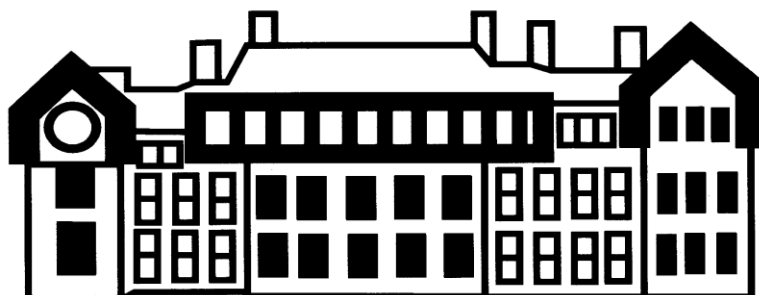


GORDON



SCHOOL

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Ratification date: November 2020

Review date: November 2023

Signed _____ Headteacher

Signed _____ Chair of Governors

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. Rationale

This policy is written in conjunction with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 No. 1751; the Education Act 1996.

There is a strong statistical link between attendance and attainment; schools with high attendance levels tend to have higher levels of attainment at all key stages and those with low attendance levels tend to have lower attainment levels. This attendance policy is therefore an important tool in the work of the school to maintain the highest possible standards and raise pupils' attainment. It helps us to identify pupils who might need extra support to catch up on lessons they may have missed along with action to tackle poor attendance and punctuality.

2. Objectives

At Gordon Primary School, we:

- encourage and assist all pupils to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- see regular school attendance as essential for all pupils if they are to be successful and we aim to work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure the highest possible levels;
- aim to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality in order for all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them
- aim to have no pupils who are classed as being persistent absentees – currently defined by the DfE as having less than 90% attendance.

3. Rights and Responsibilities

Improving and maintaining a high level of attendance at Gordon Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community, i.e. parents and carers, staff, governors and pupils.

Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. Any pupils who may experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their class teacher, and if the need should arise, the Inclusion Manager.

Parents & Carers

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents and carers are requested to notify the school by telephone or email on the first day of absence. A pupil's absence from school will be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory written explanation is received by the school office. Parents and carers will be informed promptly of any concerns that may arise over a child's attendance. Parents and carers should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours. Holidays should not

be taken in term-time. Parents and carers whose first language is not English or who have literacy difficulties will be offered appropriate support from the school concerning matters of attendance.

Staff

The staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents and carers. Staff will respond to absenteeism consistently.

4. Registration

Registration is a legal requirement and occurs at the beginning of both the morning and the afternoon sessions. Therefore, children in full-time education receive two-register marks each day.

Pupils are registered in their classroom as soon after the start of the session as possible. Attendance is recorded electronically on SIMS (the school's computer system). Reasons for absence can be recorded on SIMS too, either at the time the register is taken, or later. The SIMS system can be used to analyse attendance and punctuality for individual pupils, groups and the whole school.

5. Punctuality

Punctuality is very important and sets important lifelong habits.

Nursery sessions begin at 8:45am and 12:30pm. All other year groups begin at 8:55am*.

If a pupil arrives in school within five minutes of the start time they are marked as present. If they arrive after this time, but within half an hour of the start time, they will be marked as late on the register. If a pupil arrives 30 minutes or more after the closure of the register, they will be registered as an unauthorised absence unless an appropriate explanation is received. Attending a medical appointment would be seen as an appropriate explanation but being delayed by heavy traffic on the way to school would not.

Should lateness persist, parents and carers will be invited to meet with the Headteacher.

*Under extreme circumstances, such as during a pandemic, we may temporarily change the start and end times of the school day.

6. Pupil Absence

There are two types of absence: authorised and unauthorised. Absence from Gordon Primary School will be authorised for:

- genuine illness / medical conditions;
- unavoidable medical / dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;

- exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement.

Absences from Gordon Primary School will not be authorised for:

- holidays in term time;
- birthdays;
- shopping;
- attending non-educational events;
- minding the house;
- parent, carer or sibling being unwell.

If there are extenuating circumstances, the Headteacher will decide if an absence is authorised or unauthorised. A letter or other communication from a parent or carer does not in itself authorise an absence.

6a. Short Term Illness

Parents and carers should contact the school on the first day of absence; ideally before the start of the school day. Messages can be left on the school's answerphone (020 8850 5486) or sent via email (office@gordon.greenwich.sch.uk).

6b. Unexplained Absences

The school operates a system of 'First Day Calls' for all pupils. This means that the school will contact parents and carers on the first day of absence as soon after 9:30am as possible, if there has been no contact from an appropriate adult to explain the absence.

If no explanation is provided, an absence will be marked as unauthorised.

