



Goring Church of England Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

To conform with the requirements of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) all data is handled according to the terms of our Privacy Notice. A copy of this is available on our school website.

1. Aims

This policy is designed to help staff, parents and carers to enable children to attend school regularly and thus be offered the most consistent access to learning as is possible. It aims to:

1. maximise the time that children spend in school;
2. minimise disruption to teachers' plans resulting from the need to assist children who have missed lessons;
3. minimise disruption to classes through late arrivals.

Statutory duties

This policy has been written to adhere to the following legislation on attendance:

- Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupils Attendance Records) Regulations 1991
- The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (amended 1997)

2. Introduction

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/guardian.

Good attendance is achieved through:

- promotion of a positive school environment;
- provision of clear and high attendance expectations;
- establishment of efficient and effective day-to-day management of attendance issues;
- effective communication and collaboration with parents/carers and the community;
- targeting additional support for attendance issues where appropriate.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance should be discussed between the school, the parents and the child.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents) as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Information about the cause of absence must therefore be provided by email, phone or in writing. Authorised absences are periods away from school for good reasons such as illness or other unavoidable cause. Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. These include:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy;
- term-time holidays;
- absences which are not satisfactorily explained;
- confusion over school dates;
- arriving at school too late to be marked as present.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way the school may refer the child to the Attendance and Engagement Officer (AEO) of the Local Authority. The AEO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Parents may wish to contact the AEO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their contact details are available from the school office and the Local Authority.

3. Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- Parents are required to inform the school either in writing, email or by phone if a child is, or will be, absent by 9am on or before the first day of absence.
- Absences for illness and medical appointments will be authorised and for occasions when the school is unable to open, or access to the school is exceptionally difficult (eg, at times of heavy snow). Absences will also be authorised for exceptional circumstances such as bereavement of a close relative, although it is stressed that discussion with the Headteacher is appropriate in such circumstances.
- Family holidays should be taken during school holidays, dates for which are published well in advance. The school is unable to authorise term-time holidays. Any leave of absence will not be granted during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances, and in these cases the number of school days a child can be absent, if the leave is granted, will be determined by school in advance. A holiday costing less during term time and a parent being able to take leave only during term time will not be considered as exceptional circumstances.
- All other absences will be recorded as unauthorised unless special permission has been sought from, and granted by, the Headteacher.

The process for monitoring attendance is as follows:

- The school attendance secretary will log instances of absence.
- The Headteacher will be notified of any persistent absentees.
- Attendance registers are legal documents and these are kept secure and retained for a period of six years after the date they were last used.

If concerns regarding attendance persist, a letter from the Headteacher will be sent to the parents/carers; thereafter, an action plan may be put in place which could ultimately lead to a referral to the AEO in order to address the issues identified.

The AEO will check the attendance and lateness records and highlight concerns for the school to address.

The above procedure will also be applied to persistent late arrivals. Registration closes at 9.10 am and any pupil arriving at school after this time is considered a late arrival and must report to the school office. Lateness will be recorded as unauthorised unless the school has been informed of, and agreed to authorise, the reasons given.

The school will maintain records of individual and collective attendance/punctuality to provide internal and external evaluation of performance.

4. Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to be aware of, and draw attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve any concerns with the parent/carer. The Headteacher (or nominated member of staff) will liaise with the AEO to ensure that necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and/or punctuality are identified.

Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring, parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward.

5. Penalty Notices and Legal Action

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the school reserves the right to ask the Attendance and Engagement Team to either issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a fine or pursue further legal action through the courts.

A Penalty Notice is a fine that the Attendance and Engagement Team may issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates' Court system. A parent/carer can be issued with a penalty notice if:

- they fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as six or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six-week period;
- they allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation;
- they fail to return their child to school on the agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence;
- their child persistently arrives late for school after registration is closed.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and a parenting contract meeting will be offered between parent, pupil and school to try and help resolve any issues. All PA cases will be referred to the Attendance and Engagement Team and, if necessary, they have a range of legal powers open to them to enforce attendance including parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecutions.

6. Responsibilities

The LEA, school and parents/carers all hold legal responsibility with respect to attendance. The following sets out specific roles.

Class teacher

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children or their parents/carers.
- Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.

- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at parent-consultation sessions where necessary.

Headteacher

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Noting trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the AEO, and providing reports and background information to inform discussions.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

School Administrator

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

Parents/Carers

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time.
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Responsibility for implementation of this policy rests with the Headteacher and the School Administrator.

Other relevant school policies:

- Equalities and Accessibility Policy
- SEN and Disability Policy
- Pupil Behaviour and Discipline Policy

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher every two years.

Status of this Policy:

Approved by the Headteacher: 20th September 2017