



# **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

Ratified: September 2017  
Review: September 2018

## 1 Introduction

Good attendance is essential to ensuring good progress. It underpins the continuity of a child's education and plays an important role in supporting positive social relationships as much as supporting high quality learning. Parents and carers have a statutory legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and for each session within the school day. This policy outlines the school's procedures and expectations for pupil's attendance and punctuality.

## 2 Administrative Procedures

### 2.1 Registers

The class teacher, or member of staff acting for the class teacher, is responsible for calling an attendance register twice each day – once between 8.50am and 8.55am, and again between 1.15pm and 1.20pm. The actual procedure (e.g. calling names in order, self-registration) is defined by the class teacher, however all staff must have due regard to the legal nature of registers and ensure that they are always accurate.

Registers should be returned to the school office as soon as possible after they have been called, and in any case within 20 minutes of the start of the session.

### 2.2 Recording Attendance

The registers are checked daily by the school office to identify any initial issues which may require follow-up. Absences are transferred to SIMS Attendance at least weekly using DfE approved attendance codes.

### 2.3 Noting Absences

Parents are expected to inform the school, either by letter, in person or by telephone of the reason for any absence. This reason should be recorded with the correct code on the paper register by the person or team receiving the message – ie if the parent telephones the office this should be added by office staff, if the parent talks to the class teacher this should be added by the class teacher during the calling of the register.

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.

### 2.4 Safeguarding

The school office will maintain a list of children for whom absence is a cause for concern. This list will be managed by the Designated Person for Child Protection and will include all children with a Child Protection Plan and any other children where there are concerns about wellbeing if a child is not in school.

The headteacher or Designated Person **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. Parents 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 parents.

## 2.5 Reporting Attendance

The school reports attendance and punctuality data to parents as part of a pupil's annual report. This record also indicates whether the attendance is above or below national averages.

## 3 Promoting Good 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:

- regular sharing of pupil attendance rates with parents and carers
- ensuring that good attendance is regularly discussed in classes along with good behaviour, wearing school uniform and other aspects of belonging to our school community
- rewards for very high levels of attendance, eg above 97%, above 99%

### 3.1 Liaising with other schools

Attendance is likely to be improved if closure days for the school coincide with those of feeder secondary schools. The school will attempt to work with Impington Village College to achieve this aim

### 3.2 Making every day count

It is important that parents and children do not feel that the last week or few days of the term are somehow "less important" than the others, thus encouraging absence or leave. Teachers should ensure that core subjects are taught up to the penultimate day of term and that parents and children understand this will be the case.

## 4 Managing Absences

### 4.1 Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

All absences must be categorised as either "authorised" or "unauthorised". The responsibility for this decision rests with the headteacher and there will be times when this decision is at odds with the belief of parents and carers.

At Girton Glebe Primary School we **expect attendance to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence**, which would then be authorised.

The Department for Education has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised absences:

- 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).

We recognise that there will be unforeseen events affecting families which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged **out of school hours wherever possible**.

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 those where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- 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**:

- Family holidays including where the cost of taking the holiday is a factor in choosing the dates
- Family trips or visits which could reasonably take place at a later time, outside of the school term
- Time off for birthdays, anniversaries, theatre trips or museum visits, etc.

The guidance makes it clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised. We ask parents 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.

The Government's 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.**

Lateness after 9am is necessarily unauthorised unless it has been caused by a medical appointment.

#### **4.2 Leave of Absence**

The school holiday dates and end of Key Stage Assessment dates are published a year in advance and leave of absence **will not** be authorised during these assessment periods.

In line with the Government's amendments to the 2006 regulations, holidays during term time will NOT be authorised. The Headteacher and Governors have determined that:

- In **exceptional circumstances** permission may be granted for a period of leave of absence
- Where leave of absence in term time is due to exceptional circumstances, an application form must be requested from the school office and submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date and prior to any booking or monies committed. Consideration will then be given to the pupil's previous school attendance and previous requests for leave of absence.

If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. The Education Welfare Officer may be notified and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

**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 school will record the nature of any leave requests in order to support its decision on “uniqueness”.

Teaching staff cannot provide “catch-up” work for children who miss school due to a leave of absence whether authorised or unauthorised and parents must take this into account when requesting leave.

### **4.3 Enrichment and Extension Activity**

From time to time the school offers children enrichment or extension activity off-site, or, as part of an out-of-school activity, a short absence from school is required eg for a rehearsal.

Where the school organises the provision it will have verified the supervision arrangements and therefore pupils attending such activities should be registered with code B (Off-site educational activity). As part of the decision as to whether to provide consent, parents should be aware that the school has no obligation to provide “catch-up” work for the time missed.

Where the provision is organised by a third party, the activity must be regarded as a request for leave of absence as the family will be responsible for ensuring appropriate supervision. In these circumstances, leave is granted at the discretion of the headteacher based on the provisions of Section 4.2 above, and if granted, should be recorded as code C (Authorised Absence).

### **4.4 Following-Up Absences**

The school office should follow-up any absences where no reason has been given to the school at least twice every half-term. If no reason can be obtained, these absences should remain unauthorised.

### **4.5 Monitoring Attendance**

Rates of attendance will be monitored regularly by the Headteacher and the office manager. Families of children with an attendance rate of less than 96% where there is any unauthorised absence recorded will be contacted by the Headteacher. Pupils whose attendance is at or below 89% as a result of predominately unauthorised absences may be referred to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer). Staff involved in attendance monitoring should also look for patterns of absences, for example, Fridays or returns from a stay with a non-resident parent. Frequent short-absences are just as disruptive to a child’s education as a longer absence.

