


Gosforth East Middle School Policy Proforma		
Policy Number: 33	Name: Attendance Policy	
Agreed Date: September 2020	Agreed by: Governing Body	
Longevity: 2 Years	Review Date: September 2022 (updated annually to change dates)	

## INTRODUCTION

This Policy has been agreed by the Governing Body, staff and pupils of GEMS. It represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable and achieved by many children. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake.

Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor Attendance and Punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

## PRINCIPLES

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development
- Good attendance practice safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents or carers.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be considered vulnerable.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

## AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To ensure the safeguarding and welfare of all pupils.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and the Governing Body understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of Newcastle's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

## POLICY OBJECTIVES

- To safeguard the welfare, social, educational and emotional development of children
- To reduce persistent absence
- To reduce term time holidays/leave of absence
- To promote commitment to education and high achievement
- To maximise the potential of every individual pupil

## PROMOTING EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE

- The Governing Body, Head Teacher and staff will use all means available to them to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance.
- The school will also, when necessary, employ sanctions to improve attendance. Head Teachers only have discretion to authorise leave of absence in term-time in the **MOST EXCEPTIONAL** circumstances. In such cases the Head Teacher must specify the date when the child must return to school.
- In cases of Persistent Absence (less than 90%) the school may recommend to the Local Authority prosecution through the Magistrates Court.
- In very serious cases of poor attendance for no acceptable reason, the school may involve other agencies such as the School Nurse or Children's Social Care, to safeguard the welfare, development and educational potential of the child.

## SCHOOL PROCEDURES

To support safeguarding arrangements, there is a signing-in early book for pupils attending clubs, assembly practice, etc. This could also apply to, e.g. those arriving early for school trips.

Also to ensure safeguarding arrangements are effective, the School Office Attendance Lead keeps a file of attendance data each week.

### 1. Registration and punctuality procedures

- Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day starting at 8.55am and once during the afternoon session, at 1.20pm.

- Pupils arriving during registration will be marked present 8.55am-9.15am and those arriving before the close of registers at 9.15am will be coded L (Late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register.
- Pupils arriving after the registers have closed at 9:15am will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence.
- Afternoon registration period will start at 1.20pm. Pupils are not allowed offsite at lunchtime. If a pupil arrives up to 5 minutes late, an L code will be recorded in the register. If a pupil has not returned after 15 minutes, parents/carers will be informed and an unauthorised code O will be recorded in the register.
- Any pupils with an “N” mark will be followed up immediately by the School Attendance Lead.
- Only the Head Teacher or designated member(s) of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school’s view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absent). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year, or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action.
- If a pupil is persistently late the School Office Attendance Lead and the School Attendance Officer will arrange to meet with the family as soon as the pattern is identified.

## **2. First Day Absence Contact**

Parents are expected to notify the school on the first day their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. If the school does not receive notification the School Office Attendance Lead will text/telephone on the first day of absence, to try to ascertain the reason. School Office Attendance Lead carries out registers checks as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school, but not arrived, as quickly as possible. This is important for safeguarding reasons.

## **3. Second Day Absence Contact**

If a child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, a telephone call will be made to the home. School will use all contact numbers provided including emergency contact details to establish why a child is absent.

## **4. Continuing Absence Procedures**

For continuing absence, the school has a range of options to call upon.

- In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit is made by the School Attendance Officer (ICS).
- Any child who is absent without explanation for 12 consecutive or cumulative sessions (6 school days) (90% attendance), or who has a pattern of erratic attendance or persistent lateness after registers close will be referred to the Attendance Officers, in order that further investigations can be made. Such cases may result in a home visit by the Attendance Officer (ICS). Targets will be set for improvement; sources of support will be signposted if needed. If there is no improvement, court action or a Penalty Notice may ensue.
- **Parental Letters**
- When attendance falls below 90% a “first concern” letter is sent to parents. Attendance is monitored and if there is no significant improvement then a “second concern” letter is sent out. If there is still no evidence provided for reasons, then ICS/parent and HoY will meet and a parent contract is agreed.

## **5. Frequent/Persistent Absence Procedures**

Regular audits of the registers will be made by the School Office Attendance Lead to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), that is to say absence of 10% or more in a half term. The School Attendance Lead will be responsible for identification of any emerging concerns, and ensuring that action plans are in place for each pupil of concern.

Initially the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues the school will refer to the School Health Adviser, with parental permission, if the problem appears to be a medical one. In cases where there appears to be issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child; a referral may be made for external agency support (ICS etc.).

Parents of pupils with poor school attendance will be invited to enter in to a parenting contract. Such a contract would identify a realistic plan of additional in school or external support.

## **6. Consequences of Poor Attendance / Punctuality**

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried, the school has the ultimate right to...

- 1) Inform the LA, if the pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences; the LA could initiate a four-week legal monitoring period. During this time if attendance remains a concern the LA may issue a Penalty Notice on behalf of the school. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 21 days it rises to £120 per parent, per child, if paid within 28 days. If not paid at all, court action is likely to be initiated.
- 2) Ask the LA to initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even up to 3 months imprisonment.
- 3) Take action under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and educational development of the child.

## **7. Children who Cease to Attend without Prior Notification (CME) procedures**

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in the CME Policy and Procedures. If, however, after ten days continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to school. If after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, they can be legally removed from the school roll. However this decision will be taken in conjunction with the local authority, depending on the vulnerability of the child/family.

#### **8. Non starters**

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as Children Missing Education (CME). If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the local authority CME Officer for further checks.

#### **VULNERABLE CHILDREN**

Children who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP), Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Officer. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home, or a home visit. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

#### **ATTENDANCE TRACKING**

Where there is a cause for concern, attendance of all children will be tracked by the School Office Attendance Lead. Appropriate interventions and measures will be put in place to support students and their families with a view to improving levels of attendance and punctuality. This will include the support of the Attendance Officer (ICS) and includes making telephone calls, completing home visits, parent meetings, mentoring, sending letters, rewards and support of the Attendance Officers (ICS) and the Newcastle Admissions, Access and Attendance Service. Should all interventions not result in increased attendance, the appropriate channels will be followed and the consequences, as stated above (point6), implemented.

#### **REWARDS**

Students will have mentoring support to help improve their attendance, but could also be rewarded for achieving both long and short-term targets. This could be simple weekly 100% attendance rewards or certificates, house points, prizes for longer-term targets and end of term trips for those with attendance over 90%.

#### **AUDITING OUR PRACTICE**

An audit of our practice in relation to monitoring and improving attendance will be carried out annually in July. The findings will contribute towards a plan for improving attendance and arrangements for monitoring our systems and procedures. This plan, in draft form, will be presented to the Governing Body in autumn term for approval.