



Great Wilbraham C of E Primary School

Policy title: Attendance
Date created: September 2018
Date ratified: 22nd January 2019
Review Date: January 2021
Signed:

1. Introduction

1.1. Definition

Good attendance is essential to ensuring good progress. It underpins the continuity of a child's education and plays an important role in supporting positive social relationships as much as supporting high quality learning. Families have a statutory legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and for each session within the school day. This policy outlines the school's procedures and expectations for pupil's attendance and punctuality.

1.2. Rationale

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Support children and their families to have the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer;
- Make families aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Take steps to ensure attendance meets or exceeds Government targets.

2. Leadership and management

2.1. Roles and responsibilities

Children will:

- Attend school every day;
- Attend school punctually;
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day;
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher any problems that may affect their school attendance.

Families 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 before 9.30 am if their child is unable to attend 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.

The Governing Body will

- Be responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis.
- Hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher will

- Ensure this policy is implemented consistently across the school
- Monitor school-level absence data and report it to governors.
- Support staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Request for the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notices, where necessary.
- Ensure the school is a safe learning environment
- Work with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Monitor attendance data at the school and individual pupil level





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- Encourage good attendance and punctuality
- Meet regularly with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality;
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Education Welfare.

The School Business Manager will

- Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Arrange calls and meetings with families to discuss attendance issues
- Produce regular attendance updates for the Headteacher
- Produce letters to be sent out to families regarding attendance

The Classteacher will

- Record attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, electronically.
- Inform the Headteacher of any concerns that may arise.

Admin Staff will

- Take calls and emails from families about absence and record it on the school system.
- Follow up pupil absence

2.2. Continuing professional development

The School Business Manager and/or the Headteacher regularly attend the briefings and circle meetings on attendance. There is also discussion held with the EWO on a regular basis.

2.3. Reviewing and monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually in accordance with updates on attendance arrangements.

3. Procedures for attendance

3.1. 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 children in the class. The main playground is supervised from 8.40 am and children enter school at 8.50 am.
- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every child;
- Registration takes place twice daily at 8.50am and 1.00pm. Registers will close at 9.10am and 1.15pm. Any child arriving after the closing of the register will be recorded as 'unauthorised' for that session.
- Children's attendance is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

3.2. Child leaving school during the school day

During school hours, school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are.

- Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school;
- Whenever possible, families should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside school time.





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- If children attend medical or dental appointments at the start of the school day, thus being absent for the register, but return promptly to school by 10am, the school is able to change their attendance code from 'M' (absent for medical appointment) to '/' (present) at school.
- If children attend medical or dental appointments in the middle of a morning or afternoon session they will be marked as present for that half day provided that they leave school just before the appointment and return promptly afterwards;
- Families are requested to confirm in person at the office or with the class teacher, or in writing by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time;
- When a child is being collected from the school, family appointed guardians are to report to the office before the child is allowed to leave the site; they must sign the child out on leaving school and back in upon return;
- If a child leaves the school site without permission their families will be contacted and then the police if the child is not quickly found, unless the child is deemed to be at risk of harm, in which case the police will be called first.
- When Foundation Stage pupils attend school part-time, care should be taken that any absences are recorded only for times when the child would normally be in school.

3.3. Following up absence

Families are expected to call or email the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health. If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days, we will contact the families to discuss the reasons for this.

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason; ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary; identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use. If a child is absent and no communication has been provided, then the school endeavours to contact the families that morning.

3.4. Reporting to families

Attendance is reported to families on an end of year report, half yearly report (from February 2019) and during the monitoring process when any child's attendance is less than 96%.

3.5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

At Great Wilbraham C of E Primary School, we expect attendance to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence, which would then be authorised. All absences must be categorised as either "authorised" or "unauthorised". The responsibility for this decision rests with the Headteacher within the strict guidelines provided.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** may include:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- Days of religious observance notified in advance;
- Absence due to family circumstances (eg bereavement, serious illness).
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes





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- A parent or guardian is a member of the armed forces on leave from active duty abroad and can only have a family holiday during this period.

We recognise that there will be unforeseen events affecting families which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.

Notification of absence is essential and enables the Headteacher to make considered decisions when authorising absences. It is the Headteacher's prerogative to request that guardians certificate short-term illnesses and to request a doctor's notification in the case of long-term illness. Unauthorised absences are those where no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by families(s)/carers or the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The DfE guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.

The guidance makes it clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised. We ask families to notify the school well in advance of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits and fine judgements will have, on occasions, to be made.

The following activities are examples of what would be classified as **unauthorised absence**:

- Family holidays including where the cost of taking the holiday is a factor in choosing the dates
- Family trips or visits which could reasonably take place at a later time, outside of the school term
- Time off for birthdays, anniversaries, theatre trips or museum visits, etc.
- Lateness after registration closes unless it has been caused by a medical appointment.

3.6. Exceptional Circumstance Absence Leave of Absence

The school holiday dates and end of Key Stage Assessment dates are published a year in advance and leave of absence will not be authorised during these assessment periods.

In line with the DfE regulations, holidays during term time will NOT be authorised. The Headteacher and Governors have determined that:

- In exceptional circumstances permission may be granted for a period of leave of absence
- 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, no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date and prior to any booking or monies committed.





