

Great Gaddesden C of E (VA) Primary School



Pupil Attendance & Punctuality Policy

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CONTENTS

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. PHILOSOPHY, VALUES AND AIMS**
- 3. HOME–SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP**
- 4. REPORTING ABSENCES**
- 5. REGISTRATION**
 - 5.1 Calling the attendance register**
 - 5.2 Lateness**
 - 5.3 First day contact**
 - 5.4 Pupils at risk**
- 6. AUTHORISED/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**
 - 6.1 Unauthorised absences**
 - 6.2 Authorised absences**
 - 6.3 Illness, medical and dental appointments**
 - 6.4 Special occasions**
 - 6.5 Family bereavements**
 - 6.6 Annual family holidays**
 - 6.7 Days of religious observance**
 - 6.8 Adverse weather and school closure**
 - 6.9 Traveller children**
- 7. PROCEDURES FOR FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE**
- 8. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE**
- 9. POLICY REVIEW**

This policy has been reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body of the school.

Signed _____ Date _____

Position _____

1. INTRODUCTION

The staff and governors at Great Gaddesden (VA) Primary School recognise that regular, punctual school attendance is essential for all pupils if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available at school.

Regular school attendance has always been important. Without it, the efforts of the best teachers and the best schools will come to nothing. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in law. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. It places at risk and in some cases, can lead to pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.
(*School Attendance*, DfE, May 1994)

This policy will be brought to the attention of, and/or issued to, all members of staff and a reference copy is kept in the school office.

2. PHILOSOPHY, VALUES AND AIMS

The staff and governors at Great Gaddesden Primary School are committed to creating a Christian learning community where all adults and children feel welcome, valued, safe and able to work well. When school is happy, purposeful and stimulating, pupils will want to attend every single day. For this reason, we recognise that both high standards of pupil behaviour and high standards of teaching have a part to play in promoting pupil punctuality and attendance. We believe

- effective schools convey their positive regard for regular punctual attendance to all parents/carers, pupils and staff;
- children quickly pick up the message that their presence is important and want to be at school on time every day;
- the twice-daily requirement to register pupils can and should be perceived as an opportunity for the school to make children feel noticed and valued;
- promoting high standards of pupil behaviour and having a zero tolerance approach to bullying makes school a happy and attractive place to be which, in turn, promotes punctuality and attendance (see our *Anti-Bullying Policy* and *Behaviour Policy* for details);
- promoting high standards of teaching – so that all lessons are well planned, appropriately resourced, exciting and engaging for all pupils – also promotes punctuality and attendance (see our *Teaching and Learning Policy* for details).

3. HOME–SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

We are committed to working in partnership with parents/carers in order to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive suitable full-time education (Section 7, Education Act 1996). In most cases children attend school and therefore parents/carers should ensure their children attend and stay at school.

At Great Gaddesden, the staff and governors endeavour to support parents/carers in this responsibility by

- encouraging parents/carers to discuss any attendance related problems with the class teacher/head teacher;
- making sure the school is always bright, clean, warm and welcoming;
- promoting good pupil behaviour and dealing promptly and effectively with any and all incidents of bullying;
- ensuring all class teachers are on the playground at 8:45am to speak with parents/carers and greet pupils.
- informing parents/carers (by email, text, newsletter, website) of any changes to school routines, e.g. school trips, church services;
- recognising and celebrating good attendance through termly 100% attendance certificates and annual 100% attendance awards
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4. REPORTING ABSENCES

Pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- Authorised – where the school is able to approve pupil absence.
- Unauthorised – where the school is not able to approve absence.

It is a parent/carer's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for their child's absence as soon as possible.

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school office on the first day of absence by 9.00am giving as much information as is available at that time. If the absence is prolonged interim information should be provided, so that the school can help with homework or other necessary arrangements.

The headteacher will then decide whether to authorise the absence. If authorisation is refused, for instance when a child was kept off school for a birthday, then parents/carers will be informed in writing.

