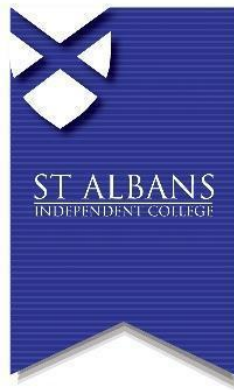


Attendance & Punctuality Policy

St Albans Independent College



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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to College attendance. Our whole-College culture and ethos places high value upon sustained excellence in attendance, through the following:

- Promoting good attendance in line with the government national framework
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend College
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.
- Ensuring all staff at the college are trained and understand their individual roles in supporting good attendance.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve College attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [College attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern College attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [College census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for Colleges](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team supported by External Advisors will work collectively to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance across the College, in both our policies and our ethos
- Make sure that College leaders fulfil their expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review and challenge attendance data
- Monitor attendance figures for the whole College
- Make sure that staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Ensure the review of attendance data drives College strategies on attendance
- Review the impact of the College attendance strategies and amend as necessary
- Hold the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the College
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students

- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies and interventions
- Issuing non-attendance notices, where necessary

3.3 The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The Designated Senior Leader is responsible for:

- The implementation of the Attendance Policy at the College
- Monitoring College-level absence data and reporting it to Senior Leadership Team
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Identifying areas of focus for improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of attendance data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention and reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and appropriate support to students and families as required

The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance is Nicola Logan and can be contacted on 01727 842348 or by email on nlogan@stalbanscollege.co.uk

3.4 The College Attendance Officer

The College Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing cumulative attendance data
- Producing weekly attendance reports and summaries
- Benchmarking attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to college mentors, SLT, and others ad hoc as required
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance
- Consistently and rigorously implementing attendance interventions when students attendance falls below set thresholds
- Working with families, the Local Authority and other external agencies to tackle persistent absence
- Working closely with the Designated Senior Leader & College Principal to understand and advise on the possible legal consequences of critical levels of attendance or persistent non-attendance
- Identifying patterns that may include absence/punctuality issues on specific days/subject areas/test weeks/ensuring any weekly patterns are communicated to the Mentors.

The attendance officer is Sarah Barker and can be contacted on 01727 842348 or by email on sbarker@stalbanscollege.co.uk

3.5 Mentors

Mentors are responsible for:

- Monitoring the weekly attendance of their mentees
- Working with the College Attendance Team, students and their families to plan the most appropriate interventions when attendance falls below set thresholds
- Ensuring there is consistency in the implementation of interventions for students falling below set thresholds
- Working as a team to ensure fairness when personalising attendance plans on Provision Map
- Monitoring the impact of interventions to improve levels of attendance for their mentees
- Regularly reviewing attendance with their mentees at half termly mentor meetings
- Actioning identified patterns for absence / punctuality by the Attendance Officer.

3.6 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance promptly and accurately at the start of each session, using the agreed codes (Present (/ or \) / Absent (N) / Late (L) + minuted late only)
- Reporting concerns about non-attendance through CPOMs as necessary

3.7 Office Staff

Office Staff will be responsible for:

- Checking messages on the absence line, as well as absence emails daily – recording absences with the appropriate codes
- Taking calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the College system, using appropriate codes
- Transferring calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Officer in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance if required
- Ensuring all students are greeted on arrival, supporting them with time table queries and directing them to their correct class room if required.
- Contacting parents when a student has not been registered 30 minutes after the start of the lesson
- If no reason has been given by a Parent / Guardian / Carer within 5 working days of the absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents notified

Office Staff are those working on Reception at each building

3.8 Parents / Guardians / Carers

Parents/ guardians / carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every lesson on time
- Call the absence line, which is an automated voicemail, or email absence@stalbanscollege.co.uk to report student absence, before the start of their lesson, or as soon as possible thereafter, and on each subsequent day of absence.
- Advise on when a student is expected to return, where possible
- Provide the College with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of their timetabled lessons
- If appointments are unavoidable, parents must notify the college in writing in advance of the appointment
- Provide details of the absence in writing via email to absence@stalbanscollege.co.uk - even in cases where they have called to notify the college

3.9 Students

Students are expected to:

- Attend every timetabled lesson on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register for all students for all timetabled lessons

We will take our attendance register at the start of each session throughout every College day

It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Late
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will 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

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive in College at the beginning of each of their learning sessions

The register for each session will be taken at the timetabled starting time and will be kept open for 30 minutes after the session begins.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the College of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practically possible by calling the College absence line or by emailing absence@stalbanscollege.co.uk

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the College has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 2 consecutive days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the College will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the College is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the College in advance of the appointment. If no prior notification is given the absence will be noted as unauthorised.

