



Policy Name:	Attendance Policy
Date:	March 2022
Review Frequency:	Every 3 Years
Statutory:	Yes

We recognise at Grendon Underwood Combined school that regular school attendance is essential for children to achieve their full potential, be emotionally resilient, confident and competent

Parents have a statutory duty to make sure that their child attends school regularly and schools have a statutory duty to promote good attendance and to minimise absence, working with their school communities to break down barriers.

The Governing body has a legal responsibility to ensure that registers are taken, indicating whether a child is present or absent and whether the absence is authorised or not. Attendance is monitored by governors and it is reported by the Headteacher every term. It is the expectation of the Local Authority that **students should have an attendance of 95% or more.**

The threshold for Persistent Absence is defined by the Department for Education as 90%. Therefore, a pupil is considered to have persistent absence if their **attendance falls below 90%.**

For the purposes of this document and the academic year 2021 - 2022 all absence related to Covid is discounted and will not negatively affect a child's attendance.

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

present;
absent;
present at approved educational activity; or
unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

In line with the Department of Education (Pupil Registration (England) Regulations 2006) **'holiday'** and **'extended leave'** should be removed from all paperwork and replaced with **'leave of absence'**.

Head Teachers are **unable** to authorise absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are **'exceptional circumstances'**; the fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short, by 'unavoidable' it implies that **an 'event' could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.**

Ideally parents/carers should request 'leave of absence' 4 weeks prior to the leave being taken, it will then be determined by the Head Teacher whether or not it is authorised leave of absence or unauthorised leave of absence.

Roles and Responsibilities

GUCS believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community. To foster effective relationships all staff:

Form positive relationships with pupils and parents,
Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve,
Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation,
Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site,
Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence,
Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions,
Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families,
Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated,

We ask Parents to work with us and:

Talk to their child about school and what goes on,
Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress,
Instill the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment,
Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations,
Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return,
Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours,
Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties,
Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance,
Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before,
Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family,
Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time.

Authorising Absence

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day.

Other Authorised Circumstances: This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence.

Late Arrival: Registration begins at 8.55am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9.00am. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session. On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office and parents complete the **Late Log stating a reason for lateness**.

An absence will only be authorised if an explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as **Late** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry.

Unauthorised absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been agreed by the school. Unauthorised absence is counted as truancy by the LEA and DfE.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

A pupil's/family member's birthday
Shopping for uniforms
Having their hair cut
Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
"Couldn't get up"
Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

Leave of Absence and Extended Leave

Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that a child absent for 10 school days, will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time **must complete the form found online on the school's website 1 month before arrangements are made.**

Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and these documents are a virtual safeguarding tool.

In cases of repeated unauthorised absence the school may refer the matter to the Bucks County Council Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice.

Support Systems

GUCS recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Late Log
- Additional learning & behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred, planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils and responsive to the individual needs of the child.

Religious Observance

GUCS acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only **when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel** and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

This does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

GUCS will be regarded as the base school if it is the school the child normally attends when they are not travelling during the previous eighteen months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at GUCS will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

GUCS can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

GUCS will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
Death of a pupil
Transfer between schools
When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

GUCS will follow Buckinghamshire County Council's Children Missing in Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

Roles and Responsibilities

GUCS believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The school will:

Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Parents are requested to:

Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return.
Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of booking the holiday.

Using Attendance Data

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Legal Sanctions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Buckinghamshire Education Welfare Service will be notified of the irregular attendance.

The Education Welfare Service or school, may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices could be considered by Local Authorities when

Intervention has failed to bring about improvement in attendance and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warnings and attendance contracts to improve.

A pupil with attendance below 90% has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.

A Penalty Notice issued by Buckinghamshire Education Welfare Service, gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/.carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Signed:
Chair of Governors.....
Date.....

Intervention Flow Chart