ST BENEDICT'S SCHOOL

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Senior School Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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1 Policy

This policy applies to the Senior School (F3-U6). The Junior School has its own attendance policy.

For students to benefit fully from the educational opportunities provided by the school, they must have high levels of attendance and punctuality. Ineffective registration or poorly executed follow-up procedures can increase the risks of truancy and educational under-performance, which can negatively affect personal and/or social development. A student going missing from school is a potential indicator of abuse (including sexual abuse) or neglect, sexual and criminal exploitation (particularly county lines), mental health difficulties, forced marriage and FGM, or in itself may indicate that a student is at risk of significant harm. Consequently, attendance and registration arrangements are hugely important and must be seen to be regarded as such by students, parents, and staff.

According to Working Together to Improve School Attendance, a student is considered persistently absent if they miss 10% or more of their time in school.

In this policy the word parent can be taken to mean anyone who has parental responsibility for one of our students. St Benedict's requires each student to have more than one emergency contact number, where possible, so that it is easy to make contact with regard to attendance issues. It is particularly important that parents inform the school if they are away overnight or longer and let the school know who has parental responsibility in their absence.

In line with the Benedictine principle of *Discipline of Daily Practice*, the school actively promotes good attendance through positive reinforcement. Tutors and Division Heads acknowledge consistent or improved attendance in assemblies and reports, helping students to understand that reliability and presence are part of character formation, alongside academic success.

2 Aims

A key characteristic of a Benedictine school is 'Discipline of Daily Practice'. This recognises that all people, but especially students, benefit from a regular and ordered life. This policy therefore promotes high levels of attendance and punctuality of students at the school.

3 Statutory Framework

This school policy has been drafted in line with Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2026) (WTTISA) and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The school is inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate against the Independent Schools Standards, including the standard on admission and attendance registers. The school also complies with advice published by the London Borough of Ealing.

4 Responsibilities of Parents

Parents with a child of compulsory school age have a legal duty to make sure that their child receives effective full-time education. Children must be in some form of education or training from the term after a child's fifth birthday up to their eighteenth birthday. Parents have an additional legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and 'this means their child must attend every day that school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.' (WTTISA – Working Together to Improve School Attendance)

Parents are responsible for informing the school on any occasion when their daughter or son is unable to attend due to illness, or a medical appointment, providing the reason for their daughter or son's non-attendance. This should be done by emailing attendance@stbenedicts.org.uk or by telephoning 020 8862 2000. This should be done as far as possible in advance and at the very latest by 8.40am on the morning of the absence, by which time students must be on site. St Benedict's may ask for evidence of illness where there is reasonable doubt about the illness, or where a student has a prolonged or repeated pattern of illness and evidence would help the school plan support. Parents may also contact their child's Form Tutor or Division Head directly for advice or clarification about attendance. The school's attendance email address (attendance@stbenedicts.org.uk) remains the first point of contact, but pastoral staff are available for ongoing conversations where attendance becomes a concern.

The school day ends at 4.10pm (Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri) and 4.15pm (Weds).

Parents wishing to take their daughter or son out of school for an exceptional reason, such as attending a funeral or wedding, must seek authorisation for the absence from the school by writing to the Head. The Head will confirm whether the circumstances meet the definition of 'exceptional circumstances' for which leave of absence may be granted.

Each application for leave of absence is considered individually on its own facts and merits. The school does not operate any blanket arrangement under which leave is granted automatically and leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively. Where leave is granted, it is for the school to determine how long the student may be away.

Where support offered by the school has not been effective or engaged with, the school will refer the matter to Ealing's School Attendance Support Team and will provide the information and evidence that the local authority requires. Any such step will always be accompanied by continued pastoral contact to help families re-engage positively.

When parents/guardians are to be away from home overnight during term, they are required by contract with the school to inform us of the name and contact number for a temporary guardian. This information should be provided to the Form Tutor and should be copied to the relevant Division Head.

Parents can see their child's attendance on the school portal, Firefly, and the school will contact parents and arrange meetings if attendance patterns are causing concern.

5 Responsibilities of Students

Students have a responsibility to attend school when they are fit and well and to arrive at school in time for registration (morning and afternoon) each day during term time.

If, for any reason, a student needs to leave the school site during the school day, their parent must contact the Form Tutor, Division Head, or the attendance email address (attendance@stbenedicts.org.uk) in advance of this, or their child must bring in a note from their parents requesting this absence and giving the reason for it. This should be handed to their Form Tutor during morning registration. The Form Tutor will pass this on to the school office, which then updates SIMS regarding the absence. The school office will not allow any students to exit school during school time without prior consent from the parents.