Upon a pupil's return to school they should bring with them a letter from their parent/carer confirming the reason for their absence and giving any other appropriate information.

The headteacher will discuss attendance registers each term with the Attendance Officer to ensure that correct procedures are being followed and to monitor the attendance of all pupils. The school office monitors registers on a daily basis, and this information is transferred daily onto the computer attendance system, which calculates individual codes for each pupil.

5. REGISTRATION

5.1 Calling the attendance register

Regulation 3 of the Pupils' Registration Regulations 1956 stipulates that all schools must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon

session, pupils are marked present or absent. The 1991 Regulations also direct that registers must state whether an absence is “authorised” or “unauthorised” (see 4, above). Session times at Great Gaddesden Primary School are as follows:

- 8.50am–12.00pm ... morning session for morning-only EYFS pupils.
- 8.50am–12.15pm ... morning session for all full-time pupils.
- 1.15–3.15pm ... afternoon session for all full-time pupils.

Registers will be recorded on the school’s electronic attendance system as required by the DfE.

5.2 Lateness

Registers are closed and returned to the register pouch in the school hall at 9.00am in the morning and at 1.15pm in the afternoon. Any pupils arriving for registration after the register has been closed and returned must report their attendance to the school office.

The school policy is to encourage punctuality and actively discourage lateness as it can seriously disrupt lessons. If a pupil is late and misses registration, a late mark will be recorded.

Obviously the school will be sympathetic if this is for a good reason. If, however, a pattern of lateness starts to emerge, parents/carers will be invited to discuss the matter with the class teacher/head teacher in order to reach a satisfactory solution.

The parent/carer or pupil must log their names on to Pupil Record file in the entrance to the school, including the reason why a pupil is late or needs to leave early.

5.3 First day contact

In the event of no contact having been made regarding a pupil's absence by the end of the morning session, the parents/carers will be contacted by the school office.

5.4 Pupils at risk

Parents/carers should be mindful that any pupil missing from school, who is potentially at great risk, will not have their absence verified until communication is received between parents/carers and the school. If unexplained absence continues, or the school is concerned regarding irregular attendance the steps identified in this policy (see 7, below) will be applied.

6. AUTHORISED/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents/carers (Section 199, Education Act 1993).

6.1 Unauthorised absences

Absence should be unauthorised when

- no explanation is forthcoming;
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is shopping in school hours;

- the pupil is minding the house;
- the pupil is caring for siblings or other relatives;
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional circumstances (e.g. a birthday);
- the pupil is attending a non-educational event;
- the pupil is away from school on a family holiday for a period longer than that negotiated with the school or parents/carers have not sought approval in advance.

6.2 Authorised absences

Absence should be authorised when a pupil is

- attending an interview for a place at another school;
- receiving special off-site tuition, e.g. a SpLD (specific learning difficulties) Base;
- attending a Pupil Referral Unit;
- participating in an approved public performance, competition or examination;
- ill or attending a dental or medical appointment (see 6.3, below);
- away because of a truly exceptional occasion (see 6.4, below);
- absent due to family bereavement (see 6.5, below);
- taking a term-time family holiday with the permission of the school (see 6.6, below);
- observing religious days (see 6.7, below);
- not present due to adverse weather conditions (see 6.8, below);
- participating in recognised Traveller Community activities (see 6.9, below).

6.3 Illness, medical and dental appointments

If the school is satisfied that a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness, then the absence will be treated as authorised. Leave for medical or dental appointments may be given (i.e. absence may be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parents/carers (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or on production of an appointments card. The school would prefer parents/carers not to make routine appointments within school time.

The school office for the purpose of safeguarding pupils, records all pupils arriving late or leaving early.

6.4 Special occasions

It is for schools to determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not: much will depend on the circumstances of the particular case. Generally the rule is that only truly exceptional occasions will be sanctioned through authorised absence after discussion with the head teacher. (As a rule, birthdays – whether of the pupil or a member of the pupil’s family – are not deemed to be exceptional.)

