopping within school hours are not acceptable reasons for absence under the law.

### Special Occasions

Exceptional occasions may be sanctioned through authorised absence and must be approved by the Head. Such events might include a sibling's graduation or family

wedding. Attending sports events or concerts are not sufficient cause for authorisation.

### Study Leave

Study leave may be authorised during the official examination period for Years 11 and 13 only. A letter is always sent to parents before study leave commences. Parents are asked to note carefully the dates on which study leave commences.

Although most pupils prefer to study at home during examination periods, there are always study facilities available in school for those who wish to work in school. Authorisation for absence for studying will not be given for periods outside those indicated to parents.

Study leave is a privilege which may be withdrawn if a pupil seems unlikely to use the time profitably.

### Absence during examination periods

Authorisation for absence will not be granted during exam periods and pupils should not arrange to visit other schools or Universities during internal or mock examinations. If a student is unwell or absent for an unforeseen, emergency reason then parents should contact the Head of Year as soon as possible. If a student is absent due to illness or an unforeseen emergency reason during the public examination season they must contact the Head of Year and school exams officer as soon as possible and certainly prior to the start of the examination.

### Year 6 absence for exams and open days

Year 6 may be granted leave to attend 11+ exams and interviews at other schools at the discretion of the Head. Open days and evenings should be attended outside school hours. Any request to attend an open event, examination or interview during school hours must be made in writing to the head and supporting documentation must be supplied.

## **Sixth Form**

### Flexible day

Sixth formers have a flexible day, recognising their growing maturity and bridging the gap between formal schooling and post 18 study or work. They must attend school every day, arriving before 8.30am in time for morning registration and form time. They must attend all timetabled lessons, and ensure that they sign in and out of Reception. Year 12s are only able to leave school during lunch time (12.25-1.15pm), year 13s are only able to leave school after their last timetabled lesson but must sign out. If year 13

pupils complete their timetabled lessons earlier than lunchtime on a given day, they must remain in school studying until lunchtime begins. All regular appointments, driving lessons etc. must be scheduled outside of school hours. Permission to miss taught lessons will not be given, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any pupil who does not attend lessons or whose progress is not good will have the privilege of a flexible day removed. Should a pupil be unable to attend school, parents/careers should notify the school in the usual way.

### Open Days

Sixth Form pupils are expected to visit Universities and Colleges during school holidays and weekends. However, if unavoidable, a letter requesting authorisation plus the booking confirmation from the University must be provided. Permission will be granted at the discretion of the Head of Sixth Form and it is expected that any pupil would not attend more than two open days during school time in the course of an academic year.

### Interviews

Sixth formers must, of course, attend interviews at Universities and Colleges at the times and on the dates allocated by the institutions. It is essential that they keep their Form Tutors informed of these dates.

### Work Experience

Students in Years 12 and 13 are encouraged to gain work experience during the school holiday periods. In addition to this there may be a period of work experience for specific year groups scheduled on the school calendar. Some sixth form students may also be permitted to carry out work experience during times of the day when they have a study period. This must be agreed with the Head of Sixth Form.

### **Persistent or severe absence**

Where absence or a pattern of absence appears to be at risk of becoming problematic, the school will meet with the parents to discuss how to support the pupil and remove barriers to attendance where possible. This may include referrals to external services and other organisations. These actions will be regularly reviewed, and stepped up if there is no improvement to the situation. Where a whole family response is appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment. Ultimately if voluntary support is not effective the school will work with the local authority to put more formal measures in place. Persistent or severe absence is always treated as a safeguarding risk. Please refer to Table 1 for the actions that will be taken by the Senior School in cases of absence.

**Table 1: Actions the school will take in case of regular/persistent absence in the Senior school.**

Stage	Description	Actions
1	Absence falls below 95%	Head of Section will ask the Attendance Officer to send Letter 1 home informing parents of attendance % and offering support.
2	Absence falls below 90%	Head of Section will ask the Attendance officer to send Letter 2. This is now in breach of the attendance policy and a meeting with parents, Head of Section and Deputy Head Pastoral will be arranged. Absence contract is written and signed with clear targets. Areas for support are identified and necessary referrals made, e.g. to the school nurse or counsellor. Referrals may also be made to out of school agencies
4	Absence falls below 85%	Letter 3. Case is referred to external agencies and parents are informed. This will be on a case by case basis..

### **Pupils with individual needs**

Whilst good attendance is an expectation for all pupils at the school, we recognise that this may be more of a challenge for some pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, or those suffering from long term medical conditions or mental health issues. The school will allow for these circumstances when working with such pupils and their parents, and will develop individualised support approaches that meet their specific needs where appropriate.

### **Returning to school**

Sometimes a pupil who has been absent for some time finds it difficult to return. In such circumstances the school will work with the pupil and parents to support reintegration.