



# Attendance Policy

## September 2020

This policy should be read with the:

- School Safeguarding Policy (Child Protection)
- DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education
- DfE: Working together to safeguard children
- DfE: School Attendance
- DfE: School Attendance parental responsibility measures
- DfE: Children Missing in Education

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CHASING HORIZONS

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## 1. Introduction

All schools within the Gipsy Hill Federation are committed to providing a full and effective educational experience for all pupils. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and can lead to educational and social disadvantages.

Regular attendance at school is critical in raising standards of education and in ensuring every child can meet their full potential. Missing out on lessons or arriving late leaves children vulnerable to failing, impacting on their academic progress and ability to meet age related expectations. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

As a Federation we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible in line with procedures agreed by the Governing Body and the Local Authority.

It is the policy of our Federation to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career and establishes a positive pattern for later life. We will actively promote, encourage and reward good attendance for all our pupils. We will support parents to meet their legal duty under *section 444 of the Education Act 1996* to maximise their child's potential by ensuring good attendance.

## 2. Aims of this policy

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence with individuals, classes or groups of pupils

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 3. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

From September 2013 attendance data for all pupils in reception (including non-compulsory school age pupils) is now included in school absence data collected via the school census. A child taking a full-time place aged four must comply with the school attendance policy, including leave of absence.

## 4. School procedures

### 4.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. Attendance registers are completed directly on the Information Management System by the qualified member of staff leading the class for that session. Where access to the Information Management System is not possible, a paper register will be provided and completed and sent to the school office.

The attendance register will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

#### **4.2 Unplanned absence**

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 8.55am or as soon as practically possible.

To report an absence, parents need to call the school office on the main school number. If parents are calling outside office hours, parents should select the 'report a pupil absence' option and leave a clear message stating their child's name, class and reason for absence.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

#### **4.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. Parents will be asked to provide evidence of the appointment, such as an appointment letter or text confirming the date/time of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Please inform the school office of the appointment by email with the evidence attached or by coming to the school office.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance.

#### 4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L).

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U).

Pupils are expected to arrive at school at 8:55am (8.40am Kingswood Upper Site), class registers remain open until 9.00am (8.45am Kingswood Upper Site). At that point, the teacher must submit their register.

From 9:00am the school playground gates are closed and children arriving late should report to the main office reception. The child's name, class, time of arrival and reason for lateness are recorded. This is to ensure that no children are missed on the register. Staff in the office will issue a late slip, which must be given to the class teacher. This lets the teacher know that the child has been registered at the office. If a child goes to class without a slip the teacher must send the child to the office to be signed in.

Due to staggered playtimes for different year groups on different sites, details for afternoon registration times are on available in the school office. Please refer to this information regarding when registers close in the afternoon.

Lateness	Comments	Code
<b>Arrival between</b> 9:01am and 9:19am  <b>Kingswood Upper site</b> 8:46am and 9:05am	Pupils who arrive during this period are registered as being present in school but late to the first session. All reasons for lateness are recorded.	<b>L</b>
<b>Arrival from</b> 9:20am Registers closed (Lambeth schools)  9:30am Register closed (Southwark schools)  <b>Kingswood Upper site:</b> 9:05am	Pupils who arrive after close of registers are recorded as being absent to the first session of the school day. This directly impacts on pupil's attendance. All reasons for lateness are recorded.	<b>U</b>

Punctuality is tracked as part of our attendance monitoring procedures and where there are concerns, parents will receive letters identifying the concern and/or might be requested to attend a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

#### 4.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

#### 4.6 Monitoring Absence

We have a duty of care to ensure children's safety as well as their regular school attendance. A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carer, a first day absence call will be made. The School office follows this system:

