

Georgeham C of E Primary School

Attendance Policy

January 2022

To be reviewed: **Triennial**

Person responsible: **Headteacher**

Owner: **Teaching and Learning Committee**



Georgeham CofE Primary School aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by:

- Setting out our requirements and expectations for school attendance.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to fulltime education to which they're entitled, thus maximising each child's opportunity to be able to say, "We Are Curious."
- Ensuring we monitor closely the attendance of pupils in order to ensure the risk of children being missing in education is minimised. In order to achieve this, we will monitor the attendance of all children regardless of whether they are of statutory school age or not.
- Ensuring we have made contact with any family whose child is not present when the school register is taken.
- Monitoring closely the attendance and punctuality of all groups of pupils within the school and addressing concerns early.
- Working in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service to create a culture where, excellent attendance within a school where pupils feel safe and secure, is valued.
- Aiming to reach a minimum of 96% attendance for all children.
- Maintaining up to date registers.
- Providing regular information to parents regarding attendance procedures and the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality.
- We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Legislation and guidance:

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold, and covers all pupils on roll at the school, regardless of age.

School procedures

Attendance register:

Our school's front door is opened at 8.45am and closed at 8.55am. We encourage parents to ensure that their child is in school by 8.55am as the school register is taken by 9.00am.

Our attendance register is taken using an online system that all staff can access through their Google accounts. It will be taken at the start of the morning of each school day and will close at 9.10am. They are taken again directly after lunchtime and will close at 1.10pm.

Please see Appendix 1. for the full range of DfE attendance codes that we use.

Any amendment to the school's online attendance register will be made using an electronic note or comment, including:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment

Our School Administrator transfers this data to our MIS system (Management Information System) at the end of every week.

Unplanned absence:

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence (for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health) as soon as practically possible, but preferably before 9.00am.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

Medical or dental appointments:

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

Where an appointment will take place during the school day, a request for the absence should be made at least 24 hours before the appointment in order for

authorisation of the absence to be considered. The request for absence should still be made through the school office, using the Request for Absence form.

The school acknowledges that there are occasions when requests cannot always be made in advance, as appointment at doctors /dentists can sometimes only be made on the actual day. Where this is the case, evidence must be provided when the child returns to school.

Lateness and punctuality:

A child who arrives late but before the register has closed (between 8.55 to 9.10am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code, **L**.

A child who arrives after the register has closed (after 9.10am) will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code, **U**.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning. Where a child is persistently late arriving to school a letter will be sent to the parents / carers detailing concerns about lateness and offering an opportunity for the parents / carers to seek support and advice if required.

- 5 minutes of lateness every day = 3 days of school lost a year.
- 10 minutes of lateness every day = 6.5 days of school lost a year.
- 15 minutes of lateness every day = 10 days of school lost a year.
- 20 minutes of lateness every day = 13 days of school lost a year.
- 30 minutes of lateness every day = 19 days of school lost a year.

Please see below detail on the actions we follow for lateness:

- 3 lates in a half term - a letter will be sent informing you of your child's lates and requesting an improvement in punctuality.
- 4 lates in a half term - a meeting with the Headteacher will be requested. Reasons for lateness will be discussed, in addition to actions to support punctuality in the future agreed.

Where improvements are not seen a further meeting with the Headteacher will be requested.

Following up absence:

It is our policy to 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 the school receive no contact from the parents/carers regarding a child's absence our school administrator will arrange to check if the child is in the lesson that they should be in.

If he/she is present the register will be marked accordingly.

If he/she is absent they will;

- Phone the parents/carers

- If contact cannot be made with the parents/carers, further attempts to contact them will be made, repeat phone calls, emails and text messages will be used.
- If we continue to be unable to contact the parents/carers the school will attempt to contact other members of the child's emergency contact list until a reason for absence can be confirmed.
- If we are unable to contact any members of the emergency contact list the Headteacher will go and visit the child's address to enable the school to fulfil its safeguarding responsibilities. The Headteacher may choose to bring another member of staff with them.
- Should the school not be able to ascertain the whereabouts of the child following all of the steps taken outlined above, the school will contact the police to ask for their support.

