



Attendance Policy

Communicating Love; Inspiring
our Community to Flourish

2023-2024

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Aims

- To emphasise the importance of, and secure from children, maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities;
- To make explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations over attendance levels;
- To promote a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance;
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/guardians, children) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised" or "unauthorised";
- To emphasise the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.
- To communicate the approach for supporting children who cannot attend because of health needs.

Introduction

Regular attendance at school is vital. Absence is detrimental to the learning process. It is a legal requirement that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important learning; it also places children at risk, isolates and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Therefore, we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our children.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude; to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/guardian is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

This policy takes account of Government published ['Working Together to Improve School Attendance'](#)

The National Perspective

The Department for Education states that 'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less'.

The government expects schools to:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to a full time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

The government expect parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age, who are registered at school attend regularly and for all pupils to be punctual.

This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil. Pupil outcomes for persistent absentees are below those of their peers. There is less opportunity for children to be in school, learning and making progress.

Our School Target

Our target for all pupils is an attendance of over **96%** throughout the year. Regular absences are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school. Whilst sickness is impossible to predict, it is likely that the vast majority of pupils are able to achieve this target (less than eight days absence across the year.)

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parent or carer), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason, such as illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies, or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which would not be considered reasonable under the Department for Education's guidance. Unauthorised absence includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration without a valid reason (Please see **Punctuality** guidance below).
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed by the school. (Please see **Holidays in Term Time** guidance below).

Authorised Absences

Authorised absences include those where:

- A child is ill or receiving medical attention
- Approved sporting activity
- Approved interview or visit to another school
- Religious Observance
- Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances and Emergencies – agreed by the Headteacher

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible. If a medical or dental appointment is unavoidably arranged during school hours, the school will ask for confirmation of the appointment through an appointment card, or letter.

Leave of Absence

The regulations regarding Leave of Absence (The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.) advise:

- Head teachers **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.

Expectations

- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Head teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance.

- When making an application for Leave of Absence in advance parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify parents of their decision. It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.
- If a child is absent after having had a LOA request refused this absence may be recorded as unauthorised if there is no reasonable cause (eg sickness).
- Where a leave of absence is requested, but additional days taken either prior to or after the request may be considered as part of the leave of absence and could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s).
- Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council.
- The Warwickshire Attendance Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council's Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>).

- **It is important to note**, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 each child if paid within 21 days).
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis and on its own merits.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- No explanation is provided by parent (s)/carers by 9.30am on the day of the absence;
- An explanation is received before 9.30am on the day of the absence but does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.
- Leave of absence has not been granted and the pupil does not attend on the required day.

The Government guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not.

Sickness

Not every illness needs to keep a child away from school. Asking these questions may help parents when deciding whether or not their child should attend school.

Guidance is provided at <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

- Is your child well enough to do the activities of the school day? If not, keep your child at home.
- Does your child have a condition that could be passed on to other children or school staff? If so, keep your child at home.
- Would you take a day off work if you had this condition? If so, keep your child at home.

Public Health England provides guidance for all schools and child care settings.

St Gabriel's follows this PHE guidance in relation to the absence period following an incidence of sickness or diarrhoea. Therefore, children must not return to school until 48 hours from last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting have elapsed.

A child's health is of paramount importance to us all and we must do all that we can to ensure that illness does not spread to other children and staff.

Persistent Absenteeism

A child is identified as a 'persistent absentee (PA)' once they have missed 10% of their own possible sessions. Therefore, all children with attendance below 90% are classed as PA.

Absence at this level will adversely affect the child's progress; therefore, we seek parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly and senior leaders review all children on the persistent absence list each week. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence level is discussed in terms of actions to raise attendance.

Children who are identified as PA are tracked and monitored by class teachers, the school attendance lead, senior leaders and parents/carers are engaged with support to raise the pupil's attendance back to acceptable levels.

Pupils with less than 50% attendance are identified as 'severely absent' and the school will work with families and external agencies to bring about improvements in such cases.

Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

- Do all they can to ensure their child arrives on time. The school day begins at **8:40 am**.
- Notify the school by **8:50am** on the first day if their child is unwell with details of the illness and an estimation of the likely length of absence; the school should be notified every day of a child's absence
- Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's motivation to attend school.

In return the school will:

- Contact home on the first day of absence if no explanation has been received from home and on subsequent days if the child does not return as expected;
- Contact home over any unexplained absences by **9:20am** going through the parental priority list as advised by parents at time of enrolment;
- Follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;
- Involve staff and outside agencies to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;

Reporting

Attendance is included in the termly report issued to parents and discussed at termly parent consultation meetings.

