



The Academies for Character and Excellence



Attendance Policy

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The Academies for Character and Excellence (ACE) is committed to ensuring that consistent effective safeguarding procedures are in place promoting the welfare and wellbeing of our children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

This policy is also supported by policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, separated parents policy and SEND.

This policy will apply to all parents of children attending any school within the Academies for Character and Excellence (ACE) in relation to legislative and Trust attendance requirements for their children. However, each individual school may have some minor amendments.

This policy will be reviewed every year unless significant legislative changes occur before the review date.

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1. Introduction

The Trust is committed to providing a full and effective educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, then punctual, daily attendance is crucial. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and can lead to future educational and social disadvantage.

The Trust actively promotes and encourages 100% attendance for all our pupils (whilst accepting that some individual pupils have evidenced medical needs. This means that some absence will be unavoidable). We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is a concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance, we will investigate, identify, and strive in partnership with parents, professionals and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times, wherever possible.

2. Policy Aims

St Gabriel's CofE Primary School aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

1. Promoting excellent attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence and severe absence
2. Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education, where possible, to which they are entitled
3. Acting early to address patterns of absence
4. We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their child/ren of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Research supports common sense and shows that there is a strong link between regular attendance and good attainment. Regular attendance is important for your child because:

- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and educationally.
- Regular attenders find school routines, schoolwork, and friendships easier to manage.
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular attenders settle into school more easily.
- Regular attenders enjoy improved social, educational, and work opportunities later in life.

This policy has been created to help support the school in effectively managing pupil absence so that our pupils (your children) can make the most of the educational and life opportunities available to them. We want your child to thrive.

3. Legislation: what the law requires

The Law requires 'regular' attendance. What is 'regular' attendance?

Attending 'regularly' has been defined by the Supreme Court (***Isle of Wight Council v Platt [2017] UKSC 28***) as attending in accordance with the rules of the school.

This means that your child is expected to attend on all of the days that the school is open to them.

St Gabriel's CofE Primary School aim is dedicated to complying with the legal requirements of **The Education Act (1996)**.

3.1 Legal framework

The Education Act (1996)

Section 7 - Duty to ensure Children receive a suitable education

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable -

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs, he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

This means that if your child is registered at a school, then as parents/carers, you have a legal duty to ensure that your child attends punctually every day that the school is open to them (unless the absence is recognised as unavoidable).

4. Absence: categories and procedures for reporting

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation (and evidence) for the pupil's absence is given to the school, this allows the Headteacher to make an informed decision as to whether it is appropriate to authorise the absence or not. Only a Headteacher can authorise an absence.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents/carers should inform the school at the **earliest opportunity on the morning of each day's absence** (this is a safeguarding requirement to protect your child) and let them know the reasons for the absence and the date that you expect the child to return to school.

4.1 Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term. As previously mentioned, parents/carers will need to contact the school at the earliest opportunity on the morning of each day of absence (safeguarding).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1161275/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2023_part_one.pdf

For prolonged absence due to illness, it is suggested that parents/carers provide the school with evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription. Providing this evidence will help the Headteacher to make an informed decision as to whether it is appropriate to authorise the absence or not. If the reason given for the absence or the evidence provided is not considered genuine or appropriate, then the Headteacher will unauthorise the absence.

4.2 Medical or dental appointments

Parents should make every effort to ensure that these appointments are made outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, pupils should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

To help the Headteacher decide if it is appropriate to authorise the absence, it is recommended that an appointment card (or similar) is passed to the school

4.3 Authorised absences

There may be some instances where the school will authorise an absence under **exceptional circumstances**, such as for a family bereavement. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. This is entirely at the discretion of the Headteacher.

4.4 Exclusion

Exclusions are treated as authorised absences.

4.5 Requesting term time absence

This School has adopted the **Local Authority Code of Conduct (September 2019)** in respect of leave of absence in term time. All parents who wish to take their child out of school for any reason (other than medical reasons) should complete a leave of absence request form. This can be obtained from the school office.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006)

Regulation 7 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006) states the three important criteria for Schools when considering requests for Authorised Term Time Absence, these criteria are:

- The leave request must be made in advance,
- The request should come from the parent with whom the pupil normally resides,
- The request should be supported by evidence of the exceptional circumstances relating to it.

This means that for a request to be authorised, it must evidence that the request meets the criteria of exceptional circumstances.

The Law does not grant parents/carers a right to take their children out of school during term time. The Law only allows Head Teachers to authorise the request when they have evidence of the exceptional circumstance.

