

GILLINGSTOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Inspire ~ Believe ~ Achieve



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Signed ... 

Name: Dave Llewellyn

Chair of Governors

Date: July 2020

Signed 

Name: Caroline Carter

Headteacher

Date: July 2020

Rationale

Regular attendance and excellent punctuality are the foundations for academic achievement and personal development and are essential to ensure the best outcomes for our pupils. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help our pupils as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. It helps children to develop a responsible attitude towards the opportunities available in school and underpin the basis for the world of work. Attendance and punctuality are strongly linked to students' well-being and safety. If pupils miss school and, therefore learning, they may experience difficulty in catching up missed work. Late arrival to school is disruptive to pupils' learning; to teaching staff and other pupils in the class. Pupils who arrive after school begins miss quality time with the teacher and vital information. A pupil who is persistently late may lose confidence and become anxious – late arrival can also be embarrassing for the pupil. Effective schools convey a positive attitude for regular attendance to parents/carers, pupils and staff. Gillingstool Primary School is proactive in promoting regular attendance and punctuality, ensuring that pupils take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Regular attendance demonstrates a commitment to learning and the school community. The term regular in our policy means that all pupils attend, punctually, each and every day that they are expected to attend. There may be exceptional circumstances when absences may be agreed in line with national code guidance.

Guiding Principles

We are committed to ensuring that all students benefit from the opportunities available at Gillingstool Primary School. Our expectation is that students arrive on time, are picked up on time and attend regularly – that is every day that the school is open, unless there is an unavoidable reason for not doing so. We will promote this ethos throughout the school community and encourage our students to achieve this aim. Where this expectation is not met we will identify and address the barriers that prevent it.

Objectives

Our policy is consistent with our school vision and values. This document defines our policies and procedures, the implementation of which will help to achieve the following objectives:

- To improve attendance at school in order that we fulfil our school aim of providing the best education for the pupils according to their attainment and achievement;
- To work in partnership with parents/carers to ensure regular and punctual school attendance;
- To reduce the percentage of unauthorised absence and persistent absence;
- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm;
- To demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school;
- To be aware of and to respond quickly to any problems relating to school attendance;
- To maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school.

Responsibilities:

The Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that registered pupils of school age attend school regularly and punctually and that they receive an education according to their aptitude and ability.

The school have a legal responsibility for maintaining an admission register (known as the school roll: containing a list of all the pupils at the school) and an attendance register. Both registers are legal documents and are completed in line with school policy. We have a legal duty to register all pupils in the attendance register in the morning and afternoon. We will code according to national guidelines. Where there is a pattern of absence and no clear supporting evidence of acceptable reasons for absence we will mark these as unauthorised.

- Attendance registers must be completed on SIMS at the start of every morning and afternoon session as this is a legal requirement
- Registers must be kept accurately as they are a legal document
- Supply teachers/other teachers in the class should be made aware of, and follow, the same procedures
- Class teachers take the morning attendance register between 8.55 and 9.05am.

Schools must also ensure proper safeguarding procedures are in place for attendance.

Attendance

- We expect our students to attend school on time every day that the school is open, unless there is an unavoidable reason for not doing so, for example, illness.
- We will celebrate and reward students who achieve our expectations of a high level of attendance and those who have shown sustained improvement.
- We will share attendance information with parents and students, focusing on the link between attendance and achievement.
- We will promote high attendance and punctuality through assemblies and class discussion; always reinforcing the link between attendance and achievement.
- The school will communicate attendance matters to parents via text, telephone; email, letter, newsletter and through the school website.

Absence from school

Understanding types of absence:

There are two categories of absence from school

- **Authorised – approved**
- **Unauthorised – not approved**

Every half day (session) from school has to be marked in the register and given a code by the school. The absence will be either authorised or unauthorised. That is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If the school does not receive details as to why a pupil is absent it will always be unauthorised.

Only the Headteacher (or their delegate) can approve an absence from school. That is the law.

Absence will be recorded using the code recommended by the Department for Education Guidance on School Attendance.

Request for absence in term time must be submitted in writing in advance to the Headteacher, who will treat every request on an individual basis and respond accordingly.

Authorised (approved absence) – types of authorised absence that may be approved:

- Leave of absence – bereavement, funeral.
- Medical absence for appointments – at hospital or orthodontists. (Non-urgent, routine check-up appointments should be made for after school hours or during the school holidays). Students are expected to be absent for the minimal amount of time and not absent for the whole day.
- Illness.
- Religious observance.
- If a student is excluded from school for a behaviour related incident, this is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised (not approved) absence – types of absence that will not be approved

- Absence due to birthday, shopping for uniform, looking after family members.
- Holiday in term time.
- Late arrival to school after the register has closed has to be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised absence can lead to parents/carers being fined by the Local Authority.

All absence – authorised and unauthorised – will be analysed and subject to challenge to ensure that any concern regarding frequency, pattern or validity is acted upon swiftly to ensure safeguarding responsibilities are met.

