



THE
PORTSMOUTH
GRAMMAR
SCHOOL

The PGS School Attendance Policy

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The PGS School Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At The Portsmouth Grammar School, education is seen as a partnership between the family and the school. The school is committed to providing the highest quality of education for all pupils. For pupils to benefit fully from the educational opportunities provided by the school, they must have the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality. The school complies with its statutory obligations relating to attendance and follows relevant Department of Education Schools' Attendance Guidance.
- 1.2 The school is committed to work with parents in support of pupils' attendance, and believes it is in the best interest of all involved that requests for authorised leave are made honestly and that pupils are not complicit in concealing the real reason for their absence.

2. Pre-School

- 2.1 All children's attendance is monitored and parents are asked to inform the school of absence of any kind. Attendance time and collection time is recorded along with any absences.
- 2.2 Any unreported absence of three sessions is followed up with a telephone call and a record of the conversation is logged.

3. Junior and Senior School

- 3.1 Consistent and regular attendance is a requirement of the school. In exceptional circumstances such as prolonged illness, recuperation or compassionate circumstances that result in extended absence, the school will provide work and facilitate a pupil's return to full time education within an agreed timeframe. This is at the Head's discretion. Where a pupil is experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), the school will work with the pupil and the family to fully integrate the pupil back into school at the earliest opportunity, including by making reasonable adjustments as required, for example as set out in Appendix 1: [Addressing Emotionally Based School Avoidance \(EBSA\) at Portsmouth Grammar School](#).
- 3.2 Pupil attendance is monitored carefully and when the school becomes aware of concerns, members of the pastoral team will be keen to act in conjunction with parents in order to improve attendance. The parents may be asked to attend a meeting with the tutor and a member of the pastoral team in the Senior School, or the Form Teacher and/or Deputy Head in the Junior School, to discuss what measures will be implemented to improve attendance. If there is no or insufficient improvement, within the agreed timeframe, the school may feel obliged to refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer in line with the statutory guidance from the Department for Education on Children Missing Education. The school will work closely with families to try to improve attendance. However, ultimately, non-attendance may result in the pupil being asked to leave the school.

- 3.3 All pupils are required to be in school by 08:35 in the Senior School and 08:25 in the Junior School. The school day ends at 15:30 (Reception – Year 2), 15:35 (Years 3 - 6) and 15:45 (Senior School), although many pupils remain later to take part in co-curricular activities under the supervision of a member of staff. With the exception of pupils in Years 12 and 13, pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day and all pupils should attend all lessons. Pupils in Pre-School - Year 11 will thus be onsite or at Games venues at all times unless accompanied by a member of staff for trips or visits or sporting fixtures, the dates of which will have been notified to parents in advance.

4. Medical Appointments

- 4.1 The school requests that parents seek to avoid making external appointments for their children in the school day. For medical appointments arranged necessarily at short notice, requests for authorised absence should be made to the tutor in the first instance in the Senior School and to the Head of the Junior School in the Junior School.

5. Registration

- 5.1 Every school is required by law to maintain an Attendance Register and pupils must be registered twice a day: once at the beginning of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The school uses an electronic registration system and the Department for Education national codes to record attendance and absence are used. School attendance registers are carefully monitored to identify any trends.
- 5.2 Any pupil in the Junior School arriving after 08.35 will be recorded as late. Any pupil in the Senior School arriving after 08:35 but before the end of the registration period (09:00) will be recorded as Late. Pupils missing from morning registration without a valid reason will be registered by their Form teacher / tutor with an N (reason not yet provided) which is updated with a more appropriate code once the reason has been established. A phone call will be made as soon as possible to parents of any pupils with an unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- 5.3 Once the registration session has closed the Registration Administrator will run an absence report and circulate to the nurse (Junior School) and all teaching staff (Senior School).
- 5.4 Afternoon registration will take place at 12:40 for Infant pupils, 13:10 for Junior pupils and 14:05 (the start of period 5) for Senior School pupils.
- 5.5 All pupils leaving the school site because of a medical appointment or an approved absence are required to be signed out by parents in the Pre-School and Junior School. Pupils in the Senior School must sign out in Reception, and sign in again if they return to school that same day.
- 5.6 If a pupil feels ill during the day they should notify a member of staff in the Pre-School or Junior School or, if in the Senior School, they should report to the Health and Wellbeing Centre to be assessed. If a pupil is too ill to remain at school the parent or guardian will be contacted. Pupils must not contact their parents directly and ask to be taken home. This information will be communicated to the relevant teaching staff.

