Great Bookham School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence

- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled

- Acting early to address patterns of absence

- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)

- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

- [The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)

- [The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013](#)

  It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties

- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school

- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school

- Promoting good attendance across the school in assembly

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

- Requesting the issuance of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

- Having an oversight of data analysis

- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues

- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers

- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

3.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer: The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher

- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

- Advising the headteacher/[role] (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance promptly at the start of each session, every day. They must report any absence concerns to the headteacher.

3.5 School office staff

School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system, using the correct codes.

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level on a weekly basis

- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher

- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and advise when they are expected to return

- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present

- Attending an approved off-site educational activity

- Absent

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry

- The amended entry

- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made

- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

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Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9am. The register for the second session will be taken a 1pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school by phone or email on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7). A reason must be given and anticipated date of return.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If your child has been suffering from diarrhea and/or vomiting you must keep them at home until 48 hours after the last bout of illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment by email or telephone to the school office or a note in the pupil's reading record.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed at 9.15am will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

If lateness persists the headteacher will arrange a meeting with the parents/carers to discuss the reason for arriving late at school and offer strategies and/or support to improve the situation. If this does not improve the pupil's punctuality a referral may be made to the Inclusion Officer.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence to ascertain the reason, by calling the pupil's first contact, followed by the second (and any other further contacts on file). If no contact is made, the Home School Link Worker will be notified and a home visit may be undertaken.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not

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- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents

Information clarifying parent/carer's legal responsibilities regarding attendance, the impact of absence and our school term dates will be available to parents on the school website and in regular newsletters.

Parents will be notified of their child's attendance % at each parent meeting in the Autumn and Spring term. In the end of academic year reports, parents will also receive an update of their child's attendance for the year.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

If absence is required, for any reason other than illness or medical appointment, a *Request for leave absence form* must be completed and given to the headteacher. The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

If a child's attendance level drops below 96%, the Head Teacher will commence close monitoring of that child's attendance level and advise the parents to ensure that the absence does not continue.

If a child's attendance level drops below 93%, and does not appear to be improving, the Head Teacher will write to the parents/carers and request a meeting in school.

If a child's attendance level drops below 90%, and does not appear to be improving, the Head Teacher will write to the parents/carers and request a meeting in school with support of the Inclusion Officer.

This will be followed by a letter outlining the agreement made. If a child's attendance level still fails to improve, despite efforts on the part of the school to secure improved attendance, the Head Teacher will refer the family to the Inclusion Officer.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school (including persistent lateness), where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

All staff will promote the benefits of being in school at all times and on time. Parents will be reminded during information evenings of the impact of absence over the period of a school year.

Each week in assembly the class with the highest attendance for the previous week will be awarded a certificate and have MAC (Make Attendance Count) the bear in their class for the week. At the end of the academic year the class with the highest attendance will get to choose their award i.e change of uniform for the day, extra play time.

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a weekly basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2). They are required to call the school each day their child is ill, unless agreed with the school office due to the nature of the illness.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

The school uses and stores attendance data in our school information management system (SIMs) and is used to:

- Track attendance of all pupils

- Identify if there are groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and/or support

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families

- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and SLT, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by Trustee and Governors.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy

- Behaviour policy

Approved by:	Jenna Allen	Date: September 2023
Next review due by:	September 2024	

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration

L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance

S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

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