

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 statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance \(August 2024\)](#) and will be reviewed as the guidance changes.

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.

The policy is also informed by statutory guidance on [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school \(December 2023\)](#) and non statutory guidance, [Providing remote education:guidance for schools \(August 2024\)](#) and [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance:guidance for schools \(February 2023\)](#).

1. Introduction

Every child of compulsory school age has a legal right to receive an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Regular attendance is extremely important if children are to fulfil their potential and take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Regular attendance has a positive impact on a pupil's attainment, wellbeing and life chances. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at school or by education otherwise than at a school.

All children are expected to attend school on a regular basis on every day that the school is open, except in allowable circumstances when they are too ill to attend or have been granted permission for an absence in advance from the school. There is a direct correlation between higher attainment and regular attendance.

At such times of severe illness 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.

For children with mental health or special educational needs, regular attendance is an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. In the most extreme cases, a dedicated and agreed reduced timetable provision with the intent of them returning to full-time education at the earliest possible opportunity can be agreed.

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 2024 and the school's Missing Child Policy).

At Gayhurst, we recognise that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe environment in which all pupils can learn and thrive and we are committed to providing this to ensure the regular attendance of all of our pupils.

The government expects schools to:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure there is a senior member of staff who acts as an Attendance Champion. At Gayhurst, The Assistant Head of Pre-Prep and Assistant Head Prep fulfil this role.
- To encourage all pupils to be punctual on arrival at school and to lessons.

2. Working together to improve attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with families. All partners should work together to:

Expect Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

3. 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 in order that the absence can be recorded during the start of day registration period; 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, greater than 10 consecutive days or 10% of the total registration sessions during any half-term period,
- a pattern forms where absences occur consistently on the same day or period of the year,
- there are increasing absences or there is concern for the child's progress, 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, as they are generally not considered as exceptional circumstances. 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. Please consider the impact that any absence from school will have on your child's academic progress and social integration with their peers (missing key events such as celebrations, sports days and prize assemblies can also adversely impact their confidence and self-esteem). If an absence is requested and approved for a holiday, academic work will not be provided for the period of absence.

Absences will not be authorised retrospectively and will instead be recorded as unauthorised.

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

4. 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 religious festivals, special family occasions and celebrations, visits to senior schools, public examinations and medical appointments. Holidays immediately preceding our end of term dates will not be considered as appropriate for authorisation.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school considers unreasonable or excessive, to be determined by the Head. An absence is unauthorised until an 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.

5. Lateness

Should a child be unavoidably late and arrive at school after the register has been taken (08:45 for Reception to Year 6 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 Assistant Head Pre-Prep or Assistant Head Prep 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.

6. Monitoring and Review

Form teachers have initial responsibility for monitoring the attendance of children in the school and will work with parents to resolve any difficulties. Attendance is reviewed on a half-termly basis and the Assistant Head Pre-Prep and Assistant Head Prep will contact the parent or guardian should a child's attendance continue to fall over a period of time, Form teachers will make the first contact to make parents aware that their child's attendance has fallen 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 unless there are valid reasons that account for the lower attendance.

Where attendance repeatedly falls below 85% 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);
- Fifteen days of sickness absence across an academic year;
- Failure to attend regularly;
- Deletion from the school register when the next school is not known or for Home Schooling.

7. 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 six years.