

# Attendance Policy

MAY 2021

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## Rationale and Aim

It is vital to the academic progress of all pupils that they attend school regularly in order that they can participate in the educational opportunities available to them. Research shows that high absence rates go hand in hand with poor examination results. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process, since not only does a pupil miss out on valuable teaching but they are less prepared for lessons when they return. Poor attendance also places children at risk and in some cases it can result in pupils being drawn into anti-social behaviour. A child arriving late may disrupt his/her continuity of learning and also that of others. Gravenhurst Academy believe that the life chances of all pupils can be improved by ensuring that all staff, pupils and parent/carers are aware of the importance of, and take responsibility for, regular attendance.

Gravenhurst Academy will encourage and assist all pupils to achieve the highest levels of attendance and punctuality in order to maximise their achievement and attainment at school. Gravenhurst Academy aim to:

- Ensure pupils are supported in reaching their full potential in order that they can attain at the highest possible level.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the academy including pupils, parents, staff and governors.
- Maintain a high attendance record and low unauthorised absence rate.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
- Promote effective partnership with the Access and Inclusion Service and other agencies.
- Encourage pupils to catch up on any missed work in a positive and supportive environment.
- Encourage pupils to maintain high attendance levels by use of a reward system.
- Publish attendance figures to parents and governors.
- Analyse attendance rates (%) and at various times throughout the year, certain attendance rates will trigger standard letters that will be sent to the pupil parent(s)/carer(s).

## Policy

### **Working in Partnership with the Law**

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at that school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

Since March 2001 there has been a further offence introduced where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend school regularly, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend. (Education Act 1996, section 444 (1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). It is clear from the law that parents risk prosecution if their child does not attend school regularly. It is important, therefore, for parents and the school to work closely together to overcome any problems which may affect a student's attendance. The DfE recommends that no term-time holidays are granted and therefore requests for term-time leave will not normally be approved. The Head Teacher will only consider exceptional applications for leave of absence for holidays that are submitted in advance and have strong compassionate grounds. If holiday leave is taken without the school's prior approval, this will be viewed as an unauthorised absence.

The school will work closely with the Access and Inclusion Service where attendance or punctuality does not meet the school's expectations. Our attached Local Authority School Attendance Officer visits our academies to support regular attendance and to help remove any barriers that may be preventing a pupil from accessing the education to which he/she is entitled.

## Absences authorised by the school

Although parents/carers will know about and agree to these absences from lessons, additional parental action is not required to authorise these absences. In the case of School Visits, parents will be asked to sign consent forms.

Examples:

- Attendance on a school trip or visit
- Representing the School in a sporting fixture, musical, public speaking or drama event

## Authorised unforeseen absence

The academy should be notified on the day of the absence where possible, and then a letter should be sent to the school explaining the absence.

Examples:

- Illness
- Bereavement or other emergency family situation
- Severe disruption to transport with no possible means of getting a pupil to the academy (e.g. very heavy snow)

## Planned absences which may be authorised

These require the Leave of Absence Form to be completed and should be submitted to the school 6 weeks in advance of the absence.

Examples of planned absences that may be authorised:

- Medical appointments which cannot be arranged outside of academy hours
- Religious holiday (guidelines are 3 days maximum)
- Visit to another school/academy
- Occasional extra-curricular activity which gives the pupil significant opportunity for personal achievement or improvement
- Attendance at a family wedding or funeral (1 day only)

## Planned absences which are unlikely to be authorised

Examples:

- Holidays (unless holiday is requested under exceptional circumstances in which case the Leave of Absence Form, which can be obtained from the main office, should be submitted as soon as possible)
- Leisure activities
- Birthdays or similar celebrations
- Shopping
- Persistent and regular lateness
- Moving house

## Term-time holiday

Amendments to the 2006 regulations (The Education regulations 2013) remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Principals should determine the number of academy days a child can be away from academy if the leave is granted. A Fixed Penalty Notice **may** be issued where a pupil takes a holiday during term time and the absence has not been authorised by the academy.

## Appointments during school hours

We do ask parents/carers to avoid taking pupils out of school for medical appointments, however, when this is unavoidable, the pupil must sign out (or in if arriving late after an appointment) at the Office. They must provide written evidence of the appointment. If a series of regular appointments are necessary (e.g. for dental work) then we ask parents/carers to try to make these during school holidays or after normal school hours.

## Persistent absence

Persistent Absence (PA) is a term used by the Department for Education (DfE) to denote absence of more than 10% for an individual pupil, whether authorised or unauthorised. There are clear links between poor attendance and poor attainment. Any child whose attendance falls to unacceptable levels will be referred to the Access and Inclusion Service.

## Medical evidence

Parents/Carers may be asked to provide medical evidence to explain why their child is/has been absent.

## Children Missing Education (January 2017)

Under the new Department for Education's (DfE) Statutory Guidance (September 2016) schools are required to undertake 'reasonable investigations' before referring a Child Missing Education to the Local Authority. On receipt of a CME referral, the Local Authority then continues the investigation. Schools have a tracking sheet and checklist to support their investigation and should be used when a child 'disappears' e.g. when parents move without providing a forwarding address; when it is suspected that the family has gone on an extended holiday without school agreement; when a child does not return two weeks after the expected return date of a family holiday. If the school has child protection concerns, Social Services should be contacted and if the school/academy suspects that a crime may have been committed the Police should be contacted. The Local Authority Business Support Officer for Access & Inclusion should be contacted in such a situation. He/she will take referrals from a variety of outside agencies for any student who has been out of school for more than four weeks. Such children are recorded on the DfE S2S (school to school) website and may be removed from school/academy roll in accordance with the guidance in the Central Bedfordshire Children Missing Education Procedures (July 2011), section 25.

## Procedure

Registers will be completed in all accurately in the morning and the afternoon sessions and attendance monitored every half term.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Attendance rates are available on the Ofsted School Data Dashboard.

Consultation will take place with class teachers to develop and maintain the Attendance Policy. Certain attendance rates at various times throughout the year will trigger standard letters that will be sent to the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s).

Attendance procedures will be evaluated by Principal, Senior Teacher and governors.

## Implementation and Review

This policy will be made known to all staff, parents/carers and governors, and published on the academy's website. Copies are also available upon request from the academy office. This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required.

Written by: Debbie Randall

Date: May 2021

Agreed by Principal:

Date: May 2021

Ratified by Governors:

Date: June 2021