

# ***Gresham Primary School***

*Headteacher: Ms Karen Steele*

## **ATTENDANCE and PUNCTUALITY POLICY**

Date: May 2021

Review Date: May 2022

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## LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy refers to the Department of Education's (DfE) statutory guidance of [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#) and the following guidance:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2020) 'Keeping children safe in education'

## INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

This policy reflects the vision and aims of Gresham Primary School.

At Gresham Primary School all staff work collaboratively to encourage every pupil to strive for excellence. Every child will be supported, challenged and valued. One way in which we strive to do this is by encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their maximum potential. We are determined in encouraging the development of high self-esteem and for our children to take pride and ownership of their learning. In conjunction with this, we will continuously provide a clear framework for parents and staff as well as clear procedures for involving parents and/or external agencies where appropriate.

The school's expectation for pupil attendance is 96% and above. The school understands that there may be exceptional circumstances that may impact attendance but these are exceptional circumstances only and parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns with the school.

Our school encourages all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that **"parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly"** (DfE 1999).

### **Above 97%: less than 6 days' absence a year**

Excellent attendance! These pupils will almost certainly get the best education they can, leading to better future prospects. Pupils will also get into a habit of attending school which will help in the future.

### **95%: 10 days' absence a year**

These pupils are likely to achieve good attainment and progress and form a habit of attending school regularly. Pupils who take a 2-week holiday every year can only achieve 95%. This needs to improve and parents will receive a reminder letter and may be contacted to discuss the attendance.

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## **90%: 19 days' absence a year**

Pupils in this group are missing a month of school per year, it will be difficult for them to achieve their best. An attendance letter and/or an invite to meet letter may be sent to parents to discuss the poor attendance. If the situation does not improve, the issue may be referred to the EWO.

## **Below 90%**

The government classifies pupils in this group as "Persistent Absentees", and it will be almost impossible to keep up with learning. This is unacceptable and is a serious concern. The school and EWO will continue to work with families to improve the matter. Parents of pupils in this group could also face the possibility of legal action being taken by the Local Authority.

- \*NB: 1. The absentee's trigger points will determine the type of letter sent and may vary between parents/carers.  
2. Where there is cause for concern, the situation will be investigated and referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

## **ATTENDANCE**

Regular and full time attendance is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life. There is statistical evidence which suggests that children who do not attend school regularly do not achieve at the same level as those that attend school regularly and on time. When children are absent or late, valuable learning time is lost. Therefore, it is important that children learn the importance of attendance and being punctual as part of their preparation for adult life.

The school and EWO will work with parents in order to achieve high standards of attendance and punctuality.

School attendance is mandatory for all children, except when the Government has issued a local/national lockdown, which restricts children from attending school. However, in circumstances where the school has to close due to the pandemic, children are expected to attend school remotely. The usual rules on attendance will still apply (which can be found throughout this policy). Children who are deemed to be vulnerable and children of critical key workers will be expected to attend school during a local/national lockdown.

## **Parents / Carers responsibility**

- Provide a minimum of **two up to date contact details** and changes of address.
- Notify the school by 9.30am on the first day of the child's absence, with a detailed reason. This can be done via telephone answer machine or email, and each day thereafter.
- Promote good attendance and be aware of their legal duty.
- Provide supporting medical documentation if the absence is for 3 days or more.

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- To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick parent/carer.
- Communicate with the school if parents / carers believe there may be issues which may disrupt the child's learning and attendance.
- To provide medical evidence where possible, on the child's return to school.
- Complete and submit a 'leave of absence' request form and provide evidence of the absence, if planning to take a child out of school for exceptional circumstances.

## **Lateness and Punctuality**

- To ensure that children are not on the school premises before 8:45am unless attending Breakfast Club
- Contact the school office to notify that the child will be late for school and provide details of the reason.
- To ensure that children are on the playground by 8:50am. The bell is rung at 8.55am and the side gate to the playground will be locked at 9am.
- To ensure children who are late report to the school office to sign in.
- Children must be collected promptly at the end of the school day; parents/carers must ensure that necessary arrangements are in place for the journey home. If these differ from the child's normal arrangements, the class teacher and school office should be made aware of this.

