



Queen Mary's Grammar School

Attendance Policy

Approved by the LGB, December 2024

Next review: LGB1, September 2025

Queen Mary's Grammar School is committed to an expectation of 100% attendance for all pupils. Regular attendance is a key factor in the drive to raise standards of attainment and enhance the learning opportunities of all pupils.

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the DFE's statutory guidance. (Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024)

1. A Statement of Policy on Attendance

- The School is committed to an expectation of maximum attendance for all pupils.
- We believe that full attendance is essential for pupils to achieve their potential. It is the parent's responsibility to perform their legal duty by ensuring their child attends school. (Education Act 1996)
- The School will not normally authorise absence for undocumented or unsubstantiated illness, medical or other appointments or for holidays in term time.
- The School will investigate any problems affecting a pupil's attendance and work with the parents and other appropriate agencies to resolve any issues.
- The School will look to act early to address patterns of absence.
- The policy considers the Department of Education document 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' August 2024.

The School will take action:

- By ensuring that all staff are aware of these expectations.
- By ensuring that all pupils are aware of these expectations.
- By working closely with parents and pupils to resolve any difficulties and offer early help where necessary
- By working, where necessary, with outside agencies.

Action is carried out:

- By Form and Group Tutors
- Year Teams, co-ordinated by the SLT member responsible for attendance- Miss R Naguthney, Assistant Headteacher
- Attendance Lead- Mrs L Nolan, Attendance Champion
- The Headmaster- Mr R Langton
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) if appropriate- Mr G Collins, Assistant Headteacher
- SASS (School Attendance Support Service) and other colleagues at the Local Authority

2. In pursuit of this Policy, the School has the following aims:

- To ensure that staff have high expectations regarding attendance.
- To ensure that parents are aware of, and share, the school's expectations through daily contact before 8.45
- Contacting parents on the first day of absence where a reason has not been provided.
- To ensure that pupils conform to the school's regulations, by arriving on time properly prepared for the day.

3. The School will endeavour to implement these aims as follows:

- The Headmaster will take overall responsibility for the Policy and its implementation, for liaison with the Governing Body, parents and appropriate outside agencies; and for the appointment within the School of a Designated Teacher with responsibility for implementing the Policy.
- The Designated Senior Leader is Miss R Naguthney who will co-ordinate the work of the Year Teams, Group Tutors, and Form Tutors alongside Mr R Matley (Head of Sixth Form).
- Daily attendance, in the morning and afternoon, will be recorded using SIMS/Edulink by the relevant tutor or teacher and overseen by the attendance lead, Mrs L. Nolan.
- Form and Group Tutors will be provided attendance information and prompted to discuss initial concerns with pupils and raise any concerns with the school attendance lead, Mrs L Nolan, who in turn will liaise with parents.
- The school follows the '[Guidance on infection control in schools](#)' published by the Public Health Agency when acting upon absences.
- Parents must notify the school at the earliest possible time i.e. before 8.45 a.m. each morning of an absence. This can be done by either phoning the school, leaving a message on the absence line or by emailing absences at absences@qmgs.merciantrust.org.uk.
- Parents must clearly state the pupil's name, form, and nature of absence.
- Medical appointments should be arranged outside of school time wherever possible.
- The school must be notified a minimum of 3 days in advance of any medical appointment that has been made. Without this prior notification the absence will not be authorised.
- Mrs L. Nolan, Attendance Lead, will make daily contact if a child is marked absent without a valid reason.
- School may complete a safe and well home visit if we do not know the reason for a child's absence as we have not received communication from home.
- Daily and overall attendance can be monitored by parents using the Edulink App.
- It is the pupil's responsibility to catch up on the class work missed and/or submit any work which was due in their absence.
- Attendance and punctuality is monitored on a regular basis. Appropriate levels of challenge and support will be implemented where there are patterns that gives cause for concern. If a child's attendance falls below 92% then they are classed as being 'persistently absent' and in turn the school will inform parents and liaise to improve attendance and help remove any barriers to attendance.
- If there is not an improvement or parents fail to engage with school the Local Authority's School Attendance Support Service can and will issue legal proceedings where parents aren't meeting their legal obligation to ensure their child attends school.

4. Authorised Absence

- The Headmaster will authorise absence for the following reasons:
 - a) Illness where supported by appropriate documentation. Parents are expected to inform school daily by 8.45 of a pupils' absence by calling the school absence line and giving the pupils full name and form and provide supportive evidence ie: proof of prescription or phone call to GP
 - b) Unavoidable medical appointments, supported by appropriate documentation submitted 3 days in advance.
 - c) Religious observance (when notified in advance using the correct protocols).

d) Other family circumstances at his discretion in line with Department of Education and Local Authority guidelines.

e) Absences that fall within the government guidelines and control measures for any infections

Additionally, in the Sixth Form

e) Interviews & Open Days

f) Courses

g) Driving tests

Any expected absence must be communicated with the school well in advance and permission sought from the Headmaster.