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of College hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of College for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer can also apply for other types of term-time absence. This must be done as far in advance as possible of the requested absence, at a minimum 4 weeks in term time. Requests for leave of absence should be addressed to the College Principal and emailed to absence@stalbanscollege.co.uk

Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the College can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L) and the minutes they are late.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)

When students are persistently late, parents/carers will be notified and students may be monitored using a punctuality plan until a significant improvement is noted.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend College does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the College will:

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Call the student's parent/carer on the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the College cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts and there are significant concerns, a member of the attendance team may contact external agencies
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after a session has been missed
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the College may consider involving external agencies

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The College will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. Attendance data will be discussed at parent consultation appointments and will be included in the written reports that are sent out.

4.7 Online lessons

Students are expected to attend all lessons in person at the College. Online lessons may only be approved in exceptional circumstances. Any requests for online lessons must be made in writing at least 5 College days in advance. Requests should be submitted to the Attendance Team via attendance@stalbanscollege.co.uk.

Government policy dictates that all students "absent from school and receiving remote education still need to be marked as absent in the register" (Providing Remote Education: Guidance for Schools, DfE (2024); Pupil Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, Statutory Guidance).

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The College Principal will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as events that are out of the ordinary or beyond parents/carers control

The College considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence. Parents/carers must submit absence requests to the College Principal, via email, to attendance@stalbanscollege.co.uk. The Principal may require additional evidence of any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the College will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart for this purpose
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the College, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision
- Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the College Principal may grant term-time holiday
- Agreed study leave or visits/interviews relating to Higher or Further Education
- Flexible timetables

Should students feel unwell at any point during the College Day, they should report to a member of the Office Staff. An assessment will be made as to whether students should remain at College or be sent home. The College staff will contact parents should a student need to return home.

5.2 Further sanctions

The College may issue further sanctions to parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from College.

The decision on whether to issue a further sanction may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during College hours without a justifiable reason

The College reserves the right to remove a student from a course if their attendance does not improve following the steps outlined in this policy.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The College promotes attendance by rewarding improved attendance on a weekly basis.

Postcards are sent home when targets for improvement are reached, and there are attendance champions of the Week display boards at our Victoria Street Campus and London Road where students who have made a significant effort to improve their attendance, and improvements have been identified in their attendance data.

Attendance data is reported to parents/carers regularly throughout the academic year, during meetings and parent consultations or at formal reporting times.

Improvements in attendance as well as sustained excellence of attendance will be recognised at the end of term all those with exceptional attendance will be entered into a prize draw and will then be further celebrated when reports are sent by including a letter with the report, along with a reward for the student. At the end of the academic year there will be a celebration to mark their attendance achievement.

7. Attendance monitoring

Sustained excellence in attendance at the College is important, but we are mindful of the nature of the needs of individual students. Whilst there may be times when students are unwell and unable to attend, our aim is always to work on improving attendance. The College recognises that 100% attendance is not always achievable but encouraging students to be as close to it as possible ensures our students have the greatest opportunity to succeed in their education, and we believe this also gives them the best chance of maintaining their wellbeing.

Attendance summaries are produced on a weekly basis, for the whole College and for identified groups within. Particular attention is given to the attendance thresholds, so that students falling below, or close to falling below 50%, 70% or 80% (The College Attendance Target) can be promptly identified and appropriately supported.

7.1 Monitoring and Analysing attendance

The College will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, and yearly across the College and at an individual student level
- Identify whether there are individuals or particular groups of students whose absence are a cause for concern

The College will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.2 Using data to improve attendance

The Attendance Team will:

- Provide weekly attendance reports to mentors and other College leaders, to facilitate discussions with students and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.3 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Within the College Policy we will consider the following terminology alongside the percentages below:

- A student whose attendance has fallen below **80%** will be considered **persistent**
- A student whose attendance has fallen below **70%** will be considered **vulnerable**
- A student whose attendance has fallen below **50%** will be considered **critical**

The College will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and critical absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of students who the College (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or who are persistently or critically absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at College
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- When a student falls below attendance thresholds the following procedures will be followed:
 - For 80% or below, a letter/email to parents reminding them of the College attendance expectations
 - For 70% or below a letter/email followed by a call from the Attendance/Safeguarding team to arrange an in person meeting to discuss barriers to attendance. The mentor and Attendance team will follow up with an agreed Level 1 Attendance Plan on Provision Map, which all staff will be made aware of. Parents and Students are expected to agree and adhere to the plan with the aim to improve attendance.
 - For 50% or below a letter/email and an in person meeting at College with the mentor and a member of the Senior Leadership Team (DSL or deputy DSL). Level 2 Attendance Plan to be put in place.
 - Where a student has persistent and significant non-attendance, a Level 3 Attendance Plan on Provision Map will be put in place by the Safeguarding/Attendance Team detailing external professional involvement. These will be monitored closely by the College Leadership Team.
 - If no appropriate Level 3 Attendance Plan can be agreed between the College and Parents/Carers, the College reserves the right to remove a student from the College roll.

In cases of unresolved persistent absence, we will work with the local authority and parents to find students an alternative educational placement.

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and at a minimum each year by the Attendance Staff and the Senior Leadership Team.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour policy