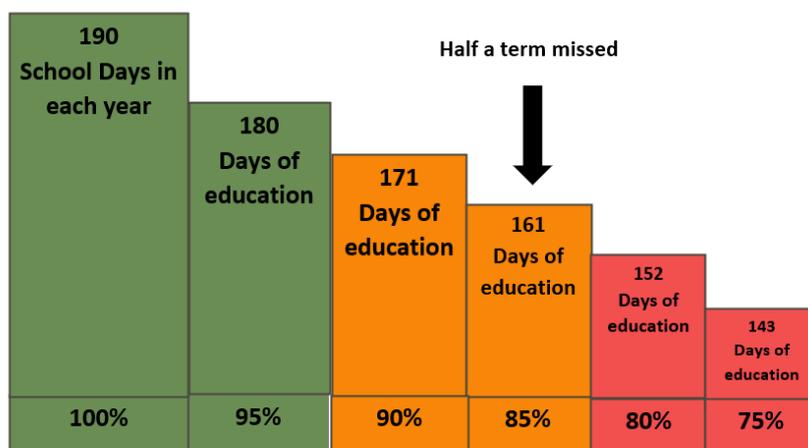
1. Phone/ text message parents' contact number(s)
2. Repeat this during the first morning of absence in the case of no response
3. Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead of unexplained absences OR where there are any concerns about the reason given. (This could lead to an immediate home visit or welfare check request.)
4. Repeat this in the afternoon of absence in the case of no response.
5. Phone emergency contact number(s) to get an up-to-date contact number for the parent/carer and update the school system accordingly
6. Carry out home visit
7. Continued absences: If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, the school will begin to make other reasonable enquires, including Local Authority Network checks and police welfare checks in the case of no response.

A reason must be established for every of absence. If the school office has not been able to make contact with the parents or if the reason for absence cannot be authorised then the absence is recorded as 'O' (unauthorised) and if necessary the Designated Safeguarding lead will be notified of the absence.

Following an illness that exceeds 3 school days or when a child is persistently absent for any reason, parents/carers will be requested to provide evidence to support the reason for absences. Any evidence must include the initial period of absence.

#### 4.7 Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% (38 sessions/19 day) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 96%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. Please see section 5 for details on systems in place where there are concerns about attendance.



## 4.8 Reporting to parents

Parents can request to view their child's attendance record at any time by contacting the school office. Pupils' attendance is included in the termly report sent to parents. Where there are initial concerns, the attendance report might also be referred to at parents' evenings.

## 5. Granting Approval for Term-Time Absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as circumstances that require absence from school during term time where alternative arrangements could not be made within the normal school holidays. There is no entitlement for parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Death, funeral or serious illness of a close relative

The school will consider all requests for exceptional term time leave in accordance with the current legislation and this guidance. The school may consult the Local Authority's Attendance and Inclusion Officers prior to making a decision but the final decision remains with the Headteacher.

- The school will need to consider each request on its own merits and whether there are exceptional circumstances for authorising the absence.
- When schools are considering exceptional term time leave requests, the following factors may help to reach a decision:
  - Time of the academic year when the leave has been requested
  - Duration of the absence (number of school days being missed)
  - Child's current attendance and punctuality rate
  - Exceptional term time leave requested/taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose
  - Whether parent/carers have considered limiting the amount of time the child would be absent from school
  - Whether alternative care arrangements have been considered by the parent/carer to limit the time away from school
  - Impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family e.g. family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN
  - The impact that the absence will have on the child.

The school recognises that taking children out of school may constitute a safeguarding risk and, where appropriate, will make necessary enquiries in order to be satisfied that the child is not at risk. Where appropriate, The school may contact outside agencies in order to ensure that any visits during term time have been authorised by the necessary professionals.