Attendance is reported at governing body meetings throughout the year.

Attendance is reported through the school census each year.

The Process of Recording & Monitoring Absences

- Electronic registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions by teaching staff. Where a reason for an absence has not been provided, the absence will be recorded as 'N'.
- The school expects parents and carers to contact the school by **8:50am** on the first day of absence (and on subsequent days if the child's expected return is delayed) to account for their child's absence; this does not need to be supported by a letter. Where an absence has not been explained the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.
- If no contact is made, the school office will contact parents by **9:20am** to determine the reason for the absence and to be satisfied the child is accounted for.

- The school attendance lead and senior leaders will regularly review attendance (weekly) of pupils where attendance has fallen below 90%.
- The school attendance lead and senior leaders will review attendance of all pupils at least once per half term highlighting where attendance has fallen below 96% or where there has been a pattern of absence or lateness.
- The school attendance lead will notify parents / carers once per half term with an attendance figure for the half term.
- Families with pupils above 96% attendance will be thanked for their partnership in achieving this.
- Pupils with 100% attendance will have an additional text message sent home thanking them.
- Families with pupils whose attendance has fallen below 96% or where there has been a pattern of absence or lateness, will be reminded of the importance of attendance and punctuality and set a target of improved attendance for the following half term.
- Families with pupils whose attendance is below 90% will be sent a persistent absentee letter highlighting the seriousness of low attendance and requesting a meeting to discuss improvement.
- If, within a reasonable margin, improved attendance is not achieved during the next half term, the Headteacher will contact the parent in writing to review the case.
- Cases which do not show improvement will be discussed with Warwickshire Attendance service and external attendance support officers.
- For pupils whose attendance is 90% and below due to unauthorised attendance over a period of time, a referral will be considered with Warwickshire Attendance Service.

Lateness

Lateness is reviewed regularly alongside attendance.

Where regular lateness is evident and causes a concern, the school procedure is:

- 1) Class teacher to speak with parent.
- 2) If lateness does not improve over the next 2 school weeks, the attendance lead will speak with the parents and set a target.
- 3) If the target is not achieved, within a reasonable margin, the Headteacher will contact the parent in writing requesting a meeting to identify issues, set a target and next steps.
- 4) If the target is not achieved, within a reasonable margin, the attendance lead will discuss the case with Warwickshire Attendance Service

The above actions will be recorded on the central system operated by the office team.

Children arriving and leaving school with a parent/carer during the school day are signed in or out from the school office. The Entry Sign system is used for this purpose and it then provides a record in the case of an emergency/drill.

Recording Codes

When established, the reasons provided for any absence will be recorded on the school MIS system. Any 'N' codes will be updated to show the appropriate code for the absence.

The most common codes are:

C (Exceptional Circumstances)

G (Unauthorised Holiday)

H (authorised holiday)

I (Illness/ recuperation from an operation)

L late (before registers close)

M (Medical/dental appointment)

O (Unauthorised absence)

P (approved sporting activity)

R (absence due to religious observance)

U late (after registers close)

V (School trip / visit)

X – (child not required to be in school)

Y (Forced and Partial Closure – school office only)

(schools closed to pupils – school office only)

The electronic registers remain accessible via Scholarpack and letters explaining absence filed in the child's school file.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance - EBSA

There are occasions where children find it hard to come into school for a variety of reasons. EBSA is a complex and multi-faceted issue can be experienced by pupils of all ages. The school is sensitive to the signs of EBSA and will always seek to work with parents at the earliest opportunity where difficulties arise to ensure families are supported with school attendance. Parents who are concerned about EBSA are encouraged to speak to the school SENDCO at the earliest opportunity.

Supporting attendance for pupils with medical conditions

The school will support pupils with medical conditions (including mental health) to attend school so that they can play a full and active role in school life, remain healthy, and achieve their academic potential. *See accompanying policy.*

Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend due to health needs

In some cases, a child cannot attend school on a long-term basis due to health problems. In this case the local authority is responsible for arranging suitable, full-time alternative provision of a good quality on a par with that they would receive in a mainstream setting. Warwickshire Local authority offer 'flex-learning'. A pupil may be referred to 'flex' with parental consent when it becomes apparent the child will be absent from school for a period of more than fifteen consecutive days.

For school attendance records, pupils will be coded as 'I' ill, during the period of required support, with a 'B' code used only where education sessions have taken place with the Flexible Learning Team or in Alternative Provision.

Individual reintegration plans will be designed to take account of need when the child is ready, some will be able to return to the school routine at once where others

will require a gradual integration over a longer period. Reintegration plans may only take shape near to the likely date of return.

Children missing education

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. *See accompanying CME policy.*