

WHOLE-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Greenlands Community Primary School

Introduction:

For all of our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how **together** we will achieve this. The Policy will be reviewed annually.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence (or lateness) affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence (or lateness) disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Significant absence and lateness can have a massive impact on a child's self-esteem, walking into a class that is already underway can be/is a very traumatic experience for any young child. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- Report to you termly on how your child is performing in school, including what their attendance and punctuality rate is;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and incentives;
- Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high school;
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school;
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school;
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors;
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day (morning or afternoon) absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Parents should be aware that school, not parents decide whether to authorise an absence.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and necessary. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- holidays that exceed the amount agreed by the Headteacher

Whilst a child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% (Government figure) or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our 'first day response' system and we also combine this with relevant mentoring where absence affects attainment. We hold a panel meeting every half-term (Chair of Governors, County LEA Attendance adviser and Headteacher) where the parents/carers of any child who is a persistent absentee is invited to attend. A complete review of each case is carried out irrespective of whether the child is represented or not.

All PA (identified by the Govt figure) pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a mentor, individual incentive programmes, parenting contracts and participation in group activities around raising attendance. PA cases are also made known to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where necessary.

During the panel meeting in October 2013 the following two modifications to the policy were made:-

Due to the success of the work of the afore-mentioned panel in 2012/3 in helping to reduce the number/% of persistent absences, we decided that we could increase the threshold to 90% so that we now list all of the children who have attended for less than 90% of the time. The circumstances leading to why those children only achieved less than 90% attendance are then investigated and acted upon.

There are still a few families who are taking unauthorised holidays during term-time. Nearly all of these families have taken at least one unauthorised holiday but there is one case where a family have taken an unauthorised holiday for at least two years running. In those (extreme) cases the Governors confirmed (16.11.13) that we will inform the LEA to carry out a penalty fine. We feel that action would set a proper precedent that will stress again the importance of attending school for the maximum amount of time.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone or you can call into school and report to Mrs Darwen in our office.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone/text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Follow our own in-school attendance strategies.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an **up to date** number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two full weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 9.00am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked at 9.00am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in school by that time. The registers are marked again at the start of the afternoon session (after lunch). Registers are then sent straight to the office once they have been completed.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an **unauthorised** absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a referral to the Pupil Attendance Support Team if the problem persists or in the most extreme cases face the possibility of Penalty notice.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the pastoral support team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time and we will obviously do our best to help you.

In-School Strategies to Promote Good Attendance and Punctuality:

The school promotes the need for good attendance with parents through:

- Posters and leaflets;
- Newsletters;
- Home school contract
- Vouchers for Toys 'r' Us – every child who attends 100% of the time receives one raffle ticket per week –at the end of each half-term the tickets are put in a container for each class and one winner

is drawn out.

- Two or three children are chosen for a voucher who have shown marked improvement in their attendance that term.

The school promotes the need for good attendance with pupils through:

- Assemblies;
- PSHE and lessons;
- School council;
- Best class attendance published in regular newsletters and celebrated in assembly;
- Incentives for those pupils who constantly achieve 100% attendance
- Individual incentives for pupils with most improved attendance and punctuality;
- Termly and annual attendance celebrations and rewards.
- Congratulatory 'green' and yellow letters showing the attendance figure.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance and Punctuality

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

- First day response system (including texts to parents);
- Individual letters to parents;
- 'red/amber/green' warning letters showing the actual attendance figures.
- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the Headteacher;
- Parenting contracts;
- Half-termly Attendance panels – Chair of Goves/LEA attendance adviser and Headteacher;
- Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority School Attendance Team);
- Penalty notices; and Legal proceedings where relevant.

We try to be very proactive with a view to only pursuing the latter strategy in very,very extreme circumstances. If pupil attendance does not improve, the above strategies may be implemented in any order.

The Local Authority School Attendance Team:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST) – c/o Ms E Lambert. They will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist the case may be referred to the Court Officers, who can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Holidays in Term Time:

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

The Headteacher will only consider authorising a holiday in term time in absolutely '**exceptional circumstances**' where you are asked to discuss the situation with the Head first prior to any booking being made. Obviously, any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid. Parents must request this leave in advance.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on first day of absence and keep school informed of absence lasting for longer periods
- Avoid holidays in term time wherever possible and apply in advance using form
- Attendance at meetings in school
- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school and attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher:

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters ie Bursar- Mrs Darwen and the Head.
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Meet with parents where attendance or punctuality is a continuing concern
- Regularly liaise with the School Attendance Consultant – Half-termly meetings for review and half-termly meetings for PA panel.

Designated Staff (School Secretary/Bursar and Headteacher):

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided
- Follow up first day response with phone calls to emergency contacts and letters where necessary
- Input and update the attendance registers regularly
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance and using Parenting Contracts where appropriate
- Make referrals to Pupil Attendance Support Team and undertake Common Assessment Framework
- Ensure interventions are escalated in a timely fashion where individual attendance is not improving
- Refer to Children Missing Education team any pupils whose whereabouts is unknown

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures
- Ensure children absent for any periods are re-integrated and supported
- Ensure registers are taken at 9am and no blanks left

Governors

- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.