

GORSEYBRIGG PRIMARY SCHOOL



Attendance and Absence Policy

<i>POLICY REVIEW</i>	DATE	SIGNED	POSITION	MIN NO
Adopted				

Gorseybrigg Primary School – Attendance and Absence Policy

Vision Statement

Giving Pride through Success

1. Rationale

- Parents of a child of compulsory school age have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives sufficient and suitable full-time education, either at school or otherwise. If the child is registered at a school, parents must ensure regular attendance and punctuality.
- The Local Authority has a legal duty to see that these statutory obligations are met and the school must have a policy outlining its arrangements for ensuring that pupils have regular and punctual attendance.
- This policy has been drawn up in line with statutory requirements, the policies of the LA and in collaboration with other schools in our locality and the Multi Agency Team (MAT)

2. Why is attendance important?

Regular attendance is essential for a child to make good educational progress. It is the best way of ensuring greatest benefit from education and the way in which friendships are developed and membership of groups is formed. Attendance and punctuality is important to help a child become a dependable adult and, eventually, a reliable employee. Regular attendance is an essential pre requisite to effective learning. At Northfield we are committed to encouraging, promoting and valuing high attendance. Our attendance target for 2016-17 is 96%.

3. How does the school record and report attendance?

- Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the Governing Body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised, or late and is coded to describe the type of absence
- Registers are legal documents. If a child is not present for registration, they are considered to be late and this will also be reported in the register. Absence and attendance is recorded electronically at Northfield. This data is collated and can be used to:
 1. support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a termly and yearly basis.
 2. identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees.
 3. facilitate and encourage early intervention.
 4. identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism.
 5. identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy.
 6. report attendance matters to parents/carers.
- Schools are required to publish annually their absence figures in the school prospectus and to report an individual pupil's annual attendance and unauthorised absence figures in the annual report to parents.

4. Punctuality

- It is crucial that children learn to arrive on time, both to acquire a disposition and discipline which will help them in later life, but also because lessons often begin with a teaching input/instructions for the day's lessons, which children who are late miss.
- If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child.
- It is the parent's responsibility to ensure their child arrives on time
- The school day starts at **8.55 am** (Infants) and **8.50 am** (Juniors) and the morning register should be completed by **9.00 am**
- The afternoon register is completed by **1.20pm**. If a pupil arrives after the morning or afternoon register has been completed then they will be marked as arriving 'late'.
- Children arriving after the close of register **must** first report to the school office before attending class.
- We will let you know if we have any concerns about your child's punctuality and offer support to improve late attendance. Repeated late attendance may be referred to the MAT Attendance Panel.

5. Types of Absence

- The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school then the parent is guilty of an offence. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is **authorised** or **unauthorised** and the appropriate register code will be used.

6. Authorised Absence / First Day Response

- Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.
- The school office should be informed during the morning of the first day of a child's absence through illness and each and every morning thereafter with the exception to this being where a specified period of absence has been agreed on the first morning e.g. 48 hours following the last episode of sickness/diarrhoea, chicken pox etc.
- Parents are expected to inform the school office of the nature of the illness/reason for absence when contacting the school.
- Where a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. If we have not been informed of a child's absence by 9:30am, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent/carer/guardian to establish the reason for absence.
- A child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised if no satisfactory explanation is given for absence or if the school considers the information received from the parent is not an acceptable reason for absence.
- If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher will take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school office, in liaison with the relevant member of school staff will then establish contact with the parent and/or relevant external agencies, in order to check on the safety of the child in conjunction with the School's Safeguarding Policy.
- Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons as we realise that there are **rare** occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent. Please let us know and we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

1. illness, medical or dental appointments.
2. days of religious observance.

3. exclusion.
4. traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment.
5. family bereavement.
6. involvement in a public performance.
7. 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis).

7. Unauthorised Absence

- Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.
- The school monitors attendance and if a child's attendance drops below the threshold for regular attendance (94%) then the school will notify parents of their concern and offer support to improve attendance
- Every effort should be made to arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, please ensure the school office is notified in advance where possible. The child must also be returned to the school directly after the appointment.
- Absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:
 1. where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory.
 2. family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances).
 3. waiting on a delivery.
 4. going for a family day out.
 5. going shopping or for a haircut
 6. because it is your child's birthday.
 7. sleeping in after a late night.
 8. parents are unwell (*call us, we can help to get your child to school*).

8. Persistent Absence

Persistent absence (or PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

9. School Outings / Visits / Residential Trips

- Children who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, will not be marked as authorised absent, and will be recorded as on an approved educational activity.
- Opportunities for children to attend these are provided; if they don't go, the children are **expected in school**, where alternative arrangements will be made for them.