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- Consideration will then be given to the pupil's previous school attendance and previous requests for leave of absence.
- The school will record the nature of any leave requests in order to support its decision on "uniqueness".
- Teaching staff cannot provide "catch-up" work for children who miss school due to a leave of absence whether authorised or unauthorised and families must take this into account when requesting leave.

3.7. Legal sanctions and Fixed Penalty Notices

Schools can request that a fine is issued to families for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. The EWO may be notified and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued.

Fixed Penalty Notices may be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. If issued with a penalty notice, families must each pay £60 per child per parent/guardian within 21 days or £120 per child per parent/guardian within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the families or withdraw the notice.

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

- A 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

3.8. Strategies for promoting attendance

The single largest factor involved in promoting good attendance is providing high quality teaching and learning which meets the needs of pupils and helps them feel safe and valued. In addition, the following strategies for promoting good attendance may be used by the school:

- regular sharing of pupil attendance rates with families and carers
- ensuring that good attendance is regularly discussed in classes along with good behaviour, wearing school uniform and other aspects of belonging to our school community
- celebration of high levels of attendance for specific year groups in regular newsletters
- half termly 100% certificates for attendance

3.9. Cambridgeshire Three-Letter System

The school employs the Local Authority's recommended 'three letter system' for notifying families of poor attendance. A copy of these letters can be found at Appendix 2.

- Letter 1 is sent to notify families that a child's attendance has dropped below acceptable levels
- Letter 2 is sent if there is no improvement in attendance. It notifies the families of ongoing concern and contains a request for them to meet with the Headteacher to discuss issues. Letter 2 also notifies families that if the pupil suffers illness from this time the school will only authorise absence on receipt of a doctor's note or appointment card





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- Letter 3 is sent if attendance still fails to improve. It notifies families of the need for the involvement of the Local Authority EWO.

4. Monitoring attendance

4.1. Monitoring attendance

The Headteacher, supported by the School Business Manager, are responsible for monitoring attendance. They monitor pupil absence on a regular basis and send out letters regarding attendance at various points during the school year – after 10 weeks and then on a six-week rotation. Attendance is formally monitored by the Headteacher and EWO on a termly basis.

The school has adopted the following procedures for attendance below 96%:

RELATE TO NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT

- 96%-92% attendance: information letter in the first instance, Letter One if repeated and no improvement
- Below 92% attendance: Letter One, monitor and the Letter Two if repeated and no improvement
- Below 90% attendance: as above and advice and possible involvement from the EWO
- If attendance still deteriorates then Letter Three will be sent, which is now a Fixed Penalty Notice Warning letter advising that school will monitor attendance over a four-week period and if there is more unauthorised attendance and overall attendance is between 86% and 89% a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine may be issued by Cambridgeshire County Council.

The above is where appropriate and depending upon circumstances. 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.

A register of letters issued to individual families can be found in the Attendance File in the Headteacher's office. The Headteacher will liaise with the Education Welfare Officer where there are other or more immediate concerns over attendance.

The school may suggest completing an Early Help Assessment (EHA) form, with families of pupils, who require support with attendance or wider family issues. This would dispense with the formal letter process, providing a supportive rather than punitive measure.

The school may also complete a Statutory Intervention Form (SIF) for any child whose attendance drops dramatically over a shorter period of time without satisfactory reason. A SIF requests the involvement of the EWO or a Fixed Penalty Notice to be applied to families. Completion of a SIF would not, normally, happen without prior communication with the families of a child.

Staff involved in attendance monitoring should also look for patterns of absences, for example, Fridays or returns from a stay with non-resident families. Frequent short-absences are just as disruptive to a child's education as a longer absence.





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Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors at every Full Governing Body meeting.

4.2. School Refusal or Reluctance

From time to time some children will experience periods of school reluctance or school refusal. In these cases, the school will aim to support the child and family in the best way possible to return to good attendance. This may be through:

- ensuring high quality provision that meets the child's needs effectively
- following-up social issues or issues of bullying
- meet and greet
- alternative provision at the start of the morning
- support through family support worker, Specialist Teaching Team or Locality services
- EHA or Common Assessment

5. **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

5.1. Safeguarding

The safety of children is paramount in all situations. If a child's absence is a cause for concern, then a log will be raised, and the Safeguarding Lead Designated Person will monitor the situation.

The school office will maintain a list of children for whom absence is a cause for concern. This list will be managed by the Designated Person for Child Protection and will include all children with a Child Protection Plan and any other children where there are concerns about wellbeing if a child is not in school.

The Headteacher or Designated Person must be informed of any child's absence on the list, whether a reason has been offered or not, as soon as possible in the morning.

A second list of children in Key Stage 2 who walk to school by themselves will also be kept. Families should be informed if any child on this list has not arrived at school without a reason being given in advance. This list should be kept up to date by families.

6. **Outcomes for pupils**

6.1. Inclusion and equal opportunities

Our whole school philosophy totally encompasses the equality of access and opportunity. Reasons for absence of all children is considered carefully and dependent upon circumstances. All children have the right to good attendance. Some children with significant medical needs may struggle to maintain the same levels of attendance to other children, however the school should hold the same high standards as for other pupils. Poor attendance may be indicative of a failure to meet a child's needs effectively and therefore the school's Inclusion Manager should be involved in cases involving SEN pupils. Advice from specialist services should also be sought.





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7. Links to other policies

7.1. Staff attendance policy

8. Appendices

8.1. Appendix 1: attendance codes

8.2. Appendix 2: letters (separate document saved in Central Hosting)





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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





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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