Reporting to parents:

We report a child's attendance figure through the Annual School report in March, and again at the end of the year.

Should there be concerns about a child's attendance or punctuality contact will be made with the family as appropriate (as outlined in this policy).

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Term-time absence:

Headteachers should not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

There is no formal definition offered for exceptional circumstances, at present, by the Department for Education (DfE). From discussion with the DfE and professional associations, however, it is suggested that exceptional leave would be:

- Rare
- Significant
- Unavoidable
- Short

We consider each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the circumstances and context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

We require the request for leave of absence to be submitted in writing at least four weeks before the intended absence.

Exceptional circumstances for leave of absence that may be agreed could be:

- Religious observance.
- A family funeral of a close relative.
- Holidays for fostering or adoption purposes.
- A close family wedding.
- A close relative coming to the end of their life.
- Family needing to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

- Renewal of visa / official paperwork which requires attendance at an embassy.
- Approved sporting activity (regional, county or national level sport).
- Participating in external exams e.g. dance or music exams.
- Participating in public performances including theatre, film or television work and modelling (subject to the child having a valid performance licence and knowledge as to whether the employer will provide educational opportunities during the absence from school).

The above list is not exhaustive. Each request for leave is considered on an individual basis.

Unauthorised absence:

Examples of reasons that we would not authorise absence are:

- Availability of cheap holidays.
- Availability of desired accommodation.
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods.
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term.
- Another sibling in a different school where holidays do not coincide.
- A special treat for the child.
- A family celebration, other than those outlined above.
- Travelling with parents to complete research (ie. finding out facts about the country).

Parents are encouraged not to take family holidays during term time in order to cause the least amount of disruption to their child's education and attendance.

- 10 days absence would mean 95% attendance.
- 19 days absence would mean 90% attendance.
- 29 days absence would mean 85% attendance.
- 38 days absence would mean 80% attendance.
- 47 days absence would mean 75% attendance.

When Attendance causes concern:

We will endeavour to work with our parents to maintain a good level of attendance. When absences start to occur, we will use the following steps to try to improve attendance.

- The class teacher will discuss how attendance is causing concern and will try to identify strategies to help improve attendance.
- First day contact will most probably already be in place.
- Further letters and meetings with the Headteacher to discuss attendance.
- Possibility of offering Early Help, if needed.
- Referral to EWO for meetings, and possible legal intervention.
- Referral to the Local Authority for Formal Legal action which could be a Penalty Notices for a block of absence in term time if not previously had one within 24 months. (Information below about EWO and Penalty Notices).

The Education Welfare officer:

Georgeham CofE Primary School works in partnership with the allocated EWO to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school.

- The Headteacher meets the EWO on an agreed schedule.
- Any concerns regarding attendance is noted by the staff or Headteacher and discussed with the EWO at their next visit.
- School staff work closely with families to improve poor attendance. When attendance does not improve sufficiently, the EWO will make a formal referral to Devon County Council.
- In the event of an emergency e.g. child running out of school, the parent, the police and the EWO shall be notified and advice sought directly.
- Advice will be taken from the EWO regarding current practice and issues.
- The EWO will promote the importance and legal requirements of good attendance to parents, carers and their children.

Legal sanctions:

Devon County Council has the legal duty to issue a penalty notice to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age or the parents have chosen to take up full time education at a school.

If issued with a Penalty Notice (under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment is made to the local authority.

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

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year (10 sessions or more in a 12-week school period).
- 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.
- Where a child is taken out of school on an annual basis for unauthorised holidays.

Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, there is no statutory right of appeal, although there are circumstances in which the council may withdraw the Notice, such as the parent providing satisfactory retrospective specific medical evidence for any absence.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent (under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996) or withdraw the Notice. Should the Local Authority choose to prosecute you may be required to appear in a Magistrates court and this may result in a fine of up to £1000.

Strategies for promoting attendance:

At Georgeham, we truly believe that every school day counts towards your child's future. Days away from school add up to lost learning, enjoyment and achievement.

