

Gonerby Hill Foot Church of England Primary School

Attendance Policy



Let all that you do be done in love.

1Corinthians 16:14

Attendance Policy

To be reviewed: Dec 25

Policy reviewed: Dec 24

GHF School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a School we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

This policy reflects the DfE regulations which came into force in August 2024 which state:

‘Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.’

GHF School would interpret “exceptional” as being a one-off, unique situation. In this context it would be of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, outweighing the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another but requests for authorised absence will be refused unless the circumstances are exceptional.

It is the policy of our School to celebrate achievement and attendance. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our School will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all our pupils.

Our School will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning.

Attendance percentages can be misleading.

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	EXCELLENT
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	SATISFACTORY
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	POOR
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	UNACCEPTABLE
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	UNACCEPTABLE
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	UNACCEPTABLE

For some parents 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means that your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that's nearly four school weeks.

1. AIM

1. The staff and governors of Gonerby Hill Foot Primary School regard good attendance and punctuality as high priority. We are committed to a whole school approach to attendance and punctuality. Our aim is to ensure our school works in partnership with parents, our local community, and the Local Authority to support and promote good attendance and punctuality.

In order to achieve these aims the school will:

- Offer a safe and supportive environment, which welcomes children regardless of race, gender or ability.
- To encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils
- Establish clear and effective procedures for administration.

- Foster a climate where the school community, teachers, parents/carers, governors and pupils value attendance and punctuality.
- Comply with legal requirements.
- Ensure any child presenting poor levels of attendance and punctuality are noted, monitored and appropriate action taken.
- Have systems in place praising regular attendance and punctuality and ensure there is a consistent approach.
- Keep parents/carers informed about their child's attendance through established procedures.
- Support governors in taking an active role in promoting good attendance and governance.
- Work in partnerships with parents/carers, the Education Welfare Service, Social Care and other outside agencies.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.

WHY ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT

- **Learning:** Learning at our school is inclusive, interactive and sequential, requiring the participation of the pupils with the teacher and peers during learning time. This is adversely affected when a pupil is absent or habitually late – not only for that pupil, but for the dynamics of the entire class. This is both during their absence as well as upon their return, when time is taken to reintegrate them into the learning context of the class. Additionally, catch up tasks can help make up lost work, but cannot replicate the discussions led by the teacher and/or children, questions raised by other pupils or the activities conducted in class.
- **Safeguarding:** Children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for every pupil encompasses: Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying. Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.
- **The Law relating to attendance:** Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:(a) to age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'
- **The Law relating to safeguarding:** Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

2. EXPECTATIONS:

We expect pupils to:

- Attend school regularly and on time.
- Be appropriately prepared for the day.
- Inform a member of staff of anything that may hinder them from attending school.

We expect parents/carers to:

- Ensure their children attend school, every day, on time.
- Contact the school as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend.
- Arrange holidays and medical appointments outside school hours.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework.
- To regularly update emergency contact details.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep them away from school.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Immediate action on any problem notified to us.
- Recognition for good attendance and a quality of education.

3. ABSENCES

A leave of absence during term time will only be granted where an application is made in advance to the school and the Headteacher considers that the leave of absence should be granted due to **exceptional circumstances** relating to that application. Exceptional circumstances will be judged by the Headteacher on a case by case basis; however, affordability of holidays and availability of parental leave are extremely unlikely to qualify as exceptional circumstances. While the final decision rests with the Headteacher, the following are examples of likely authorised/unauthorised absence.

Authorised Absence

The following could potentially qualify as exceptional circumstances:

- Sickness
- Medical or Dental appointments which cannot be arranged outside of school hours. Parents/Carers should try to arrange these appointments for out of school hours and will be asked for evidence of appointments.
- Compassionate leave for bereavement, serious illness, or funerals.
- Fixed term, or permanent exclusion.
- Contact with parents/carers immediately before, or after a long military deployment.
- A parent is getting married.

When making a decision, the Headteacher will take into consideration the following factors:

Is the type of absence from school rare for this pupil?

Is the absence short?

Is the absence unavoidable?

Is the usual level of attendance high i.e. above 95%?

Unauthorised Absence

The following are likely to be recorded as unauthorised absence:

- Truancy – a pupil is away from school without authority from the headteacher. This includes parentally condoned absences.
- Late after registration is closed (unless a legitimate reason or evidence for the absence is provided).
- Any absence which has not been informed to the school.
- Staying at home to look after siblings or sick relatives.
- Time off to see relatives, birthdays, etc.
- Issues with travel, for example, the car didn't start.
- Tiredness after a late night previously.

Term Time Holidays

The law gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Parents should consider the disruptive impact of absences on the entire class when planning family holidays. Any application for term time holidays must only be in exceptional circumstances and, where possible be accompanied with evidence demonstrating these circumstances. The Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of authorised absence. Affordability of holidays and the ability of parents to take leave are not, in themselves, regarded as exceptional circumstances.