Failure to attend school regularly or punctually or failing to attend registration without good reason constitute breaches of the Code of Conduct and may lead to formal disciplinary action being taken.

6 Responsibilities of the School

Mr Mícheál Foley, Deputy Head Pastoral and Designated Safeguarding Lead (mfoley@stbenedicts.org.uk), is designated as the Senior School's Senior Attendance Champion and holds overall responsibility for the strategy, oversight, and evaluation of attendance across the Senior School. This role involves monitoring attendance trends, coordinating support, and liaising with Ealing's School Attendance Support Team, families and, where necessary, other local schools where a student's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe. Where a student has a sibling in the Junior School, the Senior Attendance Champion liaises with the Junior School Attendance Champion so that patterns of absence across the family are identified early and support is coordinated. The school will take part in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority when invited to do so.

St Benedict's has a culture which promotes the benefits of high attendance, both in terms of the social health and wellbeing of students and also their academic attainment. It has a responsibility for taking and maintaining an accurate school register of all students twice each day throughout term time: once at the beginning of the morning session and once in the second (afternoon) session. The register is taken at the same time for all students and is kept electronically on our SIMS system. Every entry in the school register must be preserved for six years from the date on which the entry was made. Where an entry is amended, the register retains the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of the amendment and the name of the person who made it.

The school also maintains an admission register recording every student on roll. For each student this includes their full name, sex, date of birth, home address and the name and address of every parent known to the school, together with, where possible, two emergency contact numbers, the date of admission and the name of the school last attended. Where any of these details change, the admission register is amended as soon as possible. A student's name is deleted from the admission register only

on one of the grounds set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, and the relevant return is made to Ealing as set out below. Entries in the admission register are retained in line with the Regulations.

Academic staff also take registers for each academic lesson.

The Senior Attendance Champion and Division Heads regularly monitor and evaluate patterns of poor attendance so that the school can work together with parents and students to improve attendance. Attendance data is discussed in weekly pastoral meetings to identify students or particular groups or year groups who need support. This enables early, tailored intervention, including conversations with parents, mentoring, and collaboration with the Head of Student Wellbeing, SENCO, or School Counsellor where barriers to attendance relate to wellbeing or additional needs. Bullying and prejudice-based harm, including racism and faith-targeted abuse, can be a significant barrier to attendance and may make a student less willing to seek help. Where bullying is contributing to a student's absence, the school responds in line with the Anti-Bullying Policy alongside this one.

All staff receive regular training on attendance expectations, including the importance of early identification, first-day calling procedures, and the correct use of attendance codes. New staff are introduced to these expectations as part of their induction.

In applying this policy, St Benedict's recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010, has regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and ensures that reasonable adjustments are made for students with disabilities, long-term medical conditions, or other protected characteristics that may affect attendance. In rare and exceptional circumstances, a temporary part-time timetable may be agreed where this best supports a student's reintegration or health needs. Such arrangements will be time-limited, agreed in writing with parents, regularly reviewed, and recorded using the appropriate DfE attendance codes.

Some students experience anxious feelings about attending school, which may arise from worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable mood. School staff do not diagnose or treat physical or mental health conditions, but the school recognises that these students are still expected to attend regularly, that attendance may itself help with the underlying difficulty, and that a prolonged period of absence can heighten anxiety about returning. The pastoral team works with the student and their family to mitigate anxious feelings in school as far as possible, drawing on the Head of Student Wellbeing, SENCO and School Counsellor, and will consider a time-limited phased return where this is appropriate. Formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 are made where a student has a disability, and any adjustments are agreed with, and regularly reviewed with, the student and their parents.

St Benedict's recognises that some students are young carers, and that caring responsibilities at home can affect attendance, attainment, behaviour and wellbeing. Early identification is essential so that support is provided at the right time and by the appropriate services. Young carers are recorded in the school census, and the pastoral team works in partnership with the student and their family, and with the local authority where needed, to understand these barriers and put appropriate support in place. Where it appears that a young carer may have support needs, or where the young carer or their parent

requests it, the local authority must carry out a young carer's needs assessment under section 17ZA of the Children Act 1989, and the school will support the family in requesting one.

St Benedict's recognises that looked-after children, previously looked-after children, and children who have or have had a social worker may face additional barriers to attendance, and that absence from education may increase safeguarding risks that are already known to be present. Where a student is looked after or has a social worker, the school works with the Virtual School Head, who holds strategic oversight of the attendance, attainment and progress of these children, and with the student's social worker and designated teacher for looked-after children where applicable. The Designated Safeguarding Lead ensures that this information is held and used so that decisions about attendance support are properly informed.

