

Attendance Policy



1. Rationale and Aim

It is vital to the academic progress of all pupils in the academy 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 educational outcomes. 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 pupil arriving late may disrupt his/her continuity of learning and also that of others. Gothic Mede 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.

Gothic Mede 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. BEST 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's parent(s)/carer(s).
- Analyse and report on sub groups which will be defined by the responsible BEST executive leader at the beginning of each academic year (by e/o September each year). Each governing body will report this information to BEST Directors.

2. 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 student 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/student to the academy (e.g. very heavy snow)

Sickness absence

After a diarrhoea or vomiting sickness, pupils must be absent for 48 hours after the last symptom. It is our policy that pupils are not allowed to attend extra-curricular activities and events on days when they have had any sickness absence from school.

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 where possible.

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/student significant opportunity for personal achievement or improvement
- Attendance at a family wedding or funeral (1 day)

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 website and office, should be submitted as soon as possible)
- Leisure activities
- Birthdays or similar celebrations
- Shopping
- Persistent and regular lateness
- Moving house
- Any event without reason for it not taking place during holiday time

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/student takes a holiday during term time and the absence has not been authorised by the academy.

The regulations state that holidays cannot be taken for the following reasons and should not be authorised.

- Availability of cheap holidays
- Availability of the desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods and
- Overlap with the beginning of term.

The Government strongly urges parents to avoid booking family holidays during term time as this will disrupt education. There is no right to take a child out of school for a holiday and this is laid out in 1995 and 2006 regulations.

Appointments during school hours

We do ask parents/carers to avoid taking pupils/students out of school for medical appointments, however, when this is unavoidable, the pupil/student must sign out (or in if arriving late after an appointment) at the Academy 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/student, 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.

Missing Children Procedure (November 2012)

A Missing Child School Referral Form 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

Registration is a legal requirement and registers are legal documents and must be kept for three years after the date on which they were last used.

- Registers are called at:
 - Nursery – 8.55am and 12.20pm
 - Reception – 8:55am and 1:00pm
 - KS1 and 2 – 8:55am and 1:15pm
- Registers are closed at 9:25am and 12.30pm in Nursery and at 9.25am and 1.45pm for Reception, KS1 and KS2.

If a child arrives after the register has been called but within the 30 minute period they will be marked late but counted as present. If a child arrives after the registration period and fails to provide an acceptable explanation, they will be marked late and counted as an unauthorised absence for that session. Absences must be recorded using the approved symbols (see academy register of attendance codes) in the front of the registers.

Roles and responsibilities of staff, pupils and parents

- Pupils are expected to attend regularly, arrive on time and remain in learning.
- Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, properly equipped and in a fit condition to learn, they should contact the school between 8.00am and 8:55am on the first day of absence to inform the school of the reason for the absence (the responsibility for authorising the absence lies with the school and not the parent/carer) they should avoid, if possible, making medical or dental appointment during school hours and not take holidays in term-time.
- Data Manager
All absences with no reasons will be followed up the same day by the Data Manager.
- Teachers
In the first instance it is the responsibility of the teacher to monitor attendance and make early interventions to include, communicating with parent/carers, identify persistent absentees and ensure personal action plans in place to improve attendance, discuss reasons for absence.
- Vice Principal
Liaise with external agencies as part of the responsibility to refer, including close working with the Education Welfare Officer, devise and implement a range of strategies to support pupil attendance, set year attendance targets, and liaise with parent/carers, as appropriate. Have good strategies in place to support pupils returning to school.

Procedures for Addressing Poor Attendance

Attendance will be checked by the Vice Principal throughout the year and letters will be sent to parents if a child has poor attendance. Letter 1 is to inform the parents that their child's attendance has dropped to a certain level and we will be continuing to monitor it to look for an improvement. Letter 2 is if there has been no improvement in the child's attendance and it states that if there continues to be no improvement then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer. It also asks for evidence for any further absences (e.g prescriptions, appointment cards, doctors notes).

Strategies for Promoting Good Attendance

We encourage good attendance by praise and reward. Listed below are some of the strategies we use.

- Parents/carers reminded regularly via school newsletters, brochures, parents evenings of the importance of regular attendance.
- Effective working practices and procedures with the Education Welfare Service and other agencies.
- Attendance as an agenda item at every governors meeting with a report prepared by the Vice Principal.
- Supportive re-integration procedures following long term absence.
- Award the best class attendance every half term and record this on the school newsletter.

Authorising Absence

It is the school's decision to authorise absence in accordance with DfE guidance and parents should understand the school's expectations on them to inform and/or seek permission from the school for an absence. They should also be informed of the school's possible actions following unauthorised absence e.g. referral to the Schools Attendance Officer.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Attendance rates are available on the Ofsted School Data Dashboard. Academies also publish their figures on their website.

Consultation will take place with class teachers/tutors 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 senior managers, governors and the Access and Inclusion Attendance Officer.

4. 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 twice yearly or as required.

5. Author and Date

Written by:	Thomas Clarke, Interim Principal – September 2016
Updated:	April 2021- Nicola Davis, Vice Principal
Ratified by governors:	May 2021
Review:	April 2023

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