They would need to be accompanied by additional exceptional circumstances. Where term time holidays are requested without exceptional circumstances, the school will issue a letter formally warning parents/carers that they may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice if they proceed with their plans. If parents take children out of school for term time holidays without notifying the school prior to this, a Fixed Penalty Notice will also be issued. Absence fines are charged to parents at £80.00 per parent, per pupil or £120 if not paid within 21 days. From the Autumn term, only two fines can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3 year rolling period. Any second notice will automatically be charged at £160.

National Fine Thresholds

From September 2024, schools will consider a fine if a pupil misses 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The threshold can be met with "any combination of unauthorised absence". For example, four sessions in term time plus six instances of arriving late.

The period of 10 weeks can also span "different terms or school years".

But councils "retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met". This could include where parents "are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events".

4. INFORMATION

This identifies the information held by the school and will be considered when dealing with attendance and punctuality issues:

- Start and finishing times of registration: our doors open at 8.40am and registration closes in our classrooms at 8:55am. A child arriving between 8:55-9:15am will be marked as “late before the registers close”. A child arriving after 9:15am will be marked as ‘late after the register has closed’.
- The importance of punctuality and the response to lateness. If a child arrives at school after 8:50am, they will have to enter school through the main office and a record will be kept.
- If a child is absent, parents must phone the school office on 01476 565800 or email on absences@gonerbyhillfoot.lincs.sch.uk by 9:15am on that day. If they phone before school hours, they can leave a message on the answerphone or send an email. The message must include the reason for absence. If a child is absent from school and parents have not phoned the office, the school office will phone home. If the first contact does not answer, the next contact on the list will be contacted.
- In line with Health Protection Agency guidelines, a period of 48 hours absence is required for any pupil with vomiting or diarrhoea. Such absence due to illness is authorised.
- There should be daily contact between parents and school when a child is absent unless it is a illness that is guaranteed for 48 hours, for example, sickness/diarrhoea.
- If a parent wants to request an absence due to an exceptional circumstance for their child, they must contact the office and fill out a form detailing the reason. This will then be decided by the Headteacher whether it is authorised or unauthorised.
- Routine dental and doctor appointments must be made out of school hours but hospital and an emergency doctor appointment will be authorised. You will be requested to provide evidence of these appointments.
- Children should not leave school early unless they have an emergency appointment or there is an exceptional circumstance. You will be requested to provide evidence of these appointments.
- Referral routes with roles and responsibilities for pupils with emerging attendance problems. Parents of pupils with attendance below 95% will be monitored and/or contacted. This is on an individual case basis dependent on the circumstances, for example, a child may have had an operation and need to have 2 weeks absence.
- The inclusion of attendance information in school documentation, e.g. the website, reports, newsletters, home-school agreements.
- Annual reports to parents include a record of their child’s attendance.
- The Headteacher’s termly report to Governors records the attendance figures for the academic year to date.
- If a parent has concerns about their child’s attendance or would like to discuss any matters further, they should contact the school office to make an appointment to see the Headteacher or the Attendance Champion (Sarah Garland).

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It is important to set realistic targets; these targets may be set in consultation with the Local Authority or with the Governing Body. The school will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

Headteacher:

- To oversee the whole policy.
- To oversee the operation of the attendance system and the collation of attendance data

- To oversee the work of administrative staff
- To report to governors.
-

Attendance Champion

- To liaise with members of teaching staff.
- Support operation of the attendance system and the collation of attendance data.
- To liaise with EWO.
- To monitor absence across school and meet with parents at the letter 2 stage.
- Meet with LA to discuss issues and trends as well as recognising success.

Class Teachers

- To complete registers accurately and on time.
- To inform the headteacher and/or attendance champion of concerns.

Admin staff

- From 9:15am, follow-up any unexplained non-attendance by contacting parents.
- To record all reasons for absence in the register.

Governors:

- Appoint a Governor to lead on attendance issues.
- Meet with attendance champion once a year to discuss any issues and monitor the effectiveness of the systems in place.

Parents:

- Contact with school on first day of absence or as soon as possible.
- Absence notes if longer than initially indicated.
- Provide school with evidence of any medical appointments.
- Support for general attendance.

School Target

Our school target for attendance is set at 98%

Persistent Absence Definition

Attendance below 90% is defined by the DFE as persistent absence. However, pupils are now classed as persistently absent based upon their individual absence level rather than a comparison to a national threshold. The calculation for persistent absence is represented as:

$$\frac{\text{A pupil's individual overall absence}}{\text{A pupil's individual possible sessions}} \times 100 \geq 10.0$$

The DfE guidance explains that if a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, he/she will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Definition Of "Parent"

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines "parent" to include:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not; and
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

When evaluating success, the school will consider whether:

- Patterns and trends in the school's attendance and pupils' punctuality are improved
- Parental response to absence has improved
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance by celebrating good attendance within the school, governing body and the local community
- Pupils and parents are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and aware of the attendance procedures operating within school
- Parents and Governors are made aware of the current law on attendance
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies or PSHE lessons.