### **Requesting term time leave**

- Requests for exceptional term time leave must be made at least 14 school days in advance of any arrangement being made (except in the case of a family emergency). This will allow sufficient time for the request to be considered by the school. The request will be made in writing by the parent/carer using *Appendix 2: Request for Exceptional Leave form*.
- There will be some occasions where it has not been possible for the parent/carer to make a request for exceptional term time leave. Whilst emergency situations are often difficult, parents/carers are still required to contact the school at the earliest possible opportunity and submit a written request for exceptional term time leave. This written request can be made on behalf of the parent/carer by someone nominated by the parent/carer. The request must include a specific leave period including a return date.
- Parents/carers taking their children out of school due to a family emergency are encouraged to consider:
  - The impact and appropriateness for their child
  - Whether or not alternative care arrangements could be made for the child to remain in school, e.g. stay with an extended family member
  - Limiting the amount of time absent from school.
- Parents/carers who are intending to travel abroad with their children during term time should not book travel prior to securing approval from the school.
- Any changes to dates agreed by the school will require a re-submission for authorisation prior to departure.
- The Headteacher's decision is final.

The school will reach a decision and send a written response to the parent/carer within 10 school days of the leave request being received.

A decision may result in the term time leave request being (a) Authorised, (b) Unauthorised, or (c) part Authorised and part Unauthorised.

### **Legal sanctions**

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year;
- 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.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The Gipsy Hill Federation is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers and pupils to promote good attendance at school. As part of this, we are committed to our responsibilities in ensuring that pupils feeling safe and happy in school and that they access engaging and appropriate learning opportunities.

The importance of attendance in school is promoted through a number of channels – parent newsletters, class teachers celebrating attendance with their class, attendance assemblies, display boards etc.

The Gipsy Hill Federation recognises that for some pupils there are barriers to their attendance at school. This might be for physical and/or mental health reasons or due to other circumstances either within school or within the home. In these instances, a member of the Senior Leadership, SENDCo and/or Family Services Team will work with the parents/carers and the pupil to identify the barriers and put in place steps to remove these barriers and support the pupil to feel confident to attend school. The class teacher and, where appropriate, other staff members will also be involved in these discussions to support the pupil. In these circumstances, the principles of effective partnership working and co-production are essential.

## 7. Attendance monitoring

A member of the Senior Leadership Team monitors absence on a monthly basis. This includes monitoring patterns and trends in absence and punctuality, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups. Where significant patterns or trends for groups of pupils are identified, systems are put in place to improve attendance for these groups.

Where there are concerns about an individual's attendance, the school aims to work in partnership with the parent to provide support to ensure that there is an improvement in their child's attendance and/or punctuality. Please note parents can request to see their child's attendance data at any time.

### **Absence below 96% but above 93%**

- 1) If a pupil's absence goes below 96%, an initial letter will be sent to parents bringing their attention to the fact that their child's attendance is below the federation target of 96%.
- 2) If the child's attendance continues to be below 96%, a second letter will be issued dependent on the attendance record.

### **Absence below 93% but above 90%**

- 1) If a pupil's absence goes below 93%, an initial letter will be sent to parents requesting they attend an initial meeting with the school to discuss their child's attendance and any concerns. Support will be discussed in the meeting.
- 2) If the child's attendance continues to be below 93%, a second letter will be issued dependent on the attendance record.

### **Attendance below 90%**

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10% (and therefore their attendance is below 90%), the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

1. Letter sent informing parent of their legal duties, possible legal action that may be taken against them and that their child is in the category of persistent absentee.
2. School attendance panel (SAP) meeting takes place with a member of the Senior Leadership Team with the parent, together with the Family Services Officer where appropriate.
3. If pupil's attendance has continued to decrease and/or the level of absenteeism continues to be persistent, second School attendance panel (SAP) meeting takes place. Education Welfare Officer will also be present at this meeting.

4. If pupil's attendance has continued to decrease and/or the level of absenteeism continues to be persistent, a common assessment framework referral (CAF) is submitted to the Local Authority to request that the pupil is referred the Educational Welfare Team. Additional support can also be requested for the pupil and family at this time (with their consent).
5. The school will continue to be part of the attendance process supporting the pupil and family. However, the Education Welfare Officer will arrange further meetings and decide on appropriate next steps in line with Local Authority guidance e.g. court action.

