



Great Wilbraham C of E Primary School

Policy title: Attendance

Date created: January 2023

Date ratified:

Next Review Date: January 2024

Signed:

1. Introduction

We aim to work together with Families and the Local Authority Attendance Officers (LAOs) to ensure that all children registered at school attend every day and on time, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. This policy outlines the school's procedures and expectations for pupil's attendance and punctuality.

2. Quality of Education

2.1. Intent

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Support children and their families to have the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer;
- Make families aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Take steps to ensure attendance meets or exceeds Government targets.

2.2. Implementation

2.2.1. Registration

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every child. The main playground is supervised from 8.40am and children enter school by 8.50am. Registration takes place twice daily at 8.50am and 1.00pm. Registers will close at 9.10am and 1.15pm. Children's attendance is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary. When Foundation Stage pupils attend school part-time, care should be taken that any absences are recorded only for times when the child would normally be in school.

2.2.2. Lateness

Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning. Children who are persistently late to school will miss a significant amount of their education. Pupils who arrive after the registration period and up to 9.10am will be marked as late. Any pupil who arrives after 9.10am will be marked as an unauthorised late.

Where pupils show a persistent pattern of unauthorised lateness, Parent/Carers will initially receive a letter informing them of the school's concerns. This will advise Parent/Carers to speak to a member of staff to help address the issue. Should the lateness continue, Parent/Carers will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss their child's lateness. If there is no improvement, despite the school's attempts to address unauthorised absences, a referral could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAO) for pupils who are of statutory school age.

2.2.3. Reporting a Pupil Absence

Parent/Carers must contact school on the first and every subsequent day of absence by 9.00am. For any pupil not present at the close of registration, and the reason is still unknown, a member of staff will attempt to make contact with the Parent/Carers once the registers have closed at 9.00am.

The member of staff will ring every contact, starting with the priority contact, until a reason for absence is known. Failure to make contact with the Parent/Carers to establish a reason for an absence will result in an Unexplained Absence Form being sent home for the Parent/Carers to complete and return to school at the earliest opportunity. Any unexplained absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence if there is no response from a Parent/Carers to an enquiry regarding their child's absence from school. Where there is a possibility of a safeguarding risk and no contact has been made then a safe and well home visit may be required.





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2.2.4. Medical appointments

For absences relating to a medical appointment, supporting evidence may be requested to authorise this absence. This can be a text message which clearly identifies who the appointment is for, a letter that is headed from the medical professional or an appointment card. A period of absences will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment. Children who fail to return to school within a reasonable time following their medical appointment could result in an am/pm session being unauthorised.

Whenever possible, families should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside school time. If children attend medical or dental appointments in the middle of a morning or afternoon session they will be marked as present for that half day, provided that they leave school just before the appointment and return promptly afterwards. Families are requested to confirm in writing by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time. When a child is being collected from the school, family appointed guardians are to report to the office before the child is allowed to leave the site; they must sign the child out on leaving school and back in upon return.

2.2.5. Illness

Children who are unable to attend school due to diarrhoea can return after they have been 48 hours clear. Children who are unable to attend school due to sickness can return once they are able to keep food down. Children with mild coughs, colds, sore throats, sneezing and runny noses who are otherwise well can continue to attend school. However, if they develop a high temperature they should stay at home until their temperature has reduced and are well enough to return to school.

2.2.6. COVID-19

If a pupil tests positive for COVID-19 and this has been reported to school, the pupil should stay at home (for a period of time in line with current guidelines) and can return to school after 3 days if they feel well enough and do not have a high temperature. As a school, we are continuing to maintain the good practice of regular handwashing and pupils are encouraged to cough and sneeze into a tissue to help reduce the risk of passing on any infections.

2.2.7. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Parent/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that children of statutory school age (term after the child turns five) attend school on a regular and full time basis. Permitting an absence from school without good reason is an offence. At Great Wilbraham C of E Primary School, we expect attendance to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence, which would then be authorised. All absences must be categorised as either "authorised" or "unauthorised". The DfE guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** may include:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- Days of religious observance notified in advance;
- Absence due to family circumstances (eg bereavement, serious illness).

Notification of absence is essential and enables the Headteacher to make considered decisions when authorising absences. It is the Headteacher's prerogative to request that guardians certificate short-term illnesses and to request a doctor's notification in the case of long-term illness. Unauthorised absences are





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those where no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by families(s)/carers or the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The following activities are examples of what would be classified as **unauthorised absence**:

- Time off for birthdays, anniversaries, theatre trips or museum visits, etc.
- Lateness after registration closes unless it has been caused by a medical appointment.
- Medical appointments where supporting evidence have not been provided when asked for.
- There has been no reason provided by the Parent/Carers to support an absence.
- Failure to follow school procedures or inform the school.
- A leave of absence that has not been considered an exceptional circumstance.