The government is very clear that a family holiday is NOT an exceptional circumstance.

If the leave request is refused and the parents/carers proceed with the leave of absence, the school will have no choice but to refer the absence to the Local Authority. The Local Authority could then (in line with the Local Authority Code of Conduct) issue a Penalty Notice to both parents/carers for each pupil who is absent. Failing to pay a Penalty Notice could lead to a Court Summons.

Retrospective applications will not be considered. These periods of absence will be marked as unauthorised.

If an absence request has not been completed by parents/carers and the school have been given a reason for an absence that it feels is not genuine (example – advised absence was down to illness when a family holiday is suspected) then the Headteacher could unauthorise the absence and escalate.

4.6 Religious observance

St Gabriel's CofE Primary School aims recognises that there may be times where pupils of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends. Official days set aside by the faith for religious observance will be an authorised absence.

Parents will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

4.7 Traveller absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller pupils, in common with all other pupils, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents/carers from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the **Education Act (1944), Section 86**, states that a Traveller parent/carer is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and that the child is regularly attending school when that trade/business permits (and the minimum 200 session criteria is met).

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller pupils is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties to ensure that their child is receiving a suitable education when not at school.

5. The school day and late arrival

Morning registration starts at 8.35am

Pupils who arrive after this time but within the registration period will be marked as late (L Code).

Morning registration ends at 8.45am

Pupils who arrive after the registration period has ended should report to the office to sign in and give reason for lateness.

Pupils arriving from 9am

Pupils arriving after the register closes will be marked as excessively late and the absence will be unauthorised (U Code) for the whole of the session.

Persistent excessive lateness may result in legal action by the Local Authority.

The school day ends at 3.15pm

6. Reporting your child is absent

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by **9am** or as soon as practically possible (see Appendix A for the school attendance management procedures). This is a safeguarding factor to ensure your child is safe.

Where there are unexplained absences, the school will contact parents/carers to establish the reason why. If after a reasonable time, no contact with the school is made or where it is not possible to establish the reason, the absence will be unauthorised. The school will follow up any absences to ensure that proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence to enable the Headteacher to make an informed decision as to whether to authorise or not.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence could be recorded as unauthorised.

In all cases, we will offer additional support where required.

Early Help Devon:

<https://www.dcfp.org.uk/early-help/>

Early Help Torbay:

<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/children-and-families/services-and-support/early-help/>

Early Help Somerset:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/the-local-offer/about-the-local-offer/early-help/>

7. Attendance Monitoring

Attendance is monitored daily.

Pupil level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this regularly with governors.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee by the DfE.

The severe absence threshold is 50%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 50%, the pupil will be classified as a severe absentee by the DfE.

8. School Action: managing pupil absence and concerns

The school has in place rigorous systems for monitoring pupil absence. These systems are designed to pick up on early signs or patterns of absence. If the school considers your child's absence levels to be of concern, then the following actions may be taken by the school.

- School will contact parents/carers by phone, text, email or letter to bring attendance concerns to the attention of parents/carers.
- Parents/carers will be invited into the school to discuss concerns, explore barriers to attendance and to agree an action plan to resolve the situation.
- Parents/carers may be encouraged to sign up to a Parenting Agreement to commit to making the changes necessary to bring about the regular attendance of their child.
- School may make referrals to Early Help or other agencies that might be able to provide support.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, the school has a legal requirement to share information with the Local Authority Safeguarding Teams.
- School may make a visit to the family home.
- Where the attendance drops below 90% (the DfE Persistent Absence threshold), the school has a responsibility to inform the Local Authority.
- Where the school has exhausted its processes for supporting attendance and there has not been satisfactory improvement, the school will have no choice but to refer the pupil to the Local Authority.

9. Who to contact with concerns

The first port of call for parents/carers when looking to discuss pupil absence is the Attendance Lead. **Luke Williams**

Should this prove unsuccessful matters can be escalated to the Headteacher. **Luke Williams**
The Senior Lead for Attendance is **Wendy Parr**.

10.0 Local Authority Action: potential legal penalties for absence

Unauthorised Absences could result in the instigation of Local Authority parental responsibility measures. These could include a Penalty Notice, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) or a

summons from the Magistrates Court.

Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices can only be issued in line with the **Local Authority Code of Conduct (September 2019)**. From September 2013, if a Penalty Notice is issued, each Penalty Notice will be for £60 and should be paid within 21 days. The Penalty Notice increases to £120 if paid between day 22 and day 28. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 28 days a Magistrates summons could be issued.

Education Supervision Order. This is where the Local Authority applies to the Family Court for a Court Order to support and manage improved regular attendance.

Magistrates Summons. For a first offence the maximum fine issued by the Court could be £1000 per parent/carer. If the matter returns to the Magistrates Court on a subsequent occasion the fines can extend to a maximum of £2500 per parent/carer and/or a custodial sentence of up to 3 Months.

11. Strategies for promoting attendance

All our pupils are rewarded for excellent attendance and presentations are made during school assemblies to celebrate this.

We recognise that not all of our children are able to attend 100% of the time. We accept that some of our children have unavoidable and evidenced medical conditions that prevent 100% attendance. The school understands it is important to recognise this and school will endeavor to reflect this within the rewards systems in order to recognise significant attendance achievement.

Appendix A – School Attendance Management Procedures



***Name of School * Attendance Management Procedures**

- a. Registration is between 8.35am and 8.45am. Pupils arriving after 8.45am but before 9.00am are deemed as late 'before registration closes'. Pupils arriving after 9.00am are considered late 'after registration has closed', they then lose their mark for the whole session and it is recorded as 'unauthorised'.
- b. If your child is ill, or absent from school for any reason, it is expected that parents/carers will ring in to the school office in the morning before 9.00am to inform the school of the reason for absence. If your child is unwell, please give details of the illness.
- c. The school has an answerphone and it is acceptable for a parent to leave a message. If no message has been received, the office staff will contact the parent
- d. Routine appointments i.e. dental check- ups, eye tests should be made out of school hours or during school holidays. For any appointments during the school day, please bring in your child's appointment card/letter; the office staff will take a copy and this is added to your child's school record.
- e. If the absence is for more than one day the school should be kept informed on a daily basis. If a pupil is absent due to illness for more than three days, the parent will be asked to provide an appointment card/prescription indicating that the pupil has been seen by a medical professional.

The reason for this is that when a pupil is quite unwell for sustained periods of time, we, as a school, are obliged to demonstrate that we have followed the absence process.

This is not about the school doubting what a parent has said, it ensures that when the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits the school to monitor pupil attendance below 95%, we can speak on behalf of the parent and explain the circumstances surrounding a pupil's low/erratic attendance or prolonged absences.

- f. Parents will be contacted on the first day of absence whenever any pupil is absent without reason, or persistently late, and will be reminded, if necessary, of their legal responsibility for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.
- g. The school has responsibility for following up any concerns for attendance, informing parents where there are concerns regarding attendance, and for reporting persistent problems to the designated senior leader.
- h. Warning letters will be sent home where a child's attendance drops below an acceptable standard and if not addressed this will lead to fast track prosecution.

Appendix B: What you can expect from:

Governors

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff
- annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and children to implement the policy effectively
- nominate or identify a member of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children, and staff
- work out appropriate and accurate annual attendance numbers and future attendance targets, and submit these to the LA within an agreed timescale each year
- take time at governor's meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site
- ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data, including for vulnerable groups, and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff
- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future
- ensure that data is used within the school to measure the impact of strategies used to improve attendance.

School Leadership Team:

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full policy review
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- ensure that government legislation on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them
- nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job – this is held by the Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead

- report regularly to the Local Committee and the Director for Safeguarding on attendance records, data and provision
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child(ren) to attend.
- Ensure that families are referred to appropriate support and Early Help
- document all specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings
- ensure that the relevant authorities are informed in a timely manner if pupils struggle to regularly attend school

Teachers and Support Staff:

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Parents and Carers:

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- encourage and support their children to attend school
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school and include an expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- enforce a regular routine at home to support excellent attendance

- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the Headteacher

Pupils:

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- be aware of the school's attendance expectations and when they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents, and the school timetable
- speak to their teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class.
- bring a note of explanation from their parents or carers to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen
- follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

Appendix C: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

CODE	DEFINITION	SCENARIO
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

CODE	DEFINITION	SCENARIO
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

CODE	DEFINITION	SCENARIO
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

CODE	DEFINITION	SCENARIO
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix D: Local Authority Fining Protocol

Please see below the links for each individual Local Authority fining process:

Devon County Council Fining Protocol

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/school-attendance/absence-from-school-penalty-notices/absence-from-school-penalty-notices-code-of-conduct>