

Giffards Primary School

Pupil Attendance Policy

This policy was developed in the Spring Term 2009 through a process of consultation.

Our Academy works in collaboration with the schools, academies and governing bodies in the North East Cluster and The Inspiration Learning Trust to have a common approach to attendance management. This is supported by Thurrock Local Authority.

This policy was last reviewed in the Spring Term 2021 in conjunction with advice from Thurrock EWO and is supported by Thurrock Local Authority.

Last Agreed by Governors - May 2021

Next Review Date

May 2023

Signed By Chair of Governors _____ Date _____

Introduction

This document is a statement of aims, principles and strategies for Attendance. Government guidelines on attendance and punctuality have been taken into consideration in its foundation.

Giffards Primary School is a successful school which aims to provide the best available learning opportunities for children living in the local community. With Parents/Carers & the school working in partnership this will help to ensure children settle effectively into the school. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their time at school it is vital that children attend school regularly. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. This policy sets out the information we think will help you and your child understand what is important to their future success and how, with your support, attending school regularly will help them to achieve their full potential.

The effect of absence on progress					
A whole year has 365 days; a school year has 190 days. That leaves 175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping and other appointments.					
No absence	9 days absence	12 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence	38 days absence
190 days of education	181 days of education	178 days of education	171 days of education	161 days of education	152 days of education
100%	96%	94%	90%	85%	80%
<p>Very Good</p> <p>Your child has the best chance of success. Gets your child off to a flying start and is in line with National attendance and OFSTED expectations</p> <p>Well done and keep going!</p>		<p>Worrying</p> <p>Your child has less chance of success. Makes it harder for your child to make progress and is below National attendance and OFSTED expectations</p> <p>As a school we are very concerned and will closely monitor your child's attendance.</p>		<p>Serious Concern</p> <p>Your child will find it very difficult to make progress as they have very poor attendance. Any attendance under 90% is classed as persistent absence.</p> <p>Significant learning has been missed and this is below National attendance and OFSTED expectations</p> <p>As a school we are seriously concerned and at 80% are required to refer your child to the Education Welfare Service</p> <p>May result in court action!</p>	

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Learning

Any absence that a child has from school affects their learning and social interactions. Regular absences will have a serious negative effect on their academic progress and may affect a child's confidence within school.

Ensuring your child attends school regularly is your legal responsibility and allowing absence from school without good reason is an offence and may result in a prosecution.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the Curriculum and anti-bullying.

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable: -

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs, he/she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

First Day Contact

It is vital that the school is told as early as possible if a child is not going to be attending school. The school has a 24hr answer phone service and an absence link on our website to help parents. If the school is not contacted, it will have to try to contact you. It is important that you regularly notify the school of your latest contact telephone number or any change of address. If the parent/carer doesn't contact the school and the school cannot make contact with the parent/carer or other contacts, the school will have to make a home visit and may have to report the child as a 'missing person' to the Police or Social Services. This is for safeguarding reasons.

Failure to give the school an acceptable reason for an absence will result in an unauthorised absence mark, therefore please give details rather than just 'unwell' if you leave a message on our answerphone or via the website.

For safeguarding reasons, parents are required to provide at least two emergency contact numbers to the school, so we are able to communicate with someone if we need to.

Understanding types of absence:

A register is taken in the school every morning and afternoon (each classed as a 'session') and every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required by the school. You can see a breakdown of the Register codes either on your child's school report which is sent yearly or on a Pupil Attendance Report (PAR) which is attached to an attendance letter sent out at the end of each half term for pupils with attendance under 96%.

AUTHORISED absences are sessions away from the school for a valid reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), or in an emergency. Obviously children need to be kept off

school if they are too ill to attend, however, if they are simply ‘not feeling right’ or are just tired then this will not be authorised. It is also important that a child returns to school as soon as possible after feeling unwell for example, it is not acceptable to keep a child home on Friday simply because they have been unwell Monday-Thursday. Also if your child is given antibiotics by a doctor they will be entitled to up to 24 hours authorised absence, anytime off after this will be unauthorised (depending on the individual case/illness).

The school retains the right to convert an authorised absence to unauthorised should it become clear that a parent has not been truthful about an absence e.g. where a parent has said a child is sick and it later becomes clear a holiday/long weekend was taken.

It is imperative that parents are honest with the school about all absences, asking pupils to tell an untruth is not acceptable and is damaging to the pupil, giving them the wrong moral message, as well as to the relationship between school and home.

UNAUTHORISED absences are sessions away from the school which the school deems unreasonable. This type of absence can lead to referral to the Education Welfare Service Unauthorised absences include:

- parents/carers choosing to keep a child/children off school without good reason
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been properly explained
- children who arrive at school 30 minutes after registration closes will be given a ‘U’ Mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is classed a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason, both authorised and unauthorised absences. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to any child’s progress and educational prospects. Any case that is at the PA level or is moving towards it is given priority and you will be notified immediately and if attendance does not improve an Action Plan will be drawn up. If attendance still continues to fall you will be invited to an Attendance Meeting. At the end of the academic year anything over 19 days of absence will result in your child being labelled as a persistent absentee. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully in terms of both attendance and academic progress and most PA cases are also referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Absence Procedures:

If a child is absent from school you must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence and inform the school of the reason for the absence.
- Provide the school with appointment card/appointment letter/screenshot of appointment email or text if taking your child out of school for a medical appointment; the child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
- Provide the school with medical evidence of any absence lasting more than 5 consecutive days (i.e. medical note, medical appointment card, medicine bottle) or if this is requested by the school for absences of less.

