



Gomersal Primary School
Policy for Attendance & Truancy.

Revised May 2017 (in line with Kirklees LEA guidelines)

Effective schools convey their positive regard for regular attendance to parents, pupils and teachers. Children quickly pick up the message that their presence is important. At Gomersal Primary School we believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell.

Gomersal Primary School is a happy school. Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All staff show concern and care about each child's welfare.

The twice-daily requirement to register pupils can be perceived as an opportunity for the school to receive children formally from home, and serve as an introduction to the session. As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school every day - Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence.
- attend school punctually
- attend appropriately prepared for the day
- discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day.
- ensure that they contact the school to inform of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.
- notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child.
- notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.



We expect that the school will:

- provide a welcoming atmosphere.
- provide a safe learning environment.
- provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's concerns.
- keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality.
- contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.
- encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition.
- regularly inform parents of the % attendance of pupils.
- make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly.
- meet regularly with the Attendance & Pupil Support Officer (APSO) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality.
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Attendance & Pupil Support Officer (APSO). Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Attendance & Pupil Support Service may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order and Parent Order
- notify the Local Authority after 15 days sickness.
- notify APSO after 10 days unexplained absence.

Examples of Authorised and Unauthorised absences

Examples:	Authorised absences	Unauthorised absences
	Genuine illness of pupil Medical appointment for pupil Major religious observances Visits to prospective new schools External exams or educational assessments.	Shopping/day trip/Visit to theme park A birthday treat Oversleeping due to late night Looking after other children/other family members Appointments for other family members. Family holidays

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

- Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. For school pupils the classroom doors are open from 8.45 a.m. until 9.00 a.m.
- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.
- Registration takes place at 8.50 a.m. Registers close at 9.00 a.m. and pupils who arrive after this time will be recorded as late to school. Any child arriving later than 9.00 a.m. should enter via the main entrance, reporting to the school office. The parent, carer or child should give a reason for the lateness, which will be added to the register. The child will then be sent to their classroom.
- Afternoon registration is taken at 12.45 p.m. in EYFS, 1.00 p.m. in KS1, and 1.15 p.m. in KS2.



- Pupil's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.
- Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action will be taken.

Completing the Register

The school uses the Integris G2 electronic register to mark attendance at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. This is completed by each class teacher. The marking of registers can sometimes become so routine that its importance is lost. However, incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable for several reasons. Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are documents **that may be required in a court of law**, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They may also contribute to pupil's end of term reports and to records of achievement. For these reasons registers are required to be filled in accurately each day, and all alterations should be explained to the office staff so that reconciliation with print out records can be traced.

Pupil Leaving During the School Day

- During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day.
- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents are requested to confirm in writing, by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time.
- Pupils must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return.
- Where a pupil is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site. Parents should collect children who attend the Early Years Unit direct, where records are maintained.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupils as a missing person.

Communication

When a family starts school

- Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in the information pack. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.
- At the pre-school induction meetings held each year for children about to enter the reception class the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only ones left.
- Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset children which means they become unhappy, and may not want to come to school. Parents need to be aware of this.
- Again at this initial meeting parents are asked to try to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child's education is not disrupted.



- Children are also admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. As part of the induction pack, the importance of regular attendance is always highlighted along with other school routines.
- Authorised and unauthorised absences are explained to parents. All parents are asked to contact **school** if their child is absent. All information is used to inform teachers when filling in their registers. If no notification is received about a child's absence the teacher informs the office staff who contact parents as appropriate.

Ongoing communication between home and school

- If a child is absent, parents should call the school on the day the absence starts stating a reason. The school will then decide whether to authorise the absence. If authorisation were to be refused, for instance if a child was kept off school for a birthday, then the parents would be informed.
- If contact, explaining the child's absence, fails to be made by parents or carers, then the school would contact the home by telephone. If no reason has been received, after 3 weeks an unauthorised absence would be recorded.
- Parents/ child are asked to inform the office when they arrive late.
- Children with 100% attendance each term will be rewarded by the school with a certificate at the end of each term, and an annual attendance certificate at the assembly in July.
- The Head teacher talks to those parents where there is a concern about a child's level of absence and attendance for whatever reason falls below 90%, reminding parents of the disruption to their child's education.