The guidance makes it clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised. We ask families to notify the school well in advance of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits and fine judgements will have, on occasions, to be made.

2.2.8.Guidance for Parents – Term Time Leave

Parents do not have the right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term time holiday. Recent government guidelines have removed the discretion on head teachers agreeing to term time leave. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted before the leave is taken. Parents must complete a Term Time Leave Request form and provide any supporting evidence, if applicable, with their request.

If the school suspect Term Time Leave has been taken but the parent/carers have not completed a Term Time Leave Request Form, we will write to all parent/carers giving them an opportunity to clarify the reason for absence and provide supporting evidence. Failure to respond to or provide supporting evidence will result in a referral to the Local Authority for unauthorised leave from school.

Exceptional circumstance (*definition of exceptional: rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis, such as up to two days absence from school to visit a dying relative, death of a family member, attendance at a funeral or any unavoidable one off event. Teaching staff cannot provide "catch-up" work for children who miss school due to a leave of absence whether authorised or unauthorised and families must take this into account when requesting leave.

The following are examples of requests for leave of absence for pupils of statutory school age that **do not** meet the criteria of an exceptional circumstance.

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term
- Trip of a life time
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad
- Relatives coming to visit

2.2.9.Strategies for promoting attendance

The single largest factor involved in promoting good attendance is providing high quality teaching and learning which meets the needs of pupils and helps them feel safe and valued. In addition, the following strategies for promoting good attendance may be used by the school:





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- regular sharing of pupil attendance rates with families and carers
- ensuring that good attendance is regularly discussed in classes
- celebration of high levels of attendance for specific year groups in regular newsletters

2.3. Impact

2.3.1. Monitoring attendance

The Headteacher, supported by the School Business Manager, are primarily responsible for monitoring attendance. This is a rolling process and attendance from previous years is taken into account. If a pupil's overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, they will be classified as a persistent absentee.

On a daily basis staff will:

- Scrutinise the registers, monitoring authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons provided for pupil absence and lateness.
- Contact parents by telephone, email, or letter to establish a reason for a pupil's absence if reason unknown.

On a weekly basis staff will:

- Produce an attendance report of the past 12 weeks attendance (including previous academic years)
- Inform Parent/Carers if attendance has fallen below the threshold set of 96%
- Contact parents for a discussion if their child is classified as a persistent absentee
- Offer support or sign post to other areas of support within the community
- Monitor Parent Contract families

On a monthly basis staff will:

- Meet as SLT to discuss attendance issues and status of Parent Contract families
- Decide upon further action if required
- Log attendance issues on MyConcern for pupils with under 90% attendance

On an termly basis staff will:

- Liaise with LAAO on current situations
- Attend attendance meetings

2.3.2. Actions and Early intervention

The school has adopted the following procedures for attendance below 96%:

- Step One: A letter advising Parent/Carers of our concerns regarding the level of their child(ren) attendance and/or lateness
- Step Two: Informal contact. This can be via telephone or in person by any member of staff, to ascertain barriers to accessing education and offering support and signposting.
- Step Three: A formal Parent Contract Meeting to be held in school, with Parent/Carers to discuss concerns and, working together, identifying support which can be offered and signposting. Targets will be set to improve the attendance and/or lateness. These targets will be reviewed at the end of an agreed monitoring period.
- Step Four: Should the targets set at step three not be met following a review, despite every attempt by the school to support the family, a request for the issue of a penalty notice/fine or prosecution could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) for children of statutory school age, as per section 444 Education Act 1996. This may result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.





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Other actions that could be taken include:

- Liaise with other external organisations in relation to a pupil's attendance and/or lateness.
- Monitor pupils attendance within specific and identified groups
- Monitor pupil absences for those with additional medical needs
- Monitor pupils and follow procedures for pupils 'Child Missing in Education'.
- Follow reporting procedures for parents who have requested to Home Educated their child(ren)
- Follow procedures when deleting a pupil from roll
- Meet with LAAO, who will also monitor the registers and follow up any identified concerns.
- Monitor absences for illness and requests for leave to attend medical appointments.
- Complete a Medical Needs Assessment on pupils with absences of 15 days during the school year
- Monitor and act upon requests for term time leave of absence and ensure Parent/Carers are informed of procedures in relation to authorised/unauthorised leave

The above is where appropriate and depending upon circumstances.

2.3.3. Legal sanctions and Fixed Penalty Notices

Fixed Penalty Notices may be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. The fine for a penalty notice is £60 per child, per parent/carer, increasing to £120 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child(ren) this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent.