The 1996 Education Act requires parents and carers to ensure children attend school regularly and punctually. Where patterns of absence or broken week have been identified and where there are unauthorised absences we will seek to engage with parents/carers and the young person. Where efforts to address attendance do not lead to a reduction in unauthorised absence, consideration will be given to a formal legal process.

Punctuality

- Our policy is that we will allow a pupil who is late arriving by up to 10 minutes from the start of registration to be marked as 'Late' in the attendance register. We believe that a pupil arriving late will not receive the best outcomes. Arriving late can be unsettling for the pupil and may cause classroom disruption. **Students who arrive late to registration are recorded as L** (late before the register closes). **Registration takes place at 8.55am. Students should be in school for the start of registration at 8.55am.**
- The parent of any pupil who arrives late for school after 8.55am must sign in at the school office. This allows late attendance to be monitored and is necessary in case of a fire or emergency evacuation of the school.
- Parents of pupils who arrive persistently late will be challenged by the school. Persistent late arrival will result in parents and students being asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher/Education Welfare Officer/or delegate. This will also be the procedure for parents/carers persistently not picking their child up on time at the end of the school day at 3.15pm.
- Pupils arriving after 10 minutes from the start of the attendance register (after 9.05am) will be marked as U (unauthorised late arrival) in the register. A pattern of unauthorised absence U code may lead to formal action for non-school attendance and a possible Penalty Notice.

Medical appointments

- We monitor the amount of time missed due to medical appointments carefully.
- We acknowledge that hospital and specialist clinic appointments, including orthodontic and on-going dental treatment, may require a student having time out of school. Our expectation is that a minimum amount of learning is lost. We will seek an explanation from parents where a whole day is missed for this reason. Proof of medical appointments in school time must be provided for the school.
- It may be necessary for parents/carers to take a pupil out of school during the day. The parents/carers must go to the school office and show evidence of the reason for the absence, for example, an appointment card.
- Routine, non-urgent appointments must be made after school time and during the 12 weeks of holiday.

Health Needs and Attendance

About 60% of all register marks relate to illness code. In order to ensure health needs are addressed we will take full account of the health needs policy as set out in the following link
<http://www.southglos.gov.uk/documents/Medical-Needs-Policy-December-2016.pdf>

- Parents/carers are expected to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence and each day thereafter, informing the school of the reason for the absence and the expected date of return.
- The School Business Manager notes telephoned reasons for absence on the SIMS register.
- The register should be amended straight away.
- If a message explaining absence is not received, every effort will be made to telephone the parent/carer to confirm the cause of the absence using our first day calling procedures.
- If there is no notification then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If, after the School business Manager has tried to contact the parent/carer for 2 continuous days, they have had no communication, the Headteacher will write to the parents/carers and inform them that, if they do not hear from them within 3 working days, they will request that the Education Welfare Consultant visit the family residence due to safeguarding concerns.
- If there are 10 continuous unauthorised absences then the Headteacher will complete and return a Children Missing Education form.
- If there are more than 10 unauthorised absences in a 7 week period, parents/carers could be liable to a penalty notice.
- Students are likely to experience bouts of illness from time to time. Some students will be managing chronic or more serious medical conditions that impact on their attendance. We will support students in these circumstances to ensure they do not miss out on their education. • When a student is identified as having frequent absence for reasons of minor illness, a meeting will be arranged to discuss this with the Headteacher/Education Welfare Consultant/or delegate.

Where illness is the clear reason for a pattern of absence with supporting information (for example repeat reference to medical aspects by young person, parent carer, prescription information, medical appointment cards, information from other health professionals) we will put in place an Individual Health Care Plan in line with the South Gloucestershire Council Medical Needs Policy. <http://southglos.gov.uk//documents/Medical-Needs-Policy-December-2016.pdf>

Where there are occasional absences such as sickness and diarrhoea there is no requirement for medical supporting information. For repeat absences we will follow government guidance and agree to absences where there is appropriate medical supporting information.

Holiday absence in term time

- Current legislation does not allow any absence due to holiday during term time.
- If a parent feels there are exceptional circumstances that support a request for leave of absence in term time, then he/she will need to make an appointment to see the Headteacher to discuss the exceptional circumstances and, in addition, they must put the request in writing.
- Each case will be considered individually and the decision communicated to the parents.

- If a parent/carer takes a pupil out of school during term time, and that absence is unauthorised for more than 10 sessions in a 7 week period, this could result in the school requesting the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice to the family.
- The notice is a fine of £60 per parent per child if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice; but rising to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. The payment must be made in full – part payments will not be accepted – details of how to pay are printed on the Penalty Notice. If the fine remains unpaid after 42 days, the Local Authority will prosecute the parent/ carer for non-attendance of the child at school.

