

SAFEGUARDING POLICY – APPENDIX 3

SAFEGUARDING RESPONSE TO UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE AND CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

Children being absent from school or college, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Where children are already known to Children's Social Care and need a social worker, being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

The Department for Education's guidance on Children Missing Education September 2016 requires school to:

- monitor attendance through their daily register and address poor or irregular attendance;
- inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority, or in default of such agreement, at intervals determined by the Secretary of State;
- undertake reasonable enquiries to establish a child's whereabouts and to consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity when a pupil fails to attend school on an agreed first day of attendance;
- notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point under any of the fifteen grounds set out in Annex A of Children Missing Education September 2016;
- notify the local authority within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point.

It is the Form Tutor's responsibility to keep an accurate record of attendance.

In the Senior School, Form Tutors should advise the Head of Year of any extended, unreasonable or suspicious absence. The Head of Year should liaise with the Head of Section and Designated Safeguarding Lead regarding such absences.

In the Junior School, Form Tutors should advise the Head of any extended, unreasonable or suspicious absence.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will work with the Pastoral Administrator (Senior School) or Head's Secretary (Junior School) to inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more. Guidance in Section 5 (Persistent and Severe Absence) of Working Together to Improve School Attendance explains how schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will also work with the Pastoral Administrator/Junior School Head's Secretary to undertake reasonable enquiries to establish a child's whereabouts and to consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity when a pupil fails to attend school on an agreed first day of attendance, to notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point, and to notify the local authority within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point.

Staff handbook information on the School's procedures

Registration

All pupils are registered electronically on ISAMS. Registration is a very important statutory requirement and staff are reminded that parents are able to view attendance via the Parent Portal.

Pupils register in their form rooms for morning registration and in lessons for afternoon registration at the start of the lesson.

Morning registration

Morning registration takes place at 8:40 am and should be completed by 8.45 am, with a final data entry deadline of 9:15am. Email and/or SMS messages will be sent to parents of absent pupils when the reason for absence is entered as not known. Therefore it is important that if FTs are advised of the reason for absence it is entered in iSAMS as soon as possible. If parents phone or email the office staff with information, this will be entered directly into the system on behalf of the Form Tutors.

Afternoon registration

Senior School: Afternoon registration is taken at the start of Period 4, 1:50pm, with a final data entry deadline of 2:05 pm.

Junior School: Afternoon registration is carried out by the member of staff teaching the class at 1:05pm and should be completed by 1:15 pm, with a final data entry deadline of 1:30 pm.

Information received directly by the office staff and entered into the system on FTs behalf that morning can only be entered into the system at the morning registration. Form Tutors should check any note entry for the morning session and update the afternoon session accordingly. It is helpful to Form Tutors if period 4 teachers in the Senior School are able to update the register for absent pupils with any absence code from morning registration.

If a pupil was present at morning registration but is marked as a Code N absence in lesson 4 registration an automatic alert is sent to the Pastoral Administrator so that the pupil's absence can be investigated.

Lates

Senior School: Latecomers at morning registration are required to sign in at the School Office. This information will be updated in the system by the Pastoral Administrator during the course of the morning. Pupils must not sign in for convenience and should make every effort to get to registration. Punctuality is important; lateness is dealt with by the Head of Section/Head of Year who receive a weekly late monitoring report. Sixth Form registration is just as important as that of younger pupils.

Junior School: A pupil will be deemed late if he or she does not arrive in time to be registered by 8.45am or 1.05pm. Pupils who are late must sign in at the School Office. Persistent lateness is monitored and dealt with by the Deputy Head.

Failure To Sign In (Senior School)

Pupils who fail to follow the correct procedures will be warned on the first occasion. Any subsequent instances will be recorded as an incident on ISAMS and automatic notifications sent to Form Tutors and Head of Year/Head of Section so that sanctions can be put in place via the pastoral system.

The Eyeball Rule

Please remember the Registration Eyeball Rule - If a pupil is not at Registration and you have not eyeballed them, **mark them absent**. It should not be assumed that they are elsewhere. Please do not overwrite a registration, however, as other staff such as the School Nurse, Music Administrator or the School Office may have registered pupils for you.

If a member of staff has pupils on the school site for a different activity which stops them attending registration e.g. Maths challenge, controlled assessment, sport, School Nurse, Music lesson... **then it is that member of staff's responsibility to ensure those pupils are registered**. They can enter the information into the system themselves or they can inform the Pastoral Administrator who will update the system on their behalf.