6c. Long Term Illness / Medical Conditions

Children with longer term illnesses or conditions (longer than two continuous weeks) may require home tuition. Parents and carers should contact the school to discuss this. Where appropriate, the school will provide work for the child to do at home under adult supervision.

6d. Religious Observance

Absence for religious observance will be granted. The day must be set aside for religious observance by the religious body. All applications for leave of absence for religious observance must be made in writing to the Headteacher, in advance of the date.

6e. Unavoidable Causes

Parents and carers should inform the school as soon as possible and briefly explain the circumstances of the absence. Leave of absence will be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher.

6f. Holidays

Government legislation does not refer to 'family holidays' as a reason for the Headteacher to authorise leave of absence. Parents and carers will not have authorisation to remove children from school during term time for the purpose of family holidays. Headteachers can only grant leave of absence for exceptional

circumstances and this will be entirely at the discretion of the Headteacher and will not include term-time holidays. This is not a school decision but a Government directive and is upheld in law. Applications for leave of absence need to be made in writing and addressed to the Headteacher. They should give the school as much notice as possible when requesting this. Holidays taken in term time will be unauthorised. Parents and carers can be prosecuted for significant unauthorised absence.

In exceptional circumstances, schools can approve extended leave of absence. However, the Headteacher will meet with parents or carers to discuss the reason for the request and to establish whether their plans could be changed to overlap with school holidays and thereby reduce the effect on their child's education.

6g. Children Missing Education

The school will do everything in its power to investigate extended leave of absence without explanation – otherwise known as Children Missing Education (CME). There is a sequence of actions which the school will adhere to in these circumstances:

- a first-day absence call will be made;
- a second-day absence call will be made;
- a third-day absence call will be made and relevant appropriate adults on the contact list will be called (e.g. grandparents);
- a home-visit will be made by two members of school staff on the third day of absence;
- if we are unable to contact the family, the CME department within the Local Authority will be contacted on the third day of absence who will then lead on locating the child and the family;
- social services and/or the police will also be contacted on the third day;
- if there are existing child protection / safeguarding / medical concerns the above steps will be expedited and social services will be contacted on the first day.

6h. Removal from the School Roll

Compulsory school-age children will only be removed from the school roll in the following circumstances:

- transfer between schools – once official notification has been obtained from the receiving school;
- permanent exclusion;
- death of the pupil;
- the Local Authority is satisfied that appropriate education is provided elsewhere (e.g. home-tutoring);
- failure to return from an extended family holiday after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil;
- after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the Local Authority and the school have been unable to locate the pupil.

7. Dealing with Poor Attendance / Persistent Absenteeism

We are committed to the Local Authority's *Fast Track to Improved Attendance* scheme. Children are selected for *Fast Track* when their attendance is a continued

cause for concern and parents and carers fail to engage with the school. Regular meetings are held with the school's Attendance Officer, the Headteacher, and a Royal Borough of Greenwich Attendance Advisory Officer, and parents and carers, to monitor the attendance of those children. When a child on *Fast Track* is absent through illness, medical evidence from the GP or consultant is required. This can be in the form of an official letter, a copy of the prescription or, by bringing the named medication to the school office. Failure to follow this process will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'. If there is no improvement in attendance over a period of time, the school will refer the child to the Royal Borough's Attendance Advisory Service who may then take steps to issue a penalty fine or bring about court action.

As a school, we take attendance very seriously. If a child's attendance is poor without a legitimate reason, we will take court action against the parents or carers.

8. Fines for Unauthorised Absence

Under the penalty notice scheme, unauthorised absence (any absence that the school has not agreed) allows the Royal Borough of Greenwich to impose a fine of £120 (reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days).

The code of conduct allows a Penalty Notice to be issued for:

- absence from school without reasonable cause;
- persistent lateness.

9. Issuing a Penalty Notice

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has powers to issue Penalty Notices when a parent or carer is considered capable but does not secure an improvement in their child's school attendance. In such cases, a written warning notice will be given which allows you 15 school days to make an improvement in your child's attendance. There must be no unauthorised absence during this time. If unauthorised absence continues and we are not notified of any special circumstances, a Penalty Notice will be sent to your home.

10. Fines and Prosecution

If the fine is not paid the parent or carer will be prosecuted for the original offence of failing to secure attendance. If proven, the court can impose a fine of up to £2,500 and/or three months' imprisonment. If the fine is paid parents and carers cannot be prosecuted for the period covered by that Penalty Notice. However, the parent and carer remains liable for prosecution if their child's attendance does not improve.

11. Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils and will receive a termly report from the Headteacher. The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out.

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if deemed necessary.

For Information – Failure to ensure regular and punctual school attendance may result in the issuing of a penalty notice under **Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003** and/or prosecution under **section 444 of the Education Act 1996**.