6. Exceptional leave

- 6.1 Requests for exceptional absence must be made in writing to the Senior Deputy Head or the Head of the Junior School and should reach the school at least 10 days in advance.
- 6.2 Whilst it is preferred that absence in term time is avoided, each request will be considered individually and decisions made based on a number of criteria including:
 - 6.2.1 The stage the pupil has reached in their educational career
 - 6.2.2 The pupil's academic record
 - 6.2.3 The unique nature of the absence
 - 6.2.4 If the request is to participate in a co-curricular activity such as sport or drama, the level of representation will be considered
 - 6.2.5 Whether the pupil is sponsored on a Student Visa
- 6.3 The school understands that on occasions there are extenuating reasons that a pupil may need to be away from school and the Senior Deputy Head or the Head of the Junior School will provide authorisation where there are compassionate grounds. Parents are asked to provide as much advance notification and detail so that each request can be considered carefully.
- 6.4 All parents considering making a request for a holiday or absence for recreational reasons in term time are asked to consider the following points:
 - 6.4.1 The school year generally has between 170 and 180 days. Term dates are published sufficiently in advance to allow parents to make use of remaining days in the calendar year for holiday purposes
 - 6.4.2 Missed lessons place pupils at an academic disadvantage and may have unsettling effects, both socially and academically. Other pupils may be disadvantaged due to the disruption caused by absence and it is always the responsibility of the pupil to catch up with any work that is missed in the Senior School, and the responsibility of the parent in the Junior School.
 - 6.4.3 If the request is not authorised then the period of absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the school register and the pupil's report. In exceptional circumstances the School may ask to meet with parents to discuss any unaccounted periods of absence.
 - 6.4.4 Legislation – All leave for holidays is at the discretion of the school and not an automatic entitlement. The basic framework is in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations of 2013, which state:
 - (a) (1A) Subject to paragraph (2), leave of absence should not be granted unless:
 - (i) An application has been made in advance to the proprietor by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides; and
 - (ii) The proprietor, or person authorised by the proprietor in accordance with paragraph (1), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

- 6.5 National views – There has been a national campaign to maximise school attendance with fines imposed on irresponsible parents and, in extreme cases, the imposition by courts of parenting orders. Locally, with Portsmouth’s high figures for unauthorised absence, measures have been taken to ensure proper attendance. In April 2017 the Supreme Court upheld a ban on term time holidays in state schools noting the disruptive effect of the learning on the individual child and on other pupils.

7. Pupils with a Student Visa

- 7.1 The school holds a Student Visa sponsor licence which allows it to sponsor pupils under the Student Visa points-based immigration system. The school takes its responsibilities as a Student Visa sponsor seriously, including monitoring sponsored pupils’ engagement with their studies and reporting any changes to the UK Home Office.
- 7.2 In particular, the school has a duty to withdraw sponsorship of any pupil that misses 10 consecutive ‘expected contact points’. The school defines an ‘expected contact point’ as a ‘School Day’ (which includes a morning and afternoon session).
- 7.3 Tutors are informed of any Student Visa sponsored pupils in their class and that any unauthorised or unexplained absence of such a pupil should be immediately reported to the Assistant Head, Head of Sixth Form. Action will be taken in accordance with the Junior and Senior School procedure outlined above and the school may request medical evidence as appropriate.
- 7.4 If attendance does not improve and a Student Visa sponsored pupil accrues a total of 10 consecutive unauthorised absences on ‘School Days,’ the school will ask the pupil to leave the school. The school will make a report to the UK Home Office within 10 working days of the withdrawal, with a copy of the report saved on the sponsored pupil’s record.
- 7.5 In the event of a period of long term authorised absence (e.g. due to illness), the school will assess whether the pupil can still complete their course within their current Student Visa, consulting with the pupil and their parent/guardian accordingly. If the school concludes this will not be possible, the school will ask the pupil to leave the school. The school will make a report to the UK Home Office within 10 working days of the withdrawal, with a copy of the report saved on the sponsored pupil’s record.