Absence Notes

Attendance of pupils is the responsibility of the Form Tutor who must keep an accurate record; this is as necessary for the Sixth Form as for every other year.

Senior School:

When a pupil's absence continues beyond 3 days with no explanation advised, Form Tutors should contact parents to confirm the reason. The Form Tutor should advise the Head of Year of any extended, unreasonable or suspicious absence. The Head of Year should liaise with the Head of Section and Designated Safeguarding Lead regarding such absences.

(a) Routine absences: should be dealt with by the Form Tutor and cover orthodontic treatment, hospital appointments, university interviews or Open Days, driving tests, music examinations, etc. **An absence of 3 days or more with no communicated reason should always be followed up by the Form Tutor.**

(b) Extraordinary absences: have to be authorised by the Head in the first instance, and cover extended holidays, funerals, scout camps, sports competitions and all religious festivals and holy days. The Head sends copies of all absence correspondence to the Form Tutor.

Every absence, whether long or short, serious or trivial, must be covered by a parental communication: a telephone message, email or note. If there is any concern about the validity of the notification the Form Tutor should discuss it with the Head of Section. **Form Tutors must ring or email the parents to verify an absence if they do not receive an explanation within 3 days.**

Absences which remain as Code N unexplained for **more than two weeks** are examined by the Head of Section, who may write to parents requesting an explanation for the absence.

Form Tutors should record parental communications (telephone calls, emails or notes) in the notes on the register.

Junior School:

Absences are dealt with through the School Office. Every absence, whether long or short, serious or trivial, must be covered, by a parental communication: a telephone message, the standard school form, email or note. Form Tutors should retain **all** absence notes and a record of telephone and email communications, keeping them in a dedicated wallet file obtainable from the School Office. At the end of term Form Tutors should forward all notes to the School Office. The notes will be stored centrally for two years. Wallets will be returned for use in the new term.

Pupils with less than 90% attendance per term

The Pastoral Administrator (Senior School) or Deputy Head (Junior School) produces termly lists of pupils with less than 90% attendance for Head of Section/Junior School Headmaster to review. Heads of Section/Junior School Head write to parents of these pupils unless there is a valid reason for less than 90% attendance.

Stockport local authority requests termly lists of pupils with less than 85% attendance. The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Pastoral Administrator (Senior School) or Head's Secretary (Junior School) send these lists. The pastoral team work with Stockport local authority to support/work with pupils and their families where there are concerns about non-valid poor attendance.

Pupils Off-Site

Pupils who leave the premises during the school day for appointments etc. should sign out at the School Office. Pupils who return to school during the school day should sign back in at the School Office on their return.

Senior School:

The Pastoral Administrator will update ISAMS as soon as practical. The School Office always have the most current information should you need it. All entries on the signing in/out sheet will be updated in the registration system by the end of each day.

After signing out at the School Office, pupils will only be allowed exit at the gate by presenting a signed parental note to the Gatekeeper. If the parent has emailed permission, the Form Tutor should forward it to the Gatekeeper.

The Gatekeeper will pass all notes to the School Office at the end of each week for retention until the end of the year.

Pupils should present the note or planner entry to their Form Tutor to be countersigned so that the Form Tutor is aware when pupils will be leaving the school site during the day and can record the correct code for afternoon registration absence as necessary. However, the Gatekeeper can accept a note that has been signed by the parent but not by the Form Tutor.

During periods of Study Leave **all** pupils must also show their lunch passes to the Gatekeeper on exit. Lunch passes are colour coded by year group and will serve to identify Fifth Form and Sixth Form pupils who are permitted to leave early whilst on Study Leave.

Trips

If a member of staff takes pupils out of school during the day, they should follow the procedure as detailed in the SGS Trips Procedure document, recording a custom group on ISAMS and then leaving a signed list with the School Office on departure to ensure we know exactly who has gone off site in the event of an emergency. If the trip departs out of school hours the Trip Leader will confirm the departure list by leaving a message on the

school's voicemail. In both instances the School Office will forward the final list to Form Tutors for them to update future registration sessions to ensure our information is accurate for the duration of the trip.

If the group returns before the end of the school day, the School Office should be informed and the list discarded.

Activities

A member of staff organising an activity should not withdraw pupils from their normal timetable commitments without gaining prior permission from the Head. Senior School staff should submit a list of absent pupils to the School Office for inclusion on the Weekly Information Sheet by 1.30 p.m. on the preceding Friday. In the Junior School, staff will be informed at the weekly briefing and information will be displayed in the staff room.