10. Leave of Absence / Holidays in Term Time

- Under the new directive, regarding holidays in term time, from the DfE which came in to force on 1st September 2013, term time absence for holidays can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- As a matter of principle holidays should not be taken in school time. Where this is impossible then an application in writing should be submitted to the Head Teacher at least two weeks prior to the holiday with relevant documentation attached to support the exceptional circumstances.
- Parents are advised only to book a holiday once a response from school has been received and only if authorised in the category of exceptional circumstance.

- If the school believes that a child has been absent for a family holiday when they have been reported as ill, then the school will attempt to establish communication with the parents before treating the issue as an unauthorised absence.
- Parents should be aware that where holidays are taken that have NOT been approved, this will then be classed as an unauthorised holiday and information passed to the LA and they may be issued with a fixed penalty fine.

11. Exceptional Circumstances

- Leave of Absence can be applied for in exceptional circumstances only. All local schools have adopted a common approach to this and will look at each request individually and if appropriate consult with each other to judge whether the leave can be authorised or not.
- Schools are not allowed to have a blanket policy to cover all exceptional circumstances but the regulations make it very clear that holidays should not be routinely taken in term time and that school attendance must be prioritised. For example, cheaper travel, or family birthdays and occasions, are not exceptional circumstances and therefore cannot be authorised.
- In addition, leave of absence requests will not be authorised during and in the run up to SATs tests.
- Parents are asked to apply for authorisation of leave at least 2 weeks before the leave is to be taken and to provide a full explanation of the exceptional circumstances with any supporting evidence if appropriate. Holidays should not be booked without seeking prior authorisation. The forms are available from the school and to download from school website.
- If the school does not agree and the holiday is taken, the absence will be unauthorised.
- Please remember that the more time a child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost.

12. Long Term Absence

- When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork.
- If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the relevant Local Authority support services, so that requests can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

13. Absence for Religious Reasons

- The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 3 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carer is a member and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.
- If parents/carers require an additional day this must be requested in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

14. Penalty Notices

- The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/ carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.
- Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days.

- Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted. Penalty notices are issued per parent per child at £120. However, if paid within 21 days the cost is £60.
- In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 5 school days lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or 10 school days lost to unauthorised absence in 2 consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is considered. In cases of unauthorised absence parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of Penalty Notice being issued. This will state the extent of the child's absences and give parents/carers 25 days to bring about an improvement. In that time the child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

15. Inclement Weather or other reasons the school building may be closed

- In case of inclement weather (or other reason the school building may have to close) the school will endeavour to stay open for as long as it is safe to do so.
- Any decisions to close the school building will be communicated to parents at the earliest opportunity and the school will inform parents via the text messaging service in addition to publicising through the Derbyshire County Council website and on local radio. If you are in any doubt as to whether the school will be open or closed then please check the latest information on the Derbyshire County Council website or alternatively ring the school office.
- There will be five days during the school year when the school will be closed for staff-in-service training. These dates will be relayed to you at the earliest opportunity after the dates have been finalised.
- Any decision to close the school building by the Head Teacher or other authorised person will not have a detrimental effect on any child's attendance record.

16. Procedures for when a pupil is absent

- Morning school starts at 8.50 am (Juniors) 8.55 am (Infants) and afternoon school starts at 1.15 pm. When a child is absent, parents should notify school as soon as possible and no later than 9.30, giving the reason. This is important so the school can determine in the register whether it is an authorised or unauthorised absence.
- Where there is no explanation for an absence, school will ring the contact numbers provided by the parent. This is to ensure the child is safe. If this cannot be ascertained, school may report the absence to Social Care or Educational Welfare as the child is missing from education.

17. How does the school promote high attendance and tackle low attendance?

- Schools are required to interpret attendance data for individuals and groups and make judgments about what constitutes good and poor attendance. At Northfield we use the DfE criteria to make these judgments as a basis for action in order to be proactive in supporting and encouraging good attendance.
- School follows the MAT procedures for addressing low attendance
- At the end of Term 2, Term 4, and Term 6 an Attendance letter and Report is given to every parent which allows parents to see how well their child is attending against standardised criteria. This letter also highlights the importance of attendance and the negative effects over time of poor attendance.
- In cases where attendance is low (below 94%) school will monitor attendance over the next term and offer support to improve attendance.
- Where attendance is below 90% this is considered to be "persistent absence", In this case school will invite parents for a meeting to investigate ways of improving attendance or refer to the MAT Attendance Panel.

- Sometimes parents of a pupil with considerable authorised absence for medical reasons will be issued with a letter requiring medical proof of illness and if this is not provided the absence will be marked as unauthorised. Issues over late attendance are also reported to parents and monitored in the same way with support offered where possible.
- School also celebrates high attendance with class and individual attendance awards.

18. Monitoring of the Policy

- The Head and appropriate Governor(s) will regularly monitor this policy to reflect current practice and statutory requirements and staff and parents will be notified of any updates.

N White (Headteacher)