5. Unauthorised Absence (Attendance mark "O")

- The Headmaster will not authorise absences where no acceptable reason is provided.
- Parents are expected not to take holidays during term time unless there are *exceptional circumstances*. Parents should expect the Local Authority to serve a penalty notice in such circumstances.
- Attendance is monitored on a regular basis by Reception staff, Year Teams and the Designated Teacher in charge of attendance, Miss R Naguthney and Attendance Lead, Mrs L. Nolan. These staff members will challenge and support pupils and parents where there are concerns with attendance rates or specific absences. They will also liaise with the Local Authority and seek support from the Local authority's School Attendance Support Service where there are concerns.
- Absences that have not been explained or supportive evidence provided will be marked as unauthorised.
- An unauthorised absence mark (U) will be given for arrival in school after the register has closed for the AM period.

6. Leave of absence

- The law states that families do not have the right to take children out of school during term time for holidays or other activities. Permission for absences will only be granted when there are **exceptional circumstances** at the discretion of the Headmaster and as set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. Parents must make a formal request for leave of absence if they intend their child to be absent from school which is not related to the pupil's illness or medical needs. Please request a form from reception and, if leaving the UK provide a copy of your itinerary showing the expected date for the pupil to return to the UK. Where a parent removes the pupil after an application for leave was refused or where no application was made to school will be recorded as unauthorised.
- *If the leave of absence exceeds 5 school days, then, in line with the National Framework a penalty notice of £80.00 (per parent, per child) will be issued to be paid to the local authority within 21 days. Failure to pay this penalty notice may lead to prosecution in the Magistrates court.*
- Please see the 'Religious Observance' form in relation to published religious festivals.
<https://qmg.walsall.sch.uk/consent-forms/>

7. Absence from Individual Lessons

- All staff will take a class register on SIMs/EduLink so that any pupils missing from a lesson can be highlighted and the appropriate action taken.
- If there is a highlighted absence from lesson where the pupil has previously been present reception must be immediately informed so that the whereabouts of the pupil can be confirmed.
- Truancy is a high-level behaviour issue and will result in a corresponding high-level sanction (the school sanctions ladder can be found within the school's Behaviour Policy).
- No pupil in years 7-13 may leave the premises during the school day without permission.

- Sixth Form students can leave the school at lunchtime provided they follow the correct sign-out and sign-in procedure.

8. Lates & Exeats

- Pupils who arrive at school after form time has begun, i.e. after 8.45 a.m. must sign the Late Book located in reception. Patterns of lateness will be challenged in accordance with the circumstances, i.e.:
 - Form/group tutor discussion with the pupil.
 - Lunchtime, Year Team SLT and Saturday detentions.
 - Initial communication with parents, i.e. email query prompted by every late, letter home raising initial concern about punctuality, Educational Welfare Service letter raising initial concern from an authority's perspective.
 - Parental meeting.
 - Local Authority referral/visit.
 - Local Authority action.
- Pupils who need to leave the premises for medical or other authorised appointments before 3.40 p.m. must sign the Exeat Book in reception.
- At the end of the school day pupils must not remain on the school site after 4 p.m. unless they are involved in an organised activity arranged and supervised by a member of staff.

9. Arrangements for the Sixth Form

- Sixth formers are permitted to leave school during periods 5 and/or 6, the days when they can do this are pre-arranged and agreed in advance. Sixth form students should understand that this is a concession and not a right. Sixth form students are required to sign out at 2.00pm or 2.50pm.
- Failure to follow these procedures when result in a removal of these privileges and further sanction.
- Mr Matley, Head of Sixth Form will oversee these arrangements with support from SLT.
- Sixth formers are expected to be in school every day regardless of the number of lessons on that day and action will be taken by school if they are absent without good reason.

10. Pupils Returning After Prolonged Absence

- In cases of prolonged and unavoidable absence, the Headmaster will publish details and work will be organised for the pupil.
- Home visits may be completed by the school or the Local Authority's Education Welfare Officer to offer support and facilitate a return to school .
- On the pupil's return, the Form/Group tutors, Year Teams and Attendance Lead will monitor his/her progress and attendance record and provide support as required.

11. Penalty notices

- Regular school attendance is a legal obligation which is stated with the Education Act 1996. Not fulfilling the expectations placed upon parents under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 can be deemed as an offence under Section 444 of the same Act. In turn Section 23 of the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003, allows for the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice to a parent if their child is not in regular attendance at school. This is actioned if a child is absent for 5 or more school days in a school 10-week period -unauthorised absences.

- In such a case the Local Authority may issue a penalty notice of £80 (per parent, per child) to be paid within 21 days, or £160 after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay this penalty notice may lead to a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.
- Where a second Penalty Notice is issued to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first notice, a second Penalty Notice will be charged at £160 (per parent, per child) if paid within 28 days.
- The third time an offence is committed either a term time holiday and/or irregular attendance, within 3 years of the first notice, a penalty notice cannot be issued, and alternative action will be taken instead. This may include prosecution.

This policy follows the School's legal duties under the 'Equality Act' 2010, in respect of safeguarding and Section 90 and 91 of the 'Education and Inspections Act' 2006. It also includes guidance from the Department of Education document 'Working together to improve school attendance' August 2024 and 'Keeping children safe in education' September 2024.