

ATTENDANCE POLICY

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO ALL CHILDREN AT THE SCHOOL INCLUDING THOSE IN THE EYFS.

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy is written with regard to Department for Education non-statutory guidance on School Attendance (July 2019)

The main purpose of this policy is to maintain high levels of school attendance by all pupils and detail the actions that should be taken in the event of pupil absence, particularly persistent absence.

1. Introduction

Every child has a fundamental right to be educated and regular attendance is extremely important if children are to fulfil their potential and take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. To ensure that this is achieved parents and teachers have a duty to ensure regular attendance at school. All children are expected to attend school on a regular basis except when they are ill, in which case they should be fully recovered before returning. At such times and in the particular cases of diarrhoea or vomiting, school protocols must be followed with a clear period of 48 hours after the final occurrence before the child returns to school. Punctuality is equally important, as it enables children to receive important messages, get organised and instils good habits of timeliness and discipline.

The safety and wellbeing of all our pupils at Gayhurst School is of paramount importance and it is, therefore, the duty of staff to follow up unexplained and unexpected absence or increased absences and any patterns of absence in a timely manner. School staff must also identify and deal with children who go missing from education or who may be at risk of serious crime (see Annex A, Keeping Children Safe in Education, Part 1, September 2019 and the school's Missing Child Policy).

The government expects schools to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled, and
- To act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- Pupils are expected to be punctual to their lessons.

2. Notifying the School of an Absence

If a child is unfit for school, the parent or guardian should inform the school office at their earliest convenience and before 08.30 on the pupil's first day of absence for any absence which has not previously been agreed with the school; this can be done by telephone, email or through My School Portal(MSP). The school should also be updated

on each subsequent day of absence in the same manner. Failure to do this will result in the child being registered as unauthorised absence and potentially referred to the local authority if:

- the absence becomes longer than acceptable,
- a pattern forms,
- there are increasing absences or there is concern for the child's whereabouts and welfare.

If there has been no communication from the parents or guardians explaining reasons for absence, the school's administrative staff will make contact with the parents or guardians to ascertain the reason for absence.

Absence will not be authorised without legitimate explanation. Leave may be granted in an emergency or for medical appointments that are unavoidably during school time but, wherever possible, appointments should be made outside school hours.

The Head has a duty to ensure that term dates are protected and leave of absence will not normally be granted for family holidays during term time. In exceptional circumstances, parents should write in advance directly to the Head explaining fully why the request is being made to remove a pupil from school during term time. Authorisation or otherwise is solely at the Head's discretion and any decision will be final. Absences will not be authorised retrospectively and will instead be recorded as unauthorised. In the event that an absence is approved during term time, it is at the school's discretion as to whether any work is set and expected to be completed during the period of absence.

If for any reason a child has any concerns about attending school, it is important that parents or guardians discuss the problem with the school at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate measures can be put in place to address the issues and support the child whilst attending school.

3. What constitutes Authorised and Unauthorised Absence?

Authorised absences are those which the school agree are unavoidable, e.g. illness or family bereavement, and absences for which leave has been authorised and approved in writing by the Head such as agreed holidays, visits to senior schools and medical appointments.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school considers unreasonable or excessive, to be determined by the Head. An absence is unauthorised until acceptable explanation is received and it is for the school, not the parent / guardian, to decide whether an absence should be recorded as authorised or unauthorised. Providing confirmation of the reason for the absence does not automatically register the absence as authorised, this is solely at the discretion of the Head or any other delegated authority in the Head's absence.

4. Lateness

Should a child be unavoidably late and arrive at school after the register has been taken (08:45 for Rec to Y6 and 09:15 for Nursery) they must report directly to the school office where their attendance will be recorded on the school register. Arrival after registration is completed will result in a 'Late' mark being recorded on the register. The reason for lateness and timescale will also be recorded

As lateness can be disruptive to both the child and their class, in the event of a child being late twice in one week or five times in a half-term, the Deputy Head or Assistant Head Junior School will make contact with the parents to raise concern about the lack of punctuality. If this does not bring about any improvement and there are further instances of absence, the parents will be warned in writing about the lack of punctuality by the Head, who will also reinforce the school's expectations in this regard.

5. Monitoring and Review

Form teachers have responsibility for monitoring the attendance of children in the school and will work with parents to resolve any difficulties. Attendance is reviewed at the end of each term and the Deputy Head and/or Assistant Head Junior School will contact the parent or guardian should a child's attendance fall to 90% or below within this period. Where necessary, measures will be agreed to improve attendance which will continue to be monitored closely. If attendance falls below 90% in subsequent terms, parents will be contacted in writing and asked to meet with the Head.

Where attendance repeatedly falls below 90% and there is concern regarding unauthorised absence the local authority's Attendance Officer will be notified.

The law states that it is the responsibility of the parent / guardian to ensure that a child attends school regularly and on time. Neglect of this responsibility will result in the school taking action to ensure attendance and ultimately can lead to further action being taken (Education Act 1996).

Within these regulations, the school has a legal duty to report certain attendance concerns to the local authority. These include:

- Ten days of unauthorised absence (other than for reasons of sickness or leave of absence);
- Failure to attend regularly;
- Deletion from the school register when the next school is not known or for Home Schooling.

6. School Registration Procedures

Attendance registers at Gayhurst School are maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (see also amendments to the regulations, 2016). The register is backed up on a daily basis and stored for at least three years.