8. Associated documents:

Department for Education - Children missing education: Statutory guidance for local authorities (September 2016):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

Department for Education – Working Together to Improve School Attendance (May 2022 – updated September 2023):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

9. Allocation of Tasks and Version Control

Allocation of Tasks

Task	Allocated to	When / frequency of review
Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice	Deputy Head (Pastoral)	As required, and at least annually
Monitoring the implementation of the policy, relevant risk assessments and any action taken in response and evaluating effectiveness	Deputy Head (Pastoral)	As required, and at least termly
Maintaining up to date records of all information created in relation to the policy and its implementation as required by the GDPR	Registration Administrator	As required, and at least termly
Reviewing input from interested groups (such as pupils, staff, Parents) to consider improvements to the School's processes under the policy	Deputy Head (Pastoral)	As required, and at least annually
Formal annual review	SMT	Every two years

Version Control

Date Approved	13 th December 2023 (SMT)
Date Reviewed	6 th December 2023 (PRM)
Next Review Date	Autumn 2025 (PRM/SMT)
Policy author (SMT)	Deputy Head (Pastoral)
Status	External
Report	Safeguarding and Pastoral Report

Ph4110124

Appendix 1: Addressing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) at Portsmouth Grammar School

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a term referring to reduced or non-attendance at school by a child or young person.

Rather than the term 'school refusal', the term EBSA recognises that this avoidance has its source in emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues. A growing body of analysis suggests that EBSA should not be thought of as a deliberate act of defiance, but instead as a complex issue inextricably linked with mental health and wellbeing.

This guidance applies to pupils displaying social, emotional or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance. It is not only for pupils who have a diagnosed mental disorder, or a disability or special educational need.

As well as working on universal approaches to mental health and wellbeing, PGS recognises the importance of developing a planned process around EBSA for children and young people who require more targeted support.

The six-stage planned process below is aimed at providing guidance to school staff who have direct contact with the child. This will most likely be the child's Tutor or Head of Year (with oversight from the Deputy Head (Pastoral)). This guidance should also be shared with parents.

It is suggested that there is no more than 2 weeks within each stage before taking the necessary steps to move to the next (apart from stage 5 where progress is required to reach stage 6).

STAGE 1: (MEET WITH PUPIL) & PHONECALL HOME

- Where the pupil is still in school with $\leq 90\%$ attendance, school staff should meet with the pupil. This should be accompanied by a phone call home.
- Where a pupil is not in school at all, a phone call home on its own is appropriate.
- The conversations will aim to sensitively communicate the School's high expectations for the attendance, engagement with School and/or punctuality of pupils who are experiencing emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues (PGS Attendance Policy).
- The conversations will also aim to identify any potential risk factors the child is experiencing that might be contributing to their EBSA.

Potential EBSA risk factors (non-exhaustive list):

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/17157/addressing-emotionally-based-school-avoidance.pdf>

(P3)

- The outcome of the phone call should be an increase in the pupil's % school attendance that is in line with the School's high expectations and/or engagement with identified risk factors.
- This may involve actioning any reasonable adjustments* agreed by all parties to overcome the specific barriers to attendance. Any reasonable adjustments or support put in place should ensure that the time the child spends in school is prioritised (DfE, Feb 2023). These will need to consider the individual circumstances of the child, being mindful of safeguarding responsibilities as set out in KCSiE (2023)

STAGE 2: FORMAL CORRESPONDENCE inviting parents (and pupil) into School for a meeting.

This should be a formal letter stating:

- This pupil continues to display EBSA
- Pupil's current attendance %
- Associated concerns / identified risks e.g. impact on attainment

- The School has a duty to challenge falling attendance and to address this with the pupil and family
- The School has a responsibility to make any reasonable adjustments* to alleviate specific barriers to attendance.
- Parents are invited in for a meeting to discuss the matter at their earliest convenience
- It is the preference that the pupil attends as any actions or reasonable adjustments* should be agreed by ALL parties and followed up in writing.