Where a student is unable to attend and, exceptionally, receives remote education, they are still recorded as absent using the most appropriate absence code. Remote education is used only as a last resort, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, and as part of a planned return to full-time attendance.

Each term at the governors' safeguarding meeting attendance is discussed, looking at broader patterns and trends along with strategies to improve/maintain good rates of attendance. Individual cases of persistent absence are a particular focus of discussion. In-house data is compared against national data to inform analysis.

Students who are persistently absent (90% or less attendance) will be closely monitored through the weekly meetings between the Deputy Head Pastoral and relevant Division Head. Where St Benedict's has students with attendance below 80%, the pastoral team works closely with the student and the parents to create an Attendance Support Plan that supports improved attendance. Severe absence, that is 50% or below attendance, is exceptionally rare at this school. However, any individual case of severe absence is referred by the Designated Safeguarding Lead to the Safeguarding Governor for information and consideration. This provides an additional layer of support for the DSL's management of complex cases. The information shared with the Safeguarding Governor is limited to what is necessary for this purpose.

Where a student has an allocated social worker or a youth offending team worker, the school will inform that worker of any unexplained absence, and will inform them where the student's name is to be deleted from the register. The Designated Safeguarding Lead holds the information about which students have a social worker and ensures that it informs the school's response to absence.

The school does not operate a blanket requirement for medical evidence and will not be rigid about the form of evidence requested, in line with Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2026). The school may, however, ask for evidence of illness where there is reasonable doubt about the illness, or where a student has a prolonged or repeated pattern of illness and evidence would help the school plan support. Where the pattern of medical absence itself raises a safeguarding concern – for example where relevant information about a student's condition is withheld from the school, or where a student is repeatedly sent into school without essential medication – the Designated Safeguarding Lead is consulted and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is followed.

Where a student's absence is linked to physical or mental ill health, the school's ambition for their attendance is the same as for every other student, but additional support may be needed to achieve it. In line with Working Together to Improve School Attendance, the school will 'sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.' The pastoral team works with the student and their family to understand their needs and put support in place. This may include reasonable adjustments, a time-limited phased return, and involving the Head of Student Wellbeing, SENCO, School Counsellor, and external services such as the student's GP or children and young people's mental health services. Where external support is needed, the school works with the local authority and other partners to remove barriers to attendance. Where there are safeguarding concerns, the Designated Safeguarding Lead seeks advice from ECIRS.

More generally, when absence becomes persistent or severe, the school escalates support in partnership with the local authority. Where support offered by the school has not been effective or has not been engaged with, the school will refer the matter to Ealing's School Attendance Support Team and provide the information and evidence the local authority requires. As an independent school, St Benedict's cannot issue penalty notices or Notices to Improve, and cannot itself be party to an attendance contract. Any further action is a matter for the London Borough of Ealing, which may offer an attendance contract to a parent or, ultimately, consider prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Legal measures would only follow after all reasonable support has been offered and where a parent has not engaged or absences remain unauthorised. The school co-operates fully with any such process and continues to offer pastoral contact throughout to help families re-engage.

If all avenues of support have been facilitated but severe absence for unauthorised reasons persists, 'it is likely to constitute neglect' (WTTISA) and a referral will be made to Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (ECIRS), if not made already.

Children Missing Education and returns to the local authority

A child missing education is a child of compulsory school age who is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children who are missing education, or who are absent from education for prolonged periods or on repeated occasions, are at significantly greater risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation. The school follows the statutory guidance *Children Missing Education* alongside this policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The school will inform Ealing children's social care, through ECIRS, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately where:

- a single absence raises child protection concerns (see the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy); or
- the pattern or extent of a student's absence suggests that they may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Separately from any safeguarding referral, the school is legally required to share information from its

registers with the London Borough of Ealing. The school makes the following returns:

- **New pupil returns.** Where a student's name is added to the admission register at a point other than a standard transition point, the school notifies Ealing.
- **Deletion returns.** Where a student's name is deleted from the admission register at a point other than a standard transition point, the school notifies Ealing. Where a student of compulsory school age is to be deleted and the school the student will next attend is not known, the school reports the circumstances as soon as possible after the grounds for deletion are met, and in any event before the student's name is removed from the register.
- **Attendance returns.** The school provides Ealing with the names and addresses of all students of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly, or who have been absent for a continuous period of ten school days or more, where the absence has been recorded using one or more of codes G, N, O or U. The frequency of these returns is agreed with the local authority.
- **Sickness returns.** Where a student is recorded as absent using code I and there are reasonable grounds to believe that they will miss fifteen consecutive school days or more, or that their total illness absence across the school year will reach or exceed fifteen school days, the school makes a sickness return to Ealing.