## **5 Challenging Poor Attendance**

### **5.1 Cambridgeshire Three-Letter System**

The school employs the Local Authority's recommended 'three letter system' for notifying parents of poor attendance:

- Letter 1 is sent to notify parents that a child's attendance has dropped below acceptable levels
- Letter 2 is sent if there is no improvement in attendance. It notifies the parent of ongoing concern and contains a request for them to meet with the Deputy Headteacher to discuss issues. Letter 2 also notifies parents that if the pupil suffers illness from this time the school will only authorise absence on receipt of a doctor's note
- Letter 3 is sent if attendance still fails to improve. It notifies parents of the need for the involvement of the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

The school may suggest completing a Early Help Assessment (EHA) form, with parents of pupils, who require support with attendance or wider family issues. This would dispense with the formal letter process, providing a supportive rather than punitive measure.

The school may also complete a Statutory Intervention Form (S.I.F) for any child whose attendance drops dramatically over a shorter period of time without satisfactory reason. A SIF requests the involvement of the E.W.O or a fixed penalty notice to be applied to a parent. A Penalty Notice is a fixed sum, per parent, of £60 (if paid within 21 days), rising to £120 (if paid after 21 days but before 28 days have elapsed). Completion of a S.I.F would not, normally, happen without prior communication with the parent of a child.

A copy of these letters can be found at Appendix 2.

## **5.2 Other Strategies**

The following other strategies may be used by the school to challenge poor attendance:

- regular sharing of attendance data with parents and carers
- meetings with the headteacher or senior staff
- referral to the school's Family Support Worker
- referral to Education Welfare
- rewards for improved attendance
- involvement of medical staff to improve provision
- Common Assessment
- Access to Breakfast Club

## **5.3 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 school counselling, family support worker, Specialist Teaching Team or Locality services

- Common Assessment

#### **5.4 Special Educational Needs**

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. Poor attendance may be indicative of a failure to meet a child's needs effectively and therefore the school's Inclusion Manager should be involved in cases involving SEN pupils. Advice from specialist services should also be sought.

### **6 Punctuality**

Punctuality is an important life skill. Lateness can have an equally detrimental effect on a child's progress as absence. It can disrupt social relationships and can often mean that the same activity is missed each day. Lessons and activities begin in classes at 8.50am and so even minor lateness can have an effect. Lateness is recorded in two ways: authorised lateness is marked where a child arrives after 8.50am and before 9am unauthorised lateness is marked where a child arrives after 9am. All children who arrive after 9am must be signed in at the school office by a parent.

The school will use the following strategies to support good punctuality:

- rigorous marking of lateness in the school register
- regular reporting of persistent lateness to parents
- using a whistle to mark the beginning of the school day
- ensure that external doors are closed at 9am so that parents must sign children in at the office
- referral to the school's Family Support Worker
- referral to Education Welfare
- Common Assessment
- Use of the school's Breakfast Club

### **7 Flexi-School**

Flexi-school may be requested by parents who do not wish to formally adopt Elective Home Education but nevertheless would like to undertake some of the education of their children during school hours at home or on another site, themselves.

In a flexi-school scenario, the school retains full responsibility for the education of the child on their school roll. It is for this reason that, whilst the headteacher will consider carefully any requests for flexi-school, it is unlikely that it will be granted.



# Girton Glebe Primary School

Cambridge Road  
Girton  
Cambridge  
CB3 0PN

**Headteacher: Mr A Simpson**

## **APPENDIX 2-**

### **Letter 1**

Date

Name & Address of Parent

Re:

dob:

Dear

I am concerned that your son/daughter's attendance has fallen to XXX%. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed.

As I am sure you are aware, it is important that XXXXXXXX maintains regular school attendance, as any absence may interrupt his/her academic progress and may have an effect on maintaining friendships. You should also be aware that regular attendance is a legal requirement.

It may be that there is an acceptable explanation for this of which I am unaware. I would be grateful if you could contact the school as soon as possible should this be the case.

XXXXX's attendance will continue to be monitored and I look forward to seeing a significant improvement.

If there is anything that we can do to support you in helping to improve XXXXX's attendance then please do not hesitate to contact me in school.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Andrew Simpson  
Headteacher



# Girton Glebe Primary School

Cambridge Road  
Girton  
Cambridge  
CB3 0PN

**Headteacher: Mr A Simpson**

## Letter 2

Date

Name & Address of Parent

Re:

dob:

Dear

On XXXXXXXXX I wrote to you advising that your sons/daughter's attendance had fallen to xxx%. Unfortunately there has been no significant improvement in his/her attendance and this is continuing to cause concern. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed shows that in fact his/her attendance has fallen to xx%.

I must remind you that regular attendance is a legal requirement and it is important that any issues that may be the cause of this poor attendance are addressed as soon as possible. Please contact me in the next few days so that we can arrange a time to discuss xxxxx's attendance.

Due to the persistent poor attendance of your son/daughter, the school will be unable to authorise any further illness without a doctor's confirmation that he/she is unfit for school.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Andrew Simpson  
Headteacher



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## Letter 3

Date

Name & Address of Parent

Re:

dob:

Dear

I note that there has been no significant improvement in XXXXX attendance since Date of letter 2. XXXXX attendance for this academic year has fallen to XXXX%. Furthermore I have not received any satisfactory explanation for XXXXXX absences.

It has now become necessary to refer XXXX and the concerns around his/her attendance to the school's Education Welfare Officer. She will contact you in due course.

Should you have anything you wish to discuss concerning this matter, I will continue to be available. Please contact me on the above number should you require an appointment.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Andrew Simpson  
Headteacher