Leave of Absence

The school holiday dates, test /assessment dates and other important events are published a year in advance. INSET days are published as soon as the school have agreed these, but may be subject to change.

It is well recognised that good, consistent attendance at school is crucial to a child or young person's future prospects. Reducing absence from school continues to be a priority both nationally and locally, because missing school damages pupils' attainment levels, disrupts school routines, affects the learning of others and can leave young people vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and crime.

Both locally and nationally, term time holidays continue to be a major cause of absence from school. According to recent data, term time holidays represent 20% of all authorised absence in primary schools in Kirklees. Term time holidays are the second most common cause of authorised absence, after illness.

Data from the National Primary Strategy underscores the overall impact that attendance does have on attainment. Differences of more than 20 and 30 percentage points are stark reminder of the value of 'being there'. Whatever other benefits may or may not accrue, holiday absence in the first five half terms certainly cannot enhance a pupil's social or academic progress. We all need to reinforce the message that *'every lesson counts'*.

Reflecting these continuing concerns, the DfE has issued revised guidance and amended the Education Regulations on school attendance and term time holidays (April 2013) to come into force in September 2013, strengthening the view that, as a general rule, children should not be taken out of school for the purposes of a holiday.



In line with the Government's amendments to the 2006 regulations (appendix 1), holidays during term time **will NOT be authorised**. The Headteacher and Governors have determined that:

- In **exceptional circumstances** permission may be granted providing your child has a good attendance record over current and previous academic year.
- Where leave of absence in term time is due to exceptional circumstances, an application form must be requested from the school office and submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, no less than 6 weeks prior to the requested date. Consideration will then be given to the pupil's previous school attendance and the length of time requested.
- If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the Attendance & Pupil Support Officer will be notified.
- Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise this absence.

As a general rule, children should not be taken out of school for the purposes of a holiday. Time off school for family holidays is not a right. Requests for term time absence for exceptional circumstances will be considered by the Head teacher.

EVIDENCE WILL BE REQUIRED IN EACH CASE.

Procedures

- Schools will ensure leave of absence request forms are available to give to parents as required from the school office.
- Where applicable parents must return the form to the headteacher.
- The headteacher will decide if the request should be authorised or unauthorised using the principles within this policy.
- Holiday absences taken during term time will be marked-
 - 'G' if it is an unauthorised absence for a family holiday, or sessions in excess of agreement.
 - 'H' if it is an authorised absence for a family holiday due to exceptional circumstances.

Authorised Holiday Requests

The Head Teacher will write to the parent who has made the request, informing them of the decision, the date of the child's last school day before the holiday and the date the school expects the child to return to school. Within the letter it should be clear how the absence will be marked on the child's attendance register. The letter should also make clear that no more absence due to term time holidays will be authorised during the same academic year. A copy of the letter will go in the child's file.

Unauthorised Holiday Requests

The Head Teacher must write to the parent who has made the request, informing them of the decision and the reason why this was made. The letter should clearly highlight that if the parent decides to take the child on the holiday, the absences will be unauthorised and a penalty notice may be issued to each parent with day to day care and responsibility for each child. A copy of the letter will go in the child's file.

Delayed Return Following Authorised Term Time Holiday

If the child does not return to school on the agreed date following their holiday, the school should investigate the absence. If a child returns to school later than the agreed date and their parent says their



return was unavoidably delayed, this absence must be recorded as 'G' (family holiday not agreed or days in excess of agreement). This also applies where a holiday is taken in school holidays but extends into term time.

Penalty Notices:

Where family holidays or extended leave are taken without proper authorisation or if a parent / carer fails to ensure regular school attendance the Guidance states that the school **may** respond as follows:

- In line with Kirklees Code of Conduct, parents can be given a Penalty Notice or prosecuted for periods of unauthorised absence.