6.5 Family bereavements

The death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event in any young person's life. Schools have discretion to authorise absence to attend funerals or associated events and any request would be dealt with sympathetically.

6.6 Annual family holidays

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Requests for leave of absence are to be made by the person who has parental responsibility of the child, on a Holiday Form which can be obtained from the school office.

The head teacher will consider the following points before authorising an absence:

1. The pupil's previous attendance history, including time off due to illness.
2. The age of the child.
3. The pupil's stage of education.
4. The time of year – especially with reference to the run-up to SATs or other exams.

6.7 Days of religious observance

Absence of a pupil for participation in a day set aside exclusively for religious observation by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong is classified as authorised absence. It would be helpful if the school could be given advance notice of religious observance days.

6.8 Adverse weather and school closure

The decision whether to close the school and/or authorise pupil absence due to inclement weather rests with the head teacher. The head teacher will keep the school open during severe weather whenever reasonably practicable, balancing any risks from lower supervision levels, late return journeys, or minor slips and bumps, against disruption to pupils' learning. The school will only close when there are serious risks. (See our school's *Health & Safety Policy* for further details.)

We recognise that there might be fewer staff to supervise pupils on days of bad weather but should the school remain open, we will continue to supervise pupils and deliver as much of the curriculum as possible.

6.9 Traveller children

Those pupils who come from Traveller Communities (as defined in HMR/12/96/NS) will be authorised to attend national cultural events such as the great horse fairs. Pupils who are dual registered at our school and another outside the Local Authority (LA) will be deemed an authorised absence when attending the "other" school. Pupils who are living "on the road" but also registered at our school may also be deemed to be authorised when absent because of finding suitable site accommodation. Pupils who are registered at school who embark upon travelling are authorised up to 100 days of absence per academic year. This special position of Traveller families in regard to school attendance is recognised by Section 199(6) of the 1993 Education Act.

Traveller parents/carers have to demonstrate that they are engaged in a trade or business of such nature that requires them to travel from place to place. We recognise that family

events feature prominently in all cultures and especially in Traveller Communities. The head teacher will give an application for non-attendance careful consideration. However normal attendance rules apply in all other cases and children are expected to attend in line with all other children.

7. PROCEDURES FOR FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE

Parents/carers are reminded that

- if their child is absent without communication with the school, it is likely that the school will contact them out of concern for the child's welfare;
- if their child is persistently late and/or absent they will be invited to meet with the head teacher to discuss the situation;
- if their child returns to school after an absence without an explanation, the parents/carers will be asked to provide an explanation
- emails / notes from parents/carers will be filed in the child's personal file.

8. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

- Attendance data will be collected and monitored in order to inform school policy and practice.
- The head teacher will review attendance termly. If a pupil's attendance for the term falls below 90% a letter will be sent to parents/carers. For pupils below statutory school age, attendance will be monitored in the same way and letters sent as necessary.
- Exemplary attendance and punctuality will be recognised and celebrated half-termly and at the end of each academic year.
- Parents/carers will be regularly reminded (via newsletters, etc.) of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils who are absent through serious sickness or an operation for any extended period of time will, if appropriate, have work sent home to them. It may be that the child will need an integrated phase back into school routine.
- The head teacher will make a termly report to the Governing Body on attendance matters through the "Head's Report".
- The head teacher will, when appropriate, liaise with other agencies – Education Psychology Service, Social Services, Child and Family Guidance, etc. – when this may assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The head teacher will have termly meetings with the Attendance Officer who will review the school's attendance records in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- This *Pupil Attendance and Punctuality Policy* will be reviewed every three years.

9. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years and/or in accordance with national and/or local changes to the primary school curriculum, so that it represents the ethos, values, priorities and practice of Great Gaddesden (VA) Primary School.

The review process will be led by the head teacher and shall include input from all teaching staff. The policy may be discussed by members of the relevant Governing Body sub-committee as required.