

Goldsworth Primary School

Attendance Policy



Commitment to Attendance

It is our task as teachers at Goldsworth Primary School to promote and support our children's learning and enable each one of them to achieve their full potential. We endeavour to provide a school day that excites, challenges and motivates each child, and allows them to develop as independent learners. We encourage the children to achieve personal excellence in all aspects of work and behaviour.

The school staff, alongside the Local Authority, firmly believes that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. We know that every day lost to education can have a serious impact on children's attainment and overall progress in school. As a staff we do all we can to encourage parents and carers to ensure that the children in our care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

Regular attendance is key to staying healthy, enjoying and achieving, keeping safe, contributing to the community, social and economic well-being and the school aims. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. As a school, we will encourage and support parents to ensure that their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

Responsibilities

Student Responsibility:

- attend school every school day;
- attend school punctually;
- be appropriately prepared for the day;
- discuss promptly with their class teacher, any problems that may affect their school attendance.

All parents/carers will:

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that the child in their care arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- contact the school on the first day of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school;
- discuss promptly with their child's class teacher or senior staff, any problems that deter their child from attending school;
- notify the school immediately of any changes to contact details;
- contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school;
- not take holidays in term time.

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

'The parents of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

- a) to his age, ability and aptitude and
- b) to any special needs he may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

A parent is defined as per Section 576 of the Education Act 1996:

- All natural parents, whether married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility/care for a child/young person as defined in the Children's Act 1989 through a Court Order, formal agreement, Child Arrangements Order, adoption or becoming the child's legal guardian
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child/young person and is considered to be a parent in education law.

All school staff will:

- provide a welcoming and safe learning environment for children;
- encourage good attendance and punctuality;
- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily;
- monitor every child's attendance and punctuality using MIS;
- contact parents as soon as possible when unexplained and/or prolonged absence occurs and obtain notes authorising the absence;
- meet with the parents of children whose attendance causes concern;
- meet with the school's Inclusion Officer regularly to discuss any new concerns and report on the progress of existing cases;
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Inclusion Service.

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories:

- 1) Unauthorised absence – this is for pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. This includes
 - Parents/Carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
 - Absences which have never been properly explained
 - Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
 - Excessive illness without medical evidence
- 2) Authorised absence – this is for pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.
- 3) Approved Educational activity – this covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school e.g. work experience, field trips, educational visits, sporting activities, dual registration.

Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Responding to lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial and registration at the beginning of the day with the class teacher is important. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other students in the class. It is paramount therefore that all students arrive at school on time.

The classroom doors open at 8.40am and morning registration is at 9am. Any pupil arriving before 9.30am will be marked as present, although if registers have been completed they will be recorded as late (L).

Any pupil arriving after 9.30am should sign in at the office and will be marked as having unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable explanation e.g. attending a medical appointment, in which case the appropriate code will be entered.

Persistent lateness will be monitored and letters sent to parents. If lateness remains a problem and this lateness is after close of register a referral may be made to the Inclusion Service.

Leave of Absence

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and parents/carers are expected to book their family holidays during those times. Leave of absence will not be granted for holidays to be taken in term time.

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for their child as a right. If leave is taken, without prior authorisation, the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the school register.

Where a family leave of absence in term time is unavoidable, a Leave of Absence application form must be requested from the school office and submitted for consideration by the Head Teacher on behalf of the school governors, no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date. If leave is taken in term time, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and liable to a penalty notice.

The amendment to the Pupil Registration Regulations in 2013 states that the Head Teacher may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher will therefore decide whether or not to authorise the absence having decided whether or not the circumstances are exceptional.

Should absence be taken without the Head Teacher's authorisation the case will be referred to the Inclusion Service for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Many cases of non-attendance can be resolved through effective partnership working with parents, individual pupils, schools and other agencies. However, if non-attendance cannot be resolved, or parents actively prevent, or fail to ensure that their children access education, legal sanctions will be considered.

An offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a child's attendance at the school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school.

Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner.

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer, the school will endeavour to contact them that day to request a reason for absence.
- A message will be left where no contact can be made.
- If there is no response or the absence remains unexplained or still a concern, the office will inform the relevant member of the Senior Management Team and further investigation and action will be made accordingly.
- If there continues to be no response, a member of Senior Management may visit the child's home to ensure there are no safeguarding concerns.
- The school will 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.

Frequent Absence

If a child's attendance becomes a concern, a letter will be sent to parents to highlight the importance of the child's attendance at school. If there is no improvement, a second letter will be sent which requests evidence of illness e.g. GP appointment card, chemist receipt etc and parents will be asked to come in and speak to a member of Senior Management to discuss.

On their return to school after authorised absence, pupils will be welcomed back and supported as much as possible to catch up on missed work. For longer term absences due to authorised absence, a more formal reintegration will take place.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful of parents to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

Persistent Absence

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards this mark is given priority and parents will be contacted by a member of Senior Management to invite them to a meeting to address the issues identified.

If a child has persistent absence and meets the criteria for a Penalty Notice to be issued; or has been taken out of school without the school's permission for 5 or more days; the school will liaise with the Inclusion Officer / LA to decide whether a Penalty Notice should be issued.

Failure to comply with the expectations set by the Inclusion Service may result in further action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

Inclusion Officers

Inclusion Officers monitor the attendance of all children on a regular basis. The Local Authority Inclusion Service will work with school staff and parents to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence.

If attendance problems cannot be resolved by school then the school will make a referral to the Inclusion Service. The Local Authority Inclusion Service will try to resolve the situation but if attempts to improve attendance have failed, but unauthorised absence persists, the Local

Authority Inclusion Service may use sanctions such as parenting contracts, penalty notices and prosecution.

The Inclusion Service may issue a Penalty Notice to parent/carers who are failing to secure their Child's regular school attendance and are not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school and Education Welfare. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

Failure to ensure regular attendance, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, to a fine or a term of imprisonment.

Penalty Notices

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The Penalty Notice fines are as follows:

- **£60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 per parent per child if paid after 21 days but 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. Or If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must consider prosecuting the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when Penalty Notices may be issued

Where a child is taken out of school for 5 days or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** may be liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child** who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they may be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 7 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or the Inclusion Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Students Leaving During the School Day

- students 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 the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time;
- where a student is being collected from the school, parents are requested to report to the school office before the student is allowed to leave the site;
- if a student 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 students as a missing person.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform Goldsworth Primary School as soon as possible. A student will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- A new home address if appropriate

The student's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the local authority Inclusion Service.

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