We appreciate it when families use the 175 days in the year that they're not timetabled to be at school, to use those days for family visits, days out, holidays and routine appointments where possible.

The school provides regular information to parents about the importance of excellent attendance, through the website, school newsletters, an attendance leaflet and other forms of communication.

Good attendance is important because

- Statistics show a direct link between educational achievement and absence levels. Higher absence can lead to lower achievement.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to maintain.
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular attenders find transition points easier to manage.

Attendance monitoring:

Our school administrator monitors pupil absence on a daily basis (regardless of whether the child is of statutory school age or non-statutory school age).

Our school administrator will also complete thorough attendance monitoring each half term which will monitor trends in attendance and identify children causing concern. Findings will be discussed with the Headteacher and actions will be put in place if required.

We aim for an attendance level of over 96% for each child.

Please see below detail on the actions we follow for attendance falling below 96% after the first half of Autumn Term each year. These checks will then take place once each half term for the rest of the school year:

1. **Attendance above 95%** is monitored regularly.
2. **Attendance below 95%** - a letter will be sent to you informing you of your child's current level of attendance. This is an initial acknowledgement that the attendance falls below our school target. (Letter 1)
3. **Attendance below 93%** - a second letter (Letter 2) will be sent informing you that the attendance rate is not improving. A meeting may be needed with the Headteacher and the Education Welfare Officer will be notified.
4. **Attendance remains below 93%** - After a further period of time, if the attendance still remains below 93%, and is not increasing, a meeting with our Headteacher will take place. The reason for continued absence will be discussed in addition to actions being agreed to support better attendance in the future. An attendance contract may be put in place to formalise agreements regarding actions to be taken.
5. **Attendance goes below 92%** - Following continued intervention and support over a term, a referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Officer.

- 6. Should attendance go above the persistent absence threshold of 10% (attendance below 90%),** the child's attendance will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer.

We will show some flexibility in administering the process outlined above for exceptional cases or those which requires frequent medical appointments or periods of absence.

Our school administrator also monitors the attendance of several groups of learners within the school on a regular basis and this data is reported to Governors termly. If necessary, actions are taken to support particular groups of pupils.

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.

Children Missing Education

All schools must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the fifteen grounds listed in the regulations. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points.

Safeguarding Policy

Georgeham Primary School also has safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of our pupils, and this policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. Attendance figures and trends are shared at the Full Governing Body meetings.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and works with the Education Welfare Service who may issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The Schools' Administrator

Our Administrator is responsible for checking attendance daily and recording data from our online system onto the schools MIS system. Doing so, supports them in their role to monitor absences, receive phone calls or chase up same-day absences by contacting parents, monitors absence figures and trends, and reports concerns to the

Headteacher. The school administrator works with the education welfare officers to help tackle persistent absence.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information on the school's online register twice-a-day. Teachers are also required to pass on any concerns or worrying trends they have noticed with regard to a child's attendance, or, comments made by a child which contradict a reported reason for absence.

Parents

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that it is every parent's legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives a full and efficient education either by attending school or by providing suitable Home Education (which is registered with the local authority). Failure to ensure your child attends school every day may result in legal action being taken against you.

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a "parent" as:

- All natural parents whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom a child is residing, and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law).

Monitoring arrangements:

This policy will be reviewed annually. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Governing Body.

Links with other policies:

This policy is linked to our Safeguarding Policy, and with the Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs policy.

Appendix one Absence Codes

Present in school during registration...

/ = am \ = pm ...present in school

Code L: Late arrival

Not in the class line walking in to school? ... Code L

After the register has closed (after 9.10am)... **Code U**

Code B: Off-site educational activity

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

Code V: Educational visit or trip

Absence codes...

Code C: Authorised absence (Only exceptional circumstances)

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school (Only exceptional circumstances)

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Code R: Religious observance

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided.

Schools should follow up all unexplained absences in a timely manner and amend the records to show the reason for absence.

Code O: Absent without authorisation; if not satisfied with the reason.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Code X: Not attending in circumstances relating to Covid-19

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (School closure)