

# **Gorse Hill Primary School**

## **School Attendance Policy**

## Introduction:

Regular attendance at school is essential if children are to get the best possible start in life. It enables them to access, and engage in, appropriate educational opportunities that provide them with the knowledge and skills to achieve their full potential. Children who fail to attend regularly are very likely to underachieve and may become victims of, or involved with, anti-social or criminal behaviour

Gorse Hill Primary School believe that regular and punctual school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them through enjoying and achieving; becoming healthy young people; being and feeling safe; whose emotional well-being is addressed; and who are able to make a positive contribution to their school and community.

The school values all pupils, and staff will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. However, the school will challenge pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives the school has established an effective system of communication with parents to provide mutual information, advice and support

## Legal Framework:

When a pupil of compulsory school age is on the school's register, parents are required by law to ensure that their children attend school regularly and that they arrive on time. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is important that children from an early age get into good habits of regular and punctual attendance that set positive patterns for the future.

Absence from school should only occur when a child is unfit to attend due to illness; has a day of religious observance or leave of absence has been granted by the school.

If a pupil does not attend regularly, the local authority has a statutory responsibility to enforce parental responsibility and may issue a penalty notice or take legal action if they fail to do so.

- **Penalty Notices:** The School recognises the use of penalty notices as an early enforcement measure that are used by the authority in accordance with Trafford Councils Penalty Notice Protocol. A Penalty Notice is to the value of £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 21 days.
- **Prosecution:** Legal action in the Magistrates Court may be taken. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education. The court can impose a fine of up to £2,500 per child or up to 3 months imprisonment.

## Support Systems:

It is recognised that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home, in the community 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, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

The school works closely with the authority's Education Welfare Officer in matters relating to poor school attendance and continuing late arrival at school. Other support services are requested to provide assistance on a needs led basis.

## **Arrival and registration:**

The registers are taken twice a day at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Each school day counts as two attendances.

All children should be in the playground and ready to come into school at 9.00 am each day. The school gates are open from 8.45 am and this enables pupils to socialise with their friends and helps start the day calmly. Pupils should not arrive before 8.45 a.m unless it is for an organised activity such as before school clubs, breakfast club or when having to leave school earlier for an educational visit.

Morning registration starts at 9.00 am. If a child arrives after the end of the registration period, 9.00 am they will be marked **late**. After 9.30 am they will become an **Unauthorised Absence**.

Afternoon registration begins at 1.00 pm and ends at 1.10 pm for EYFS and KS1 and begins at 1.30pm and ends at 1.40pm for KS2 after which a pupil will be marked **late** in the register. Children arriving after 1.30 or 2pm respectively will be marked as **Unauthorised Absence**.

## **Lateness:**

When children arrive in school late, or if they have to leave school early, the parent or carer should call at the school office to sign them in or out. The signing in/out register is used as an appendix to the class register as part of the school's health and safety procedures.

## **Categorising absence:**

When a pupil is absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. 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.

**Illness:** The school office should be informed before 9.30 am on the first day of a child's absence due to illness with an expected date of return. Parents should keep in regular contact with the school if the absence continues. Children should return to school as soon as they are well enough to attend. Parents should put the reason for absence in writing and 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, GP's note, etc.

**Medical appointments:-** Parents should make every possible effort to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day so as not to disrupt their child's education. If it is absolutely necessary to make an appointment during school time, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

**Other Authorised Circumstances:** The school will consider authorising absence on occasions where there is absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example a family bereavement.

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

**Exclusion from school:** Exclusion is counted as an authorised absence. Parents are responsible for educating their child during the first 6 days of exclusion and the child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

**Leave of Absence:** The school strongly discourages leave of absence during school time. Parents **do not** have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time due to leave of absence. Under no circumstances will the school approve a holiday during school time. If your child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during the academic year.

The Head teacher has the discretion to authorise leave of absence. Leave of absence can only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**.

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing. If leave of absence is granted, you must make sure that your child attends on the expected date of return. The parent must contact the school if there is an unavoidable delay. If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil still does not attend school the absence will be **unauthorised**. Unauthorised absence may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice to the parent or carer.

**Religious Observance:** The school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends. The school will authorise absence on parental request for a day's absence for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

**Unauthorised absence:** Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school. Unsatisfactory explanations include: Shopping for uniforms; A pupil's or family members birthday; Unauthorised holidays; 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; Having their hair cut; Looking after the house or a sick member of the family. This is a general list and is not exhaustive.

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

Gorse Hill Primary School 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 Governing Body**, in order to ensure that the school is complying with its statutory duties, will:

- Review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy;
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings;
- Ensure that there is a named senior member of staff to lead on attendance;

### **The School will:-**

- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve;
- Monitor Attendance effectively and follow up absence appropriately;
- Raise awareness of regular school attendance by highlighting expectations in newsletters, the school prospectus, assemblies and parents meetings;
- Encourage a welcoming and positive atmosphere in which pupils feel safe and their presence is valued;
- Reward pupils successes in achieving high attendance standards;
- Discuss appropriate strategies with pupils and parents to support those with attendance difficulties;

- Use appropriate resources and advise parents on accessing support to aid their child's social, emotional and behavioural development;
- Ensure staff receive training regarding supporting pupils with school attendance difficulties;
- Consider individual circumstances and discuss strategies with parents and pupils in the event of a child returning to school after a lengthy absence.

**The School response to Absence and lateness:**

- School will make immediate contact with parents if there is concern about an absent pupil;
- The school will work closely with the EWO to monitor all pupils absence;
- Parents of pupils who are regularly late for school or are consistently poor attendees will receive a letter from the school expressing concern;
- If there is no improvement in attendance following a letter the parents will be invited into school to discuss the situation with the Attendance Lead/Headteacher;
- If school interventions fail to resolve issues of poor attendance and punctuality, the matter will be referred to the EWO.
- If a pupil is on the child protection register, the EWO will be notified on the first day of absence.

**Parents** have a very important part to play in supporting their children's education. Ultimately all those with parental responsibility are accountable for the regular and punctual attendance of children. In order to make a valuable contribution to their attendance parents are expected to: -

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress;
- See themselves as partners with schools in the education of their children and must endeavour to instil respect for education and those who deliver it;
- Contact the school by 9.30 a.m. on the first day of absence to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note to the school;
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours or during school holidays;
- Parents are urged to contact the Headteacher should their child seem worried or upset about coming to school;
- Encourage good routines at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before;
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family;
- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed, and in a condition to learn;
- ensure the school are kept informed of the progress during continued absence at regular intervals;
- avoid taking their children on holiday during school time;

**School expectations of Pupils:**

- Children should try their best to attend school regularly and punctually;
- Pupils arriving after 9.00 a.m. should always report to the school office.

Headteacher:

Chair of Governors:

Date: September 2013