If a child is absent from school, we will:

- Text the parent/carer then telephone them on the first day of absence if the school has not heard from them.
- Attempt to contact any other persons listed as a contact if we are unable to contact a parent/carer.
- If we are still unable to contact any of the contacts listed, we will carry out a home visit. If there is nobody at home and we have a potential safeguarding concern we call the police. If after three days of absence we have not been able to make contact we will seek advice from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and may also report this to the police as a safeguarding concern.

- At the end of every half term we will write to the parent/carer to inform them if the school has concerns regarding a child's attendance.
- We will write to a parent/carer if your child has more than 10 sessions of medical absences offering support. If the absences continue to escalate we will send a letter informing you that medical evidence will be needed in future for us to be able to authorise an absence. If no medical evidence is supplied, we will issue a penalty notice once there have been 12 unauthorised absences over a 12 week period.
- The school will contact the parent/carer to inform them of our concerns regarding a child's attendance and to see how we can best support the family. If the child's absence continues to fall (or reaches 90%), we will contact you to discuss matters further and arrange a meeting to agree an Action Plan.
- Invite the parent/carer to an Attendance Panel meeting should a child's attendance not improve after the previous contact and agreed Action Plan.
- Refer a child to the Education Welfare Service or seek advice from the Multiagency Safeguarding Hub if attendance still continues to fall.
- For safeguarding reasons, our school must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without school permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

The Education Welfare Service

The school aims to work pro-actively with parents/carers to ensure attendance for each child is as high as possible and, unless there are extenuating circumstances, never falls below 96%. The school will contact parents/carers at an early stage as explained above if a child's attendance starts to fall towards concerning levels. In this way the school and parents/carers can work together to resolve any issues without Education Welfare or Social Care involvement. However, if difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way then the school may refer a child to the Education Welfare Service (EWS). The EWS is the statutory service responsible for enforcing attendance where the efforts of the school have been unsuccessful.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable in the school. If a child misses the start of the day, it can have a detrimental effect on their progress as they find it hard to settle and they will inevitably miss vital introductions to lessons. It also disturbs the class routines, which has a negative effect on children's learning.

The school doors open at 8:45am and children must be in class for registration by 8:55am. If a child arrives at school after 8:55am they will need to come via the school office for their details to be recorded on the class register. If a child is up to 30mins late they are marked in the register as 'late' (L), pupils arriving more than 30 minutes after the close of registration will be regarded as absent from the morning session and will be given an unauthorised absence mark (U). This will have an impact on a child's Attendance Report.

Obviously there are times when a child may be late into school due to an appointment, this type of lateness is marked accordingly, although the school does need to be notified prior to the lateness. If an appointment is later in the morning or afternoon the school will expect the parent/carer to send their child into school to obtain their 'present' mark and then collect them nearer to the appointment time. Ideally, where possible, appointments should be made for a child outside of the school day.

A letter is sent out at the end of each half term to parents/carers of children who have been late that term notifying them of the number of late sessions that have been recorded. A letter will be sent home during the term if a child is frequently late and lateness will continue to be monitored from that point. Further lateness will result in a phone call home, if the problem continues this will result in a meeting between the school and parent/carer to agree an Action Plan going forward. If after this meeting lateness is still an issue then referral to EWS or Social Care could be made.

If the parent/carer is having problems getting a child to school on time at any point you can approach the school for support and get help to resolve the problem.

Holidays in Term Time

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#). These amendments, as described below came into force on 1 September 2013.

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 Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances, please contact the school for examples of our definition of exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Parents must apply for leave of absence in advance of taking it.. All applications need to be made **at least 4 weeks** before the period of absence and before personal/travel arrangements are made. Unless it is agreed that the leave is for 'exceptional circumstances' all leave will be unauthorised and will show as such in the register. Medical Evidence will be required if a child is off sick prior to a holiday or immediately after a holiday. If your child continues to incur unauthorised absences, an application may be made for a Penalty Notice to be issued

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday taken, the case may be referred to the EWS who may issue a Penalty Notice (See below). If a leave of absence is taken, staff will **not** set extra work for children to do during their absence or on their return.

Any holidays taken will incur absence marks and parents may still receive letters stating their child is below the recommended attendance level. This can cause parents upset but it is important parents are kept updated on their child's attendance and how absence due to holidays contributes to poor attendance. For more information, please refer to the DFE Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

Penalty Notices

The EWS have issued a '[Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence from School](#),' which came into effect on 1st May 2014. This complies with the relevant law as regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for pupils.

Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice can be issued (a letter warning that a Penalty Notice could be issued must be sent first for point 1 below):

1. At least 12 sessions of unauthorised absence within the previous 120 sessions (one session is half a day)
2. If the Head Teacher does not authorise a request from a parent for term time leave of absence of at least 10 consecutive sessions and the parent takes the leave. **No warning letter will be given.**
3. Where a pupil of compulsory school age who has been excluded from school, either for a fixed period or permanently, is found to be present in a public place during school hours in the first five days of the exclusion, without reasonable justification.

Penalty Notices will be issued by Authorised Local Authority Officers, in Thurrock these are members of the EWS; Headteachers may make an application to the EWS to issue a Penalty Notice in respect of pupils registered at their school; Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers can issue a Penalty notice in the cases of excluded pupils in a public place.

Once a person is issued with a Penalty Notice it must be paid, this is set by regulation at £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority may prosecute for the offence to which the Notice applies.

Penalty Notices can be issued in respect of each child and to each parent in relation to each instance of unauthorised absence.

Those responsible for attendance matters in this school:

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the following staff have specific attendance related responsibilities

- **Class Teacher** – To complete electronic registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily; to be alert to early signs of issues which may result in non-attendance; to inform the admin. officer of any attendance concerns.
- **Receptionist/Admin Officer** - To ensure children who are late or absent are added to the electronic register including recording reasons and first day absence calls are made when parents/carers have not notified the school of an absence; to alert the Admin Officer if unable to make contact, a home visit may be necessary.
- **Admin Officer** – To oversee the registration process and liaise with class teachers over attendance concerns; to alert parents/carers over attendance concerns and/or for frequent lateness and to closely monitor all identified children; to consult and liaise with EWS and refer PA children to them; to promote good attendance within the school with assemblies, achievement certificates and rewards. Particular focus will be on monitoring the attendance of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium as it has been identified that this group of children have lower attendance than non-Pupil Premium children and this negatively affects their academic progress and results can therefore be lower.
- **Senior Leadership Team and Governors** – To ensure all attendance procedures are carried out in accordance with the Attendance Policy and to work with the Admin Officer to raise the profile of attendance within the school and deal with the attendance issues that arise.
- **Learning Mentor** – To identify children with high and or consistent absence/lateness, to liaise with parents/carers and to set and monitor an Action Plan to improve attendance.

Engaging Parents

The school will use standard letters for information. Standard letters will be sent out by the admin officer at the end of each half term when attendance has fallen below 96% (whether this is due to illness or any leave of absences) and subsequent letters sent if attendance does not improve.

If a child has been late during that term a letter will be sent informing parents/carers

If the school has referred the child/children to the EWS due to consistently poor attendance, the school will do it's best to help the parent/carer with any problems which affect a child's attendance, but the school cannot help the parent/carer if they do not tell us. In fact, where parents/carers consistently fail to cooperate with the school, the absences will be unauthorised and will result in the school asking the EWS to take action. However, before the school gets to that point, they will invite the parent/carer to an attendance meeting, if after this meeting there is no improvement then the school will invite the parent/carer to an Attendance Panel meeting, please see below:

Attendance Meetings

- This is a supportive measure by the school to address poor attendance and prevent the involvement of the EWS.

- Initially the Learning Mentor will make telephone contact to discuss the reasons for a child's poor attendance/persistent lateness and for the school therefore support the parent/carer in ensuring a child gets to school where possible and attendance improves.
- If there is no improvement then the school will invite the parent/carer in for an Attendance Meeting where an Action Plan will be drawn up with targets for a child to met with respect to their attendance as well as a review date set to discuss improvements. Present in this meeting would be the school Learning Mentor and parent/carer.
- If the school still sees no improvement, then the parent/carer will be invited back to the school for a meeting with the Assistant Headteacher/Inclusion Lead.
- Where parents/carers do not engage-in this supportive process school will seek advice from MASH and EWS.

Re-integration programmes

Where children have been absent from school for some time due to an ongoing illness they may need to return on a gradual basis. Individual cases will need to be discussed with the relevant member of staff and agreement reached as to the pace and time scale of any return.

Incentives and rewards

The following incentives and rewards are used across KS1 and KS2 to promote good attendance:

- Children with 100% attendance over the school year are given a certificate in an assembly to celebrate their achievement.
- Individual pupil incentive schemes are used for pupils with low attendance, this is done sensitively to encourage and reward pupils for achieving their personal attendance target.
- The classes with the best attendance each term/school year are honoured in a newsletter and presented with a certificate and prize at the end of the term.
- The class with the best attendance in each key stage is mentioned in our weekly celebration assemblies and awarded a class certificate.

Summary

The school has a responsibility to discourage parents from removing their children from education for any reason as absences may have a negative impact on a pupil's educational attainment and progress.

A pupil who takes 10 days absence a year will actually be spending more time at home than at school in that year and will only attain 94.7% attendance. 10 days absence means a child misses 50 hours of education.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance; equally parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school.

All staff within the school are committed to working with both parents and pupils to ensure that attendance within the school is as high as it can be so that the pupils receive the best education that they can which will improve their life opportunities.