The definition of parent in relation to a Penalty Notice includes parent and step-parent and the partner of a parent who lives in the same household. If the family has been issued with a penalty notice and they feel it has been issued wrongly then they can discuss this with the school in the first instance.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- A pattern of unauthorised absence over any 4 week period
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

2.3.4. Communication

Throughout the process (whether Early help or Parent Contract meeting) evidence will be recorded of actions and whether the family has accepted early help. An register of letters issued to individual families can be found in an Attendance overview. The Headteacher will liaise with the NSA (Non-School Attendance) helpline in the first instance where there are concerns over attendance.

The school uses letter templates from the Local Authority's recommended system for notifying families of poor attendance. The letters chosen depend upon the level of attendance.

2.3.5. Addition and deletion from roll

The school will add and delete pupils from roll in line with law and guidance from the Local Authority.





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2.3.6. Cambridgeshire Child Missing Education (CME) and Elective Home Education (EHE)

The school will follow processes, making CME referrals where appropriate.

3. Behaviour and Attitudes

3.1. School Refusal or Reluctance

From time to time some children will experience periods of school reluctance or school refusal. In these cases, the school will aim to support the child and family in the best way possible to return to good attendance. This may be through:

- ensuring high quality provision that meets the child's needs effectively
- following-up social issues or issues of bullying
- meet and greet
- alternative provision at the start of the morning
- support through family support worker, Specialist Teaching Team or Locality services
- Early Help

3.2. Inclusion and equal opportunities

Our whole school philosophy totally encompasses the equality of access and opportunity. Reasons for absence of all children is considered carefully and dependent upon circumstances. All children have the right to good attendance. Some children with significant medical needs may struggle to maintain the same levels of attendance to other children, however the school should hold the same high standards as for other pupils and will refer to the medical policy. Poor attendance may be indicative of a failure to meet a child's needs effectively and therefore the SENDCO should be involved in cases involving SEN pupils. Advice from specialist services should also be sought.

4. Personal development

4.1. Safeguarding

All members of the school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness; with the Headteacher having overall responsibility in the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil. The safety of children is paramount in all situations. If a child's absence is below 90%, then a MyConcern log will be raised, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will monitor the situation.

The school office will maintain a list of children for whom absence is a cause for concern. This list will be managed by the SBM (who is also a DDSL) and will include any children where there are concerns about wellbeing if a child is not in school. The Headteacher must be informed of any child's absence on the list, whether a reason has been offered or not, as soon as possible in the morning.

A second list of children in Key Stage 2 who walk to school by themselves will also be kept. Families should be informed if any child on this list has not arrived at school without a reason being given in advance. This list should be kept up to date by families.

During school hours, school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are. Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school. If a child leaves the school site without permission, their families will be contacted and then the police if the child is not quickly found. If the child is deemed to be at risk of harm, the police will be called immediately.





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4.2. Data collections and reporting to DfE

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 with governors at every Full Governing Body meeting within the School on a Page (SOAP) document.

5. **Leadership and management**

5.1. Roles and responsibilities

Children will:

- Attend school every day;
- Attend school punctually;
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day;
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher any problems that may affect their school attendance.

Families will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- Ensure that they contact the school before 9.30 am if their child is unable to attend school;
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child;
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.

The Governing Body will

- Be responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis.
- Hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher will

- Ensure this policy is implemented consistently across the school
- Monitor school-level absence data and report it to governors.
- Support staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Request the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices, where necessary.
- Ensure the school is a safe learning environment
- Work with Local Authority Attendance Officers (LAAO) to tackle persistent absence
- Monitor attendance data at school and individual pupil level
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality
- Communicate with Non-School Attendance helpline when necessary
- Communicate with the LAAO to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality;
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the LAAO.

The School Business Manager will

- Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Arrange calls and meetings with families to discuss attendance issues
- Produce weekly attendance updates for the Headteacher
- Produce letters to be sent out to families regarding attendance

The Class teacher will

- Record attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, electronically.
- Inform the Headteacher of any concerns that may arise.

Admin Staff will

- Take calls and emails from families about absence and record it on the school MIS system (SIMS).
- Follow up pupil absence





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5.2. Continuing professional development

The School Business Manager and/or the Headteacher regularly attend the briefings and circle meetings on attendance. There is also discussion held with the LAO on a regular basis.

5.3. Reviewing and monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually in accordance with updates on attendance arrangements. And the latest legislations including the Attendance regulations 2006 and the Education Act 2011.

6. **Links to other policies**

6.1. Staff attendance policy

6.2. Medical policy

7. **Appendices**

7.1. Appendix 1: attendance codes

7.2. Appendix 2: letters (separate document saved in Central Hosting)





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Appendix 1: 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





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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
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