Local authority officers have a right of access to the school's admission and attendance registers in order to carry out their functions under the Education Acts, and may take digital or physical extracts.

Where a parent notifies the school of an intention to educate their child otherwise than at school, the school will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead, notify the local authority, and follow the procedures above for deletion from the admission register. Elective home education is a lawful choice and works well for many families, but the school recognises that it can result in some children receiving unsuitable education and becoming less visible to the services that keep them safe.

The school reviews this policy annually and seeks feedback from staff, parents, and student representatives to ensure that expectations and support systems remain clear and proportionate.

Lateness is managed through the school disciplinary policy and students receive a demerit if they are late for morning or afternoon registration without good reason provided by parents. These demerits are monitored by the Deputy Head Pastoral weekly and discussed with Division Heads in weekly meetings. Should a student in F3-U5 receive 4 such demerits in a term, they will be issued a Friday Pastoral Detention and their parents informed. This encourages punctuality and flags up persistent lateness with tutors and Division Heads very quickly.

7 Registration Procedure

Form Tutors have primary responsibility for completing the attendance register at the start of each session of each school day during the AM Registration Period and during the PM Registration Period and Form Tutors will follow up on absenteeism and lateness.

In the morning, students should be at school by 8:30am, so that they are punctual for morning registration at 8:40am in their form rooms.

- Students in Years 7-11 (Third Form – Upper Fifth) arriving late (after 8.40am) should enter the school via the Senior School Reception and sign in there
- Sixth Form students arriving late should enter via the Sixth Form entrance as normal but must register with the Sixth Form Administrator

If there is no explanation for a student's absence, a text will be sent to the parents by the school reception in the morning, alerting them to their daughter or son's absence. If no contact is received from parents to explain the absence, a phone call will be made to the parents and/or other emergency contacts, and if there is still no contact, they will inform the Senior Deputy Head, Deputy Head Pastoral and Head of Student Wellbeing. The register for the morning session closes at 9am. In line with DfE guidance, registers remain open for no more than 30 minutes after the start of the session. Students arriving after this time are recorded as absent for that session, using code U unless the reason fits another absence code (for example M for a medical appointment). Where an absence is recorded as unexplained in the register, the correct code is entered as soon as the reason is established, and no later than five school days after the session. If no reason is established in this time, code O is used.

The Senior Deputy Head/Deputy Head Pastoral/Head of Student Wellbeing will contact parents on the same day if a student is missing without an explanation and if the parent has still not responded to the school.

A dismissal register will be taken at lunchtime by Form Tutors in form bases for students in Years F3-L5. The official pm register will be taken by relevant Games teachers at the times listed below.

At St Benedict's school the registration codes used by tutors when registering are as follows:

/ Present AM (registers are open 8.40 – 9.00am (Mon- Fri))

**** Present PM (registers are open 2.10 – 2.15pm (Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri); 2.15 – 2.20pm (Weds))

L Late arrival: after taking of the register has started, but before the register is closed (counts as present)

N Absent with no reason yet provided

Absences related to school activities should be recorded as follows:

V Educational Visit

P Approved sporting activity

S Study Leave

Where the school receives clear notification from parents, other absences may be recorded as follows:

M Medical or dental appointment

I Illness

J1 Interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

R Religious observance

C Other authorised, exceptional circumstances

The school uses the full set of national attendance and absence codes set out in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. In addition to the codes above, the following national codes are used where applicable:

U Arrived after the register closed (recorded as unauthorised absence). Counts as absent for the session

B Attending an approved educational activity off-site (not a visit, sporting activity or work experience)

D Dual registration – student is attending another school at which they are also registered

K Attending education provision arranged by the local authority (e.g. alternative provision or provision in an EHC plan)

W Attending work experience

C1 Leave of absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad (under a licence or BOPA)

C2 Leave of absence for a student on an agreed temporary part-time timetable

G Holiday not granted by the school (recorded as unauthorised absence)

X Not required to attend – student below or above compulsory school age, for sessions they are not timetabled to attend

E Suspended or permanently excluded where no alternative provision has yet been arranged

O Absent in other or unknown circumstances (recorded as unauthorised absence)

T Parent travelling for occupational purposes

Q Unable to attend because the local authority has not made access or travel arrangements it is required to make

Y1–Y7 Unable to attend for reasons outside the family's control – e.g. transport normally provided by the school or LA unavailable (Y1), widespread travel disruption caused by an emergency (Y2), part of premises closed (Y3), whole site unexpectedly closed such as adverse weather (Y4), student in criminal justice detention (Y5), attendance prevented by public-health guidance or law (Y6), any other unavoidable cause (Y7)

Z Prospective student not yet on the admission register (administrative code)

Planned whole-school closure (administrative code)