Engaging with parents and carers: Working with the Education Welfare Officer

We believe regular attendance is so important in ensuring the best outcomes for our pupils that we will review our attendance performance regularly with the Education Welfare Officer. We will look regularly at the pupils where there is a pattern of absence. Where a child has a pattern of broken weeks we will contact parents and may arrange to meet and review progress. There is clear national evidence that children who are in receipt of free school meals attend less than other pupils. We will ensure that support to ensure attendance of all pupils in receipt of free school meals is prioritised.

- The school and the Education Welfare Officer have access to the attendance records of all pupils and will take appropriate action when attendance is of a concern.
- If a member of staff has concerns, the Headteacher must be informed immediately.
- The school and the Education Welfare Officer work very closely to monitor attendance of all pupils which is below 95%. •

Any pupil with attendance below 95% will automatically be discussed with the Education Welfare Consultant, this may result in an offer to attend an attendance support meeting.

- If a pupil's attendance continues to be below 95% the parents/carers will be invited to attend a school attendance meeting to identify support strategies. The Education Welfare Consultant will be in attendance at these meetings. There will be review meetings to monitor the impact of the support.
- Parents/carers should be aware that any pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern, where there is no improvement after intervention and support and the absence is unauthorised by the school, that this may lead to prosecution.

Threshold for Parent Contact

Action will be taken to engage with parents where:

- there are **5** broken or incomplete weeks over old style term (Autumn, Spring, Summer). A broken week is one where there is at least one late or absence mark in the register;
- attendance is below 95% over a term or
- there have been repeat Late or U code marks with or without other attendance concerns

Gillingstool Staged Response

Stage 1	attendance <95% broken weeks greater than 5 per term	Letter 1 Cause for Concern Challenging letter: Identification of attendance issue Offer of school support Time frame set for change (4 weeks) improvement or SAM (School Attendance Meeting)
Stage 2	continued attendance <95% broken weeks greater than 5 per term	Letter 2 Invitation to attendance support meeting with school attendance lead to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss impact of missed learning • investigate reasons for absence and solutions • set attendance targets Time frame set for change (4 weeks)
Stage 3	continued attendance <95% broken weeks greater than 5 per term	Letter 3 Invitation to formal SAM Meeting with attendance lead and EWO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss impact of missed learning • investigate reasons for absence and solutions • set attendance targets • fining or Individual Health care plan creation discussed • Set review period
Stage 4	continued attendance <95% broken weeks greater than 5 per term	Attendance Panel meeting
Stage 5	continued attendance <95% broken weeks greater than 5 per term	Prepare prosecution

Penalty Notices

In cases where parents or carers take their child on holiday during term time we will follow the Code of Conduct and request that a Penalty Notice is issued by the local authority where applicable. Where all or almost all unauthorised marks are U coded (late after registration) we will first seek to engage with the parents/carers and the young person. If U code absences persist we will request a Penalty Notice in line with the Code.

Safeguarding First Day Absence Call

We will regularly request updates of parent/carer contact information. Adults who have day to day care of a pupil are legally responsible for ensuring regular attendance. We will contact parents/carer on the first day of any unexplained absence. Where absences are of concern and attempts to engage have failed we will refer to the Access and Response Team for further investigation.

Removal from Roll

There are strict grounds as to when schools may remove pupils from their admissions register. These are outlined in Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulation 12(6) states that when a school has decided to delete a pupil's name from their admission role, they must notify their Local Authority as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

If the pupil has left the school without explanation, and there are concerns about the pupil's welfare, we will contact the local Access and Response Team immediately.

If there are concerns that a pupil may be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or radicalisation, we will contact the Access and Response Team immediately.

If the school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure will establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Once the school has confirmation that the child has started at the new school they will update SIMS. Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed.

If the school is concerned about any aspect of the transfer or if a pupil has 'disappeared' the matter will be drawn to the attention of the Access and Response Team without delay. Please see further information in the Children Missing Education Policy

<http://southlgs.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-education/behaviour-andattendance/children-missing-education>

Children Missing Education Flowchart

**Special arrangements**

We view our school as a 'community'. We value all pupils equally and will work with parents, carers and pupils to ensure best outcomes. There may be occasions when special arrangements are in place to support the attendance of young people who are more vulnerable. For example young people who have been ill may be placed on a phased return provided there is agreement from all parties. If any pupil is being supported through special arrangements with other schools we will ensure that agreements are in place with all parties including parents and that attendance is marked in the register properly.

Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs; this decision is made by the Headteacher in consultation with external agencies. A part time

timetable is time limited, must not be treated as a long-term solution and can only be made with parental agreement. This will be reviewed every two weeks within the time limited period. The school will mark the sessions where the pupil is not expected to attend as authorised absence. (Code C)

Celebrating Success

We will acknowledge excellence in attendance progress by class-tutor group and where individuals have outstanding attendance. Rewards schemes are in place for the class with the highest attendance each term (Dominos' Pizza) and a raffle for those children with over 95% attendance each term. We will regularly share attendance information in Celebration Assemblies and through the School Newsletter.