## **Absences**

- To notify the school on the first day of absence before 9:30am or as soon as possible. Parents should leave a message on the answer machine giving a *specific* reason for absence.
- To provide medical evidence where possible, on the child's return to school.
- To ensure that as far as possible, medical appointments are arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before or after the appointment.
- To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick parent/carer.
- Registers are taken at 9 am and 3.05 pm.

## **Illness and Medical absences**

- Parents/carers must ensure medical appointments are arranged outside of school hours, where possible.
- Parents/carers are expected to provide evidence of medical appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before or after the appointment.
- Provide supporting medical documentation if the absence is for 3 days or more
- 

If a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request medical evidence for further absences.

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## Examples of medical evidence:

- Appointment card
- A copy of a prescription
- Copy/photograph of medication
- Hospital discharge letter
- Hospital consultant letter
- Screenshot of text message or email confirming the appointment

## Shielding

If your child is clinically vulnerable, their GP or consultant will add them on to the shielded patient list, because based on their medical judgement the GP/Consultant believes that your child is at a higher risk and medically vulnerable. Parents/carers will need to provide the school office with a copy of the shielding confirmation letter so that the school can mark the absence correctly and also arrange remote learning support for your child. Failure to provide the evidence letter, will result in your child receiving an unauthorised absence.

## School Responsibility

- Promote good attendance using newsletters, communications with parents, assemblies etc.
- Keep accurate records and monitor attendance.
- Will ensure vigorous action is taken with regard to unauthorised absence.
- Record and publish attendance and punctuality rates.
- Request medical evidence for frequent illness absences.
- Ensure that attendance and punctuality is a high priority.
- Automatically request for medical evidence for absences that directly proceed or follow half term.
- Meet with parents to discuss attendance.
- Contact and communication with parents/carers of children for whom have not informed the school of a child's absence, for safeguarding purposes. The school will try to make contact with all those listed on the child's contact list.
- The school will automatically request medical evidence for any illness absence taken immediately before or after a school holiday.
- Parents/carers of children for whom we do not know the reason for absence will be contacted after 9:30am
- Discuss concerns with other schools, staff, support agencies, EWO and the Local Authority around individual children and families in common.

## Term Time Absence

Holidays during term time are not permitted. Parents/carers are expected to take their children on holiday during the school holidays to minimise the impact of missing education. If there are exceptional circumstances, parents/carers must complete a leave of absence request form in advance of the trip (ideally at least 4 weeks prior).

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There is no parental right to term time holidays and absence. These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Head Teacher, and they will use their discretion in line with DfE's guidance.

## **Travelling Abroad and Quarantine**

Parents/carers are not permitted to remove their child from school and take them abroad, during term time. However if your child is taken abroad your child will be expected to isolate at home for 10 days once they have re-entered the UK, unless the destination country has been added onto the travel corridor list, you can find further details on this via the Government's website at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>). This means that your child will not be allowed to attend school during this isolation period and will also mean further disruption to their learning time. Parents/carers will need to notify the school of their need to quarantine on the first day of the absence and your child is expected to return to school after the isolation period.

## **Parents/Carers Responsibility**

- To obtain a leave of absence form from the school office.
- To complete and submit the form in advance of the period of absence (ideally 4 weeks prior).
- Provide flight ticket details for the child, if travelling abroad.
- Provide evidence for the reason for travelling, where possible.

If parents/carers decide to take their child on holiday without the Head Teacher's authorisation, the child's absences will be marked as unauthorised. **Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued by the Local Authority's, Education Welfare Service for unauthorised holiday absence during term time.**

**£120 fine per adult/carer in the household per child, if paid within 28 days**  
**£60 fine per adult/carer in the household per child, if paid within 21 days**

## **Absence for Other Reasons**

Absences for reasons such as religious observance (up to 2 days per year) or close family bereavement *may* be authorised by the Head Teacher. These requests must be discussed with the school. Absences for close family member's weddings or funerals will be limited to one day's authorised absence, if granted.