STAGE 3: PARENT/CARER MEETING AT PGS

- Further assess the pupils' EBSA and barriers to attendance
- Potential risk factors contributing
- Review current reasonable adjustments*
- Introduce further or adapt reasonable adjustments*(agreed by all parties)
- Reiterate to all that the priority must be working towards fully integrating the pupil back into School. A prolonged period of absence may heighten their anxiety about attending in future (DfE, Feb 2023).
- This meeting should be followed up in writing.

STAGE 4: HOME VISIT

A home visit will most likely be carried out by the pupil's Tutor and/or Head of Year. The meeting needs to be organised with the parents' prior consent.

- Further assess the pupils' EBSA and barriers to attendance
- Potential risk factors contributing
- Review current reasonable adjustments*
- Introduce further or adapt reasonable adjustments*(agreed by all parties)
- Reiterate to all that the priority must be working towards fully integrating the pupil back into School. A prolonged period of absence may heighten their anxiety about attending in future (DfE, Feb 2023).
- If the home visit exposes further risk factors or concerns for the pupil, an Early Help Referral may be appropriate, however, we reserve the right to make an Early Help or MASH referral at any point. We will always consult with parents before doing so.
- The home visit will always be followed up in writing.

STAGE 5: REGULAR MEETINGS (suggested fortnightly minimum)

Regular meetings should be in person and can take place in School or as home visits depending on the pupil's individual circumstances.

- Further assess the pupils' EBSA and barriers to attendance
- Potential risk factors contributing
- Review current reasonable adjustments*
- Introduce further/ adapt / begin to transition away from reasonable adjustments*(agreed by all parties)
- Reiterate to all that the priority must be working towards fully integrating the pupil back into School.
- Follow up in writing.

STAGE 6: FULL RE-INTEGRATION

- The pupil should be attending school regularly and in line with the School's high expectations as set out in the PGS Attendance Policy.
- There may still be some reasonable adjustments* in place to support this.
- The pupil will continue to be monitored carefully by Tutor and Head of Year; their % attendance and overall wellbeing accompanied by a weekly communication home (either email or telephone call).
- Depending on the length of time the pupil has been fully re-integrated, should the pupil start to display signs of EBSA again, it would be at the Head of Year's discretion as to which stage of the planned process is necessary to return to (determined by the pupil's individual circumstances).

NB. The Portsmouth Grammar School staff reserve the right to make an Early Help or MASH referral at any point. We will always consult with parents before doing so. Unless doing so is perceived to put to put the child at greater risk.

*Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are any actions taken to support attendance and should be agreed by all parties (DfE, Feb 2023)

Below is a non-exhaustive list for The Portsmouth Grammar School inspired by sector-led examples of the kinds of support and reasonable adjustments that schools have in place for EBSA. 'Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance Effective practice examples', (DofE February, 2023)

- *Staff take a bespoke approach to each child with an emphasis on breaking down barriers to attendance, so that children are ready to learn, feel safe and grow in confidence.*
- *Some pupils are offered a "meet and greet" at the school gate to support transition back into school after period of absence.*
- *Seating plans during lessons can be adapted to support with EBSA.*
- *Pupils can be withdrawn from lessons on a short-term basis and complete work on emotional regulation, to build their resilience and alleviate anxiety about attending school.*
- *Pupils can be provided with "Medical Exit" cards, that will allow them to avoid main transition times in corridors between classes and allows them to leave lessons and to go to their designated 'safe space'.*
- *A short period of phased timetabling to allow a transition back into School. This might allow the pupil to attend full-time but does not mean they attend all lessons. Providing support for the pupil (gently re-integrating them with their friends/peers) will be key here.*
- *Some pupils will sit exams in smaller examination venues e.g. smaller rooms of 1-10 pupils.*
- *Ear defenders may be provided to students who are particularly sensitive to noise. They wear these in and out of lessons as needed.*
- *Children with sensory difficulties are considered as part of the school uniform policy, such as allowing them to wear shorts instead of trousers, which helps to alleviate anxiety about attending.*
- *Pupils are made aware that they can speak with anyone they have confidence in, and staff know that, where they need help, they should contact the pupil's Tutor, Head of Year or the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).*
- *Pupils can be paired up with buddies/mentors from Y11/13 who have received specific training to support.*
- *Pupils are offered complimentary School counselling and 1-2-1 or group pastoral coach support*
- *Mental Health awareness days and sessions are arranged for pupils.*