

POLICY – ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy owner	Deputy Head Pastoral (Mrs H P Dolding)
Policy last reviewed	September 2022
Policy next review date	September 2023
Policy audience	Public

At Norwich High School for Girls, we see student attendance as critical to academic success and social integration. We monitor attendance rates on an ongoing basis and teachers, tutors and pastoral leads will take action if a student's absence becomes a concern, as required by the law.

We ask parents to familiarise themselves with our policy and 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 student'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 (Student 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 students' potential, the GDST is committed to ensuring students 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 the 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 as required, and reporting to the School Governing Board.

Class teachers and tutors are expected to monitor and review the attendance record of the students for whom they are responsible. An individual attendance record of below 90% must be followed up by the school, as will noticeable patterns, sudden or unexplained absence.

School guidelines

Key contacts

The senior leader with overall responsibility for attendance at the school is Mrs Helen Dolding (Deputy Head, Pastoral). For day-to-day attendance matters, please contact your child's form tutor. For more detailed support with attendance contact Mrs Susan Roberts (Head of Prep School) in the Prep school or the relevant Head of Year in the senior school.

Leave of absence

Leave of absence can only be authorised by the Deputy Head Pastoral for absences lasting one or two days, the Head for a longer absence period, and may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

Parents should email their request via admin@nor.gdst.net 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 telephone the school concerning the reason for a student'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 student's absence a call will be made to parents. Schools are expected to remain in contact with parents on a regular basis until the student returns.

On the student's return to school, parents must supply a note or email to the student's form tutor indicating the cause of the absence, if we have not been notified of the absence already. If this is not forthcoming the absence will be investigated. If no absence note is received, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Parents are informed if absences are recorded as unauthorised.

If an absence occurs, it is the responsibility of the student to make up any lost work. If an absence is known in advance, the student must approach individual members of staff for guidance.

Reasons for absence

Illness

Parents are requested to telephone the school on the first day if their child is ill.

Senior school

For the following absence requests, we advise parents to inform the school via admin@nor.gdst.net and copy in their child's Form Tutor.

Prep school

For the following absence requests we advise parents to inform the school via a.howard@nor.gdst.net and copy in their child's class teacher .

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.

Bereavement

It is helpful if we are informed of family bereavement so that we can offer students sympathetic support. Absence under such circumstances will, of course, be authorised.

Religious Observance

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

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 carefully note the dates on which study leave commences.

Although most students 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 student seems unlikely to use the time profitably.

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 Director of Sixth Form.

Senior and Prep school

For the following absence requests, we advise parents to contact the Headteacher of Prep or Senior school.

Special Occasions

Exceptional occasions may be sanctioned through authorised absence. Such events might include a sibling's graduation or family wedding. Attending sports events or concerts are not sufficient cause for authorisation.

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 in time for morning registration and form time. They must attend all timetabled lessons, but will be able to leave the school during their lunch and break, signing in and out. With permission from their parent or guardian and a member of the Sixth Form Team, sixth formers may also take a study afternoon where they leave the premises once a week and in non-taught sessions, signing out at lunchtime. All regular appointments, driving lessons etc. must be scheduled for study periods and ideally study afternoons. Permission to miss taught lessons will not be given unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any student who does

not attend lessons or whose progress is not good will have the privilege of study afternoons removed. Should a student be unable to attend school, parents/careers should notify the school in the usual way.

Open Days

Sixth Form students are expected to visit Universities and Colleges during school holidays. However, a maximum two Open Days may be attended during term time if appropriate letters requesting authorisation for absence are brought in, or emailed to admin@nor.gdst.net

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.

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.

Students 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 students, 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 student who has been off school for some time finds it difficult to return. In such circumstances it is of paramount importance that parents contact the Deputy Head Pastoral, appropriate Head of Year in Senior School, or Miss Brand in the Prep school, to discuss procedures for supported reintegration.

Punctuality

Students are expected to be punctual at all times. If a student is late, they must register with their form tutor if possible. Otherwise, they must sign in with reception. If a student fails to do this, the school will assume they are absent. 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.