## 8. Process for removing a child's details from the school roll

The Federation has safeguarding duties in respect of all pupils and, as part of this, will investigate any unexplained absences from school as well as in circumstances where the school is unsatisfied with the reason provided for absence.

School will inform local authorities of the details of pupils who are regularly absent from school or who have missed 4 school days or more without permission. School will also notify the authority if a pupil is to be deleted from the admission register i.e. in year transfer to another school.

No child shall be taken off roll until the school is satisfied that they are safe and accounted for. This will mean that we have confirmation of them starting a new school/educational establishment.

Where a parent has elected to home-school their child, the parents/carers must formally put this in writing addressed to the Headteacher. The school will inform the local authority home education team. The pupils shall be taken off roll once authorisation for off-rolling has been granted by the local authority home education team.

Where it is not possible to verify where a child is, the Local Authority will be informed and a child will only be taken off roll once the Local Authority has given authorisation. Should the school have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is the local authority will be informed and the Child Missing Education protocol will be followed.

## 9. Roles and Responsibilities

### 9.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### 9.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The headteacher reviews and responds to request for term-time leave.

### 9.3 Link Deputy Headteacher

- Monitors attendance data at school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Analyses and acts upon any patterns and trends
- Works with the Education Welfare Team to tackle persistent absence.

#### **9.4 Senior Administrative Officer**

- Supports the link deputy headteacher to monitor attendance data
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Sends out parent letters when thresholds have been met
- Arranges school attendance panel meetings with parents
- Works with Administrative Officer to maintain attendance records on the school's information management system in line with this policy
- Brings any safeguarding concerns linked to attendance to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

#### **9.5 Family Services Officer**

- Supports the Senior Leadership Team to work in partnership with families to identify the barriers to attendance and punctuality
- Supports the Senior Leadership Team to effectively support families who are experiencing barriers to their child's attendance; supports families to access appropriate support
- Works with the Senior Leadership Team to make referrals to Early Help, social care and/or the Education Welfare Team as appropriate.

#### **9.6 Class Teacher (and any staff providing cover to the class teacher role)**

- Records attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submits this information to the school office.
- Celebrates the importance of good attendance with their class.
- Works with the parents/carers and pupil, together with the Senior Leadership Team, SENDCo and Family Services Officer to provide support to pupils who are experiencing barriers to their attendance for physical/mental health reasons or due to circumstances in school or at home.
- Gives feedback to parents about attendance and punctuality and its impact on their child's education, where appropriate, at parents' evening/meetings.

## Appendix 1: Recording of Leave by the School – DfE register codes

School attendance registers are legal documents and the information recorded in them can be used as evidence in legal proceedings. It is therefore important that the information contained is accurate and the correct absence code is used. 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
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
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

<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	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)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	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
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day



**REQUEST FOR TERM TIME PUPIL LEAVE – EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_

School/Year Group/Class: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to request permission for my child to take 'exceptional' term time leave from school for the following reasons. I understand that family holidays are not a valid reason and that any absence may be detrimental to my child's education.

**Outline of exceptional circumstances:**

**Where will your child be traveling to during the leave period?**

The exceptional leave I am requesting for my child is planned (date):

From: \_\_\_\_\_ until: \_\_\_\_\_ resulting in a total absence of: \_\_\_\_\_ school days.

I understand that I may be required to provide evidence of the above if required. That this information may be discussed with the relevant Attendance & Safeguarding Lead.

Signature of parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Headteacher use only**

Thank you for your application for 'exceptional leave' for your child.

a) I confirm that this exceptional leave has been agreed:

b) Your request for exceptional leave has **not** been agreed for the following reason:

Headteacher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**It is Important to note that if the absence is not authorised and you go, or if it is authorised and you do not return on the date agreed, the school will issue a Penalty Notice (Penalty Notices will be £60.00 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days). You are also at risk of your child losing their school place.**