



**Promoting Good Attendance
in the Sixth Form:
A Guide for Parents
and Carers**

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Introduction

St Aidan's and St John Fisher Associated Sixth Form is a highly successful Sixth Form and your student plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach their potential. Full attendance at school is the best way to ensure this happens unless there are unavoidable reasons for absence.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your student attends regularly and this booklet sets out how we will achieve this together.

Why Regular Attendance and Punctuality are so important:

Every student has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents/carers and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all students.

Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital your child is punctual and at school every day. The routines students develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between higher education, employment or training

Learning

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect learning. High levels of attendance and punctuality are characteristics of students who achieve above or in-line with their potential, with research showing that poor attendance and punctuality have a serious detrimental effect on outcomes.

Safeguarding and supporting students

We encourage and value high attendance rates. However, we recognise the external factors which influence student attendance and will work in partnership with parents/carers, Sixth Form Attendance Officer and other relevant services to support with any identified issues. The school will take a proactive approach in the promotion of good attendance, by defining expectations with students and their parents/carers and will provide an effective and efficient system for monitoring attendance in accordance with statutory guidance.

- We will monitor and analyse data to identify those students that may need support to attend school regularly
- We will regularly analyse data to both identify and then provide support to students or cohorts that need it
- We will look at historic and emerging patterns and develop strategies to address these.
- We recognise that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk. All issues which may cause a student to experience attendance difficulties are promptly investigated by the Safeguarding Lead and appropriate action will be taken
- Support is available and put in place for those students who are unable to attend school and links are made via the Safeguarding Lead and Assistant Directors of 6th Form/Head of Year. We also work with the relevant outside agencies and NYC to support the student
- Students who have been absent for any extended period will be reintegrated back into school through a discussion with their Assistant Directors of 6th Form/Head of Year, followed by a structured and individually tailored programme, as a short-term measure to ease the transition
- The school has a nominated Attendance Lead and Safeguarding Lead who work closely with the teachers on attendance and punctuality. The school will contact parents/carers, make home visits and support both parents/carers and students on attendance and punctuality matters where appropriate

Attendance Agreement

Until the age of 18, a student must stay in education or training, for example, at a school or college, start an apprenticeship or traineeship. As a parent/carer you are responsible for making sure that this happens, either by registering your child at a school or by making other arrangements. Once your child is registered at a school you are responsible for making sure they attend regularly.

All students are expected to attend 100% of sessions including curricular subjects, registration, assemblies and any other directed sessions. Attendance is defined as: participation in the programme of educational activities arranged by St Aidan's and St John Fisher Associated Sixth Form. This may also include:

- Work experience
- Educational visits (including foreign exchanges) organised or approved by the schools
- Day and residential visits to outdoor centres
- School/department study days
- Interviews and visits relating to further and/or higher education (up to a maximum of 3 Open Days per year)
- Debates, sports, musical or theatrical productions etc. arranged by, or in conjunction with, the schools

Monitoring attendance

Our strict attendance monitoring process allows for immediate awareness of absences - these will be communicated to you via email. If a student is not present when the class register is taken, an email will be sent to you and the student, advising that your student is absent from the lesson. Registers are taken within the first 10 minutes of a lesson. If for any reason a student arrives late to a lesson, we would be grateful if they could check with the teacher that the register has been amended.

Students' attendance will be closely monitored by their Form Tutor, Sixth Form Team and Attendance Officer. We appreciate that there may be times when a student will have to be absent from school.

For St Aidan's based students, parents/carers must notify the school by 8.45 am with the reason for absence either by phone call or by email attendanceofficer6thform@staidans.co.uk

For St John Fisher based students, parents/carers must notify the school by 8.45am using the report absence form which can be found on the website.

This should be completed for each day that the student is absent, unless arrangements have been made with the attendance officer in advance.

For planned absence, a leave of absence during term time can be requested by completing the absence request form on the website. This should be made at least two weeks in advance of the absence, and there must be exceptional circumstances for the leave to be authorised by school.

For St Aidan's based students, the absence request form should be emailed to attendanceofficer6thform@staidans.co.uk

For St John Fisher based students, the absence request form should be emailed to 6thform@sifchs.org. marked for the attention of the Headteacher.

All absences will be considered unauthorised unless a valid reason is given.

Understanding types of absence

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the student to be away, or where an explanation, offered afterwards, has been accepted as a justification for absence.

Only schools can authorise absence. Should staff have reason to doubt that the explanation offered about a particular absence is genuine or acceptable; the absence must be treated as unauthorised.

Examples of non-attendance that may be authorised:

- Illness. Repeated absence for illness, even if only for short periods of time, will be followed up and, where appropriate, be discussed with the student and/or their parent/carer. Medical evidence/certificate may be requested for longer periods of absences (10 days or more) and hospital or specialist appointments
- Urgent (not routine) medical or dental appointments. Evidence may be requested.
- Confirmed school transport problems – where this results in the student being late to lessons but not to missing a whole day of lessons
- An interview for a permanent job is attended, and invitation to interview is presented as evidence
- Official Evidence is provided that a Court attendance is required
- Official Evidence is provided that a Driving Test (practical or theory) is to be attended
- There are exceptional family difficulties or circumstances
- The wedding of immediate family is attended
- A family bereavement, including the funeral of a close family relative or friend is attended.
- Religious observance is required
- Traveller child is travelling
- Approved study leave
- Involvement in public performance/sporting event
- There are exceptional circumstances for the absence

Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the student's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school, not to fall in the authorised category.

Unauthorised absence will be recorded if:

- A student is absent from a session where authorisation for absence has not been granted
- A holiday/social event is taken during term-time (family holidays will only be authorised in term time where there are exceptional reasons why it cannot be taken during the holiday period)
- A driving lesson is arranged during the school day except **lunchtime** (you cannot organise a driving lesson during a core learning session or a self-directed learning period)
- An interview for casual/part-time employment is attended
- A period of part-time job training is attended
- A student is missing lessons to complete coursework/homework
- A student is missing lessons if seeking to change/discontinue a course before approval has been officially given

Punctuality

Students are expected to arrive on time for all lessons and timetabled sessions, including registration. Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your student misses registration or the start of a lesson they can miss work and do not spend time with their teacher getting vital information and news for the day.

For St Aidan's based students, if a student arrives after 9.15 am they must sign in at the Sixth Form Office. If a student signs in late after 9.15 am this will be recorded as unauthorised, unless a valid reason is given.

For St John Fisher based students, if a student arrives after 9.15 am they must sign in via the Inventory system at Main Reception.

If a student signs in late after 9.15 am this will be recorded as unauthorised, unless a valid reason is given.

Illness

If a student feels unwell during the school day they must go to the medical room (SA) or Main Reception (SJF). No student should leave the school premises without following this guidance. A medical note will be required for 10 consecutive school days absence or long-term medical conditions which result in regular absence.

Contact details and Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about a range of matters, including absence, so we need to always have the correct contact numbers. It is important that you ensure we always have an up-to-date number – if we don't, then we may be unable to contact you if there is an emergency.

Please also note that attendance data is often requested by prospective employers or tutors in references, so it is important that records of attendance in lessons are accurate; students are responsible for attending all lessons punctually to be registered accurately. Form Tutors receive weekly attendance reports and will work with students to address any reported unauthorised absences. Any problems with regular attendance should be resolved between the school, the parents/carers and the student. If your student is struggling to attend school, then please notify their Head of Year to discuss the reasons for this.

Summary

St Aidan's and St John Fisher Associated Sixth Form has a legal duty to advise parents/carers of absences and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their student attends school.

All our staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every student's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.