## **Parent/carer's responsibility:**

- To inform the office, in writing, of the need for leave in circumstances which are known in advance.
- To inform the school as soon as possible when sudden circumstances occur which prevent a family bringing a child to school, so that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register.

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## **Unexplained Absence**

When a child is repeatedly absent and no satisfactory reason is given, the parent/carers will be investigated and may be liable for prosecution and/or a fine from the Local Authority. Regular monitoring is carried out by the Education Welfare Officer. Children who have repeated unauthorised absences, holidays or otherwise, will be contacted by the Education Welfare Officer and may be invited in to attend an attendance meeting to discuss absences and any appropriate support.

## **What is an authorised absence?**

- Unavoidable medical appointments with evidence provided.
- Illnesses (however frequent, illnesses will be monitored and medical evidence may be requested).
- Religious observance (up to 2 days per year).
- Compassionate leave such as funerals (limited to 1 day).

## **What is an unauthorised absence?**

- Day trips and holidays during term time.
- Missed the morning bus.
- Events at a sibling's school.
- Celebrations and weddings.
- Children not attending school before or after medical appointments.
- Unexplained absences with no satisfactory reason provided.
- The parents/carer cannot get the child to school.
- A child is absent due to family work patterns or parent/carer appointments.
- The child refusing to come to school.

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## **POOR ATTENDANCE AND EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER**

When attendance (below 96%) becomes a cause for concern, it will be closely monitored by the school. If the attendance does not improve, the school will refer the matter to the EWO who will manage meetings with these parents when necessary:

## **Referrals to the EWO**

- Frequent patterns of absence (i.e. absent on Mondays, Thursday or days following half term breaks) with no valid explanation.
- A lack of satisfactory medical evidence for repeat illnesses.
- Unacceptable unauthorised absence.

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- High levels of absence and persist lateness.

## **Role of the EWO**

- Refer cases for support to the Local Authority, which could involve a referral to the Early Help Team and/or other support agencies.
- To investigate absences and meet with parents/carers.
- To investigate persistent lateness, which exceeds more than 10%, and to hold meetings with these parents as required.
- To investigate any unexplained absence which exceeds more than 5 consecutive days.
  - To investigate lateness which exceeds more than 5%.
  - Monitor and investigate repeated medical appointments and illness when evidence has not been provided.
  - To investigate any unexplained absence which exceeds more than 5 consecutive days.
  - To ensure parents are aware of their legal duty under the Education Act to ensure their children attend school.

## **Children Missing in Education (CME)**

If a child is absent (unexplained) for at least 5 consecutive days, the Education Welfare Officer will be notified. A home visit may be carried out. If the absence continues for a total of 10 days, the family will be referred as a Child Missing in Education case for the Local Authority. You can read further on the CME guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>.

## **Persistent Latecomers**

Children who repeatedly attend school late after 8:55am will be brought to the attention of the Education Welfare Officer. Attendance letters will be issued to the parents/carers of these children. In addition, the Education Welfare Officer does unannounced gate checks.

Parents/carers should note that children who arrive late after 9:15am are given a 'U' code, which is the equivalent of an unauthorised absence and this will affect the child's attendance figures. Fixed penalty notices may be issued to parents/carers whose children persistently arrive after this time.

## **ATTENDANCE CODES**

The school uses the following codes to report pupil attendance, these codes are issued in the Department of Education's guidance on School attendance.

Attendance Codes			
/	Present in the morning	N	Reason not yet provided
\	Present in the afternoon	O	Unauthorised absence
B	Off-site educational activity	P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity
C	Authorised Absence	R	Religious observance

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D	Dual Registered – at another educational establishment	S	Study leave
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
G	Unauthorised holiday	U	Arrived after registration closed
H	Authorised Holiday	V	Educational visit or trip
I	Illness	W	Work experience
J	At an interview with prospective employers or another educational establishment	X	Not required to be in school COVID related illness
L	Late arrival before the register has closed	Y	Exceptional circumstances
M	Medical or dental appointments	Z	Student not on admission register
		#	Planned whole or partial school closure

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