



Gateway Primary School Policy Cover Sheet

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| Policy Name: | Attendance Policy |
| Adopted at / by: | FGB |
| Signed on behalf of the Governing Board | |
| Name: | |
| Date: | March 2024 |
| Signed on behalf of Headteacher: | pp. <i>KAnstee</i> |
| Name: | Kayleigh Anstee |
| Date: | March 2024 |
| Review period: | 2 year |
| Date of next Review | March 2026 |

Introduction

We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this. The named member of staff responsible for Gateway School attendance is Sarah Gardner.

Why Regular Attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in weekly newsletters.
 - Report to you at least termly, at Parents' Evening or in the annual report, on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
- Share attendance data regularly with children.
- Celebrate good attendance by issuing 100% attendance acknowledgements at the end of each long term and at the end of the year.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. If this occurs, school may require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider 'unavoidable' and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (County Attendance Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, never cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with your child's school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
- Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly each half term. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority and you will be informed of this by letter from the Deputy Headteacher.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and we also combine this with support from our Senior Leadership Team where absence affects the well-being or education of the child.

Some of our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Teaching Assistant from the Senior Leadership Team, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the County Attendance Team. If your child becomes a PA pupil and attendance does not improve between monitoring points, we will seek your consent to complete an Strengths and Needs Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible and before 8:45am on the first day of absence by telephone call to the office.

If your child is absent we will:

- Send a ParentHub by 9:30 to report that your child has been identified as absent, asking you to call the office to explain the absence, if you have not already done so;
- Telephone you during the afternoon of the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90%.

Absence from School without parental contact

To safeguard pupils at our school we have a set procedure to monitor absence. This is:

First Day Absence – The school expects parents to notify them of any child absence by contacting the school office as soon as possible and by 8:45am. There is an answering machine for times when office staff are not available to take your call. Messages regarding illness must come from parents/carers and not siblings.

Once registers have closed and there is still no information, the office staff shall contact the parents to find out the reason for the absence. The evidence of this call is logged on the SIMS system and whether there was an answer to the call

Third Day Absence – If a child has been absent and without any notice a member of the Senior Leadership Team along with another member of staff will go to the house to find out why the child is absent, and that school is unable to get through.

If there is no response, a letter will be put through the door asking the parents to contact school that day.

Continuing Absence – If there has still been no contact from the parent, a further letter is sent requesting that parents contact the school as a matter of urgency before the issue is passed on to the LA.

Ten Day Absence - Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be referred to Oxfordshire County Council, Attendance and Engagement Team. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action they have taken.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers at all times. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't, then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The County Attendance Team – Penalty Notices

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any attendance problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the County Attendance Team at the Local Authority.

In cases of persistent and regular absenteeism and unauthorised holiday, the school reserves the right to issue a Penalty Notice Warning.

For absences that persist after the Penalty Notice Warning Letter the County Attendance Team may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, per child (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice for prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. This can result in a criminal record and a fine of up to £2,500, a Community Order, Parenting Order or ultimately a custodial sentence). The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court.

“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.”

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the County Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01865 323513 and email address is attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8:35 a.m. and we expect your child to be making their way to class at that time.

Registers are marked by 8:45 a.m. and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9:05 a.m. the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Exceptional Leave

Taking exceptional leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

- It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
- Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.
- Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications.
- All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.
- Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student's attendance is less than 95%.
- Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
- Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
- Reasons for Exceptional Leave will be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

Exceptional Leave at Gateway Primary School has been agreed by the Governing Body as:

- 1 day authorised absence for reunion with a parent who has served a long deployment. (4 months or more) Please note, proof of deployment (letter from line manager or assignment order) may be requested to accompany the Exceptional Leave Form and will be verified with appropriate Line Manager. Requests will need to be submitted 15 working days ahead of the requested exceptional leave to be authorised.
- 1 day for visiting a school on notification of being posted and/or changing schools.
- Other educational activity such as ballet exam, attending graduation ceremony of parent etc. (1 day)
- 1 day per academic year for travelling to a family event that is a significant distance away. 'Significant' is defined as a distance not manageable there and back in a day in the car.
- 1 day for a family funeral.
- 1 day for a wedding of a parent or sibling.

The County Attendance Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave'. Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned. Please note that it will be per parent per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days you will each receive a summons to Oxford Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the County Attendance Team may summons each parent to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.

Attendance Awards

The school will use the following system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance

- Acknowledgment for 100% attendance over each term.

Attendance Targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and a senior school manager will be responsible for overseeing this work.

Our schools targets are:

- Whole school attendance to be in line with Oxfordshire attendance figures.
- Attendance registers, by law, must be kept for at least 3 years;
- Entries in paper registers must be in ink;
- All corrections must be visible (no correcting fluid)

The registers must be safely stored. They are currently stored electronically via the Integriss system.

Summary

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Oxfordshire.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures & it's attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority & the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years.