Consequences of Unauthorised leave of Absence

- The possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued (to each parent for each child)
- The possibility of losing the school place if a pupil fails to return on the date they were expected to. (the school and Local Authority must make enquiries to locate the pupil before the deletion is made)
- The possibility of prosecution under section 444 of the education Act 1996 for repeat offences of unauthorised leave of absence.
- The possibility of a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record for non-payment of a penalty notice should the case go to court.

Under the revised Code, Penalty Notices may be issued:

- If parents have not sought permission from the Head Teacher before taking their child out of school for a holiday in term-time;
- If the Head Teacher **has refused the request** but the absence occurs anyway;
- If a pupil has not returned to school by the agreed date with no satisfactory explanation;
- In accordance with guidance from Kirklees Council, holidays during SATS and other external exam periods **will not be authorised by the school and a Penalty Notice may be issued.**
- Changes made to the Kirklees Code of Conduct on the issuing of Penalty Notices, which itself was revised in November 2007 continue to be adopted by the school as part of its policy for attendance.

Penalty Notice due to unauthorised leave of absence

Once the unauthorised absence has been taken and the child has returned, and the school decides to issue a penalty notice, the school must complete a penalty notice referral form and send it via AnyComs to the Local Authority's Attendance & Pupil Support Service together with a copy of the holiday request form, the letter sent by the head teacher to the parent and a copy of the child's up to date attendance certificate.

If procedures have been followed correctly and the case meets the penalty notice criteria the Local Authority will issue a penalty notice.

The timescale for payment has been revised in line with the new regulations from September 2013.

In line with the amendments made to The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 please note the following:

- The Head Teacher can now request that the local authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents, when pupils are taken out of school for a holiday or leave of absence without school authorisation.
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days.



- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.
- Penalty notices are issued to each parent, for each child.

Parent Pays Penalty Notice

The case is closed and the period of time that the parent received the penalty notice for will not be used in any further proceedings.

Parent Does Not Pay Penalty Notice

If after 28 days the penalty notice remains unpaid, the Attendance & Pupil Support Service will prepare the case for court. The school will be required to provide a Head Teacher's certificate prepared by their Attendance & Pupil Support Officer. The Attendance & Pupil Support Officer will keep the school informed regarding proceedings.

What can parents do to help?

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is away
- Try to make appointments outside school time
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is really necessary

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school what can you do?

- Talk to your child; it may be something simple
- Talk to the Head Teacher and staff at school

If it continues...

- The school may refer to the Attendance & Pupil Support Service
- You may contact the Attendance & Pupil Support Officer, who will work with you and the school to resolve the situation. (Number available from the school office)

Concerns

If a child is regularly late for school or is often absent then the class teacher informs the Head Teacher, who then contacts the parent concerned to have an informal discussion about this. If this persists then the Head Teacher contacts Attendance & Pupil Support Officer for the school. Contact may be made by phoning if the situation needs discussing before a visit, or by filling in a Attendance & Pupil Support Service Referral Form which shows the patterns of absences and lates.

The Attendance & Pupil Support Officer meets with the Head Teacher to discuss attendance issues, and offers advice and support.

Truancy

All the staff at Gomersal Primary School are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness. Although it is a very rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a concern that a child might be truanting then action is taken straight away.

If truancy is suspected, the Head Teacher is notified, who then contacts the parent, either by phone, or by home visiting if possible by the Attendance & Pupil Support Officer. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. In the event of not being able to talk to the parent then the Head Teacher talks to the child



concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these are discussed with the class teacher and appropriate action is taken.

It is important to stress to parents that this policy marks a change in the notion that parents are “entitled” to up to ten days leave of absence in any school year. The guidance issued from the Department of Education, reinforced by Kirklees guidance is clear that absence from school for the purposes of a normal family holiday, perhaps to take advantage of lower prices in off-season, is not acceptable and cannot be authorised by the Head Teacher.

At Gomersal Primary School we aim to work closely in partnership with parents, and we aim not to routinely issue penalty notices to parents. However we must have regard to changes in national attitudes and guidance, and should it be necessary, warnings and penalty notices will be issued to parents.