Monitoring process:

- Attendance is monitored daily. A report is sent to the HT and Attendance Champion (Sarah Garland – Assistant Headteacher) each day to monitor individual children.
- Parents will be routinely contacted if attendance falls below 90% in Autumn term and below 95% from Spring term onwards.
- Every half term, the Attendance Champion monitors all children's attendance across school and children who are less than 95% are monitored and may be contacted via a letter (Letter 1 - see appendix). This is continually monitored every half term and each child is looked at individually. This can depend on the term: in the Autumn term, a letter will only be sent if attendance is below 90% as this will have only been one bout of illness unless there has been an unauthorised holiday. From the Spring term, anyone with less than 95% may be contacted. Again, each case is looked at on an individual basis.
- If the attendance does not improve, a second letter is sent (Letter 2 - see appendix) inviting the parents to meet with the Attendance Champion to discuss any issues and putting actions in place e.g. referred to Early Help, complete an EBSA referral.
- For pupils that further drop below 95%, parents will be requested to meet with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to attend a SAP (School Attendance Panel). This is a more formal meeting and actions are agreed from it. (Letter 3 – see appendix).
- If attendance continues to fall and is below 95%, a formal letter will be sent (Letter 4 – see appendix) explaining to the parent that it needs to improve or a fine could be issued.
- Finally, legal proceedings will begin (letter 5) if a child's attendance is below 95% and is continually dropping.
- The policy cycle including letter and meetings, does not restart each year. Previous years' attendance will be taken into consideration when following the next step.
- A 'well done' letter is sent to all children who have attended school 100% at the end of each main term (3 times per year).

- A 'well done' letter (nearly 100% attendance) is sent to all children who have attended school at least 99% at the end of the year.
- A 'well done' letter is sent to all children who have attended school 100% of the time at the end of the year.

Children on part-time timetables

In some circumstances, a reduced timetable may be suitable for individual pupils. These are implemented after discussion and agreement with home and school. All reduced timetables are submitted to Lincolnshire County Council with a review date of 4 weeks. These children are monitored separately and their attendance is tracked pro rata.

Good Practice

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- Regularly analysing attendance data
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- Reporting missing children and changes in roll to the LA
- Rewarding and celebrating good and improving attendance through individual letters saying well done and parental conversations.

It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of the whole School.

Any unauthorised absence is damaging to a child's education as well as reflecting badly on the school. It also gives children the wrong messages about the importance of education which may lead to problems later in schooling. Good attendance and punctuality are important values for later in life.

This policy has been created from the guidance set:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Gonerby Hill Foot Church of England Primary School

APPLICATION BY PARENT/CARER FOR CHILD'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME

If you consider you have to take a holiday in term time, and that you have exceptional circumstances, please complete this form and return to the school at least 10 days before the date you wish to remove your child from school.

Pupil Name Class

Home Address

First day of absence Date of return to school

Total number of days missed

Reasons for absence (please make it very clear why there are exceptional circumstances)

.....
.....
.....
.....

I understand that if the absence request is unauthorised the Lincolnshire Education and Welfare Service will be notified if the holiday is taken and a Penalty Notice may be issued. I understand that a Penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school and that this is a fine of £60.

Name of Parent/Carer making application

Signed Dated

(Please ensure you are giving at least 10 days' notice of the proposed absence)

✂-----

Pupil Name Class

AUTHORISED: Your request has been authorised for the following dates:

___ / ___ / ___ to ___ / ___ / ___

UNAUTHORISED: Your request for a leave of absence during term time has not been authorised because:

Headteacher signature

Letter 1

DATE

To the Parents of

Dear Parents

Annual Attendance Letter

Following a review of the school attendance data, I am writing to you because since September your child's attendance has been less than 95%.

I realise that there may be a good reason for **NAME's** absence and you may have already told us about it. However, it is vital that all pupils' attendance at our school should be at least 95%. This is important because **NAME's** progress can be seriously affected and it is your legal responsibility to make sure that **HE/SHE** is in school.

I would like to thank you in anticipation of your co-operation in this matter and if you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Garland

Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Champion

Letter 2

DATE

To the Parents of

Dear Parents

Second Attendance Letter

Following a further review of the school attendance data, I am writing to you because since September your child's attendance is now at and has not improved since my last letter.

I realise that there may be a good reason for absence and you may have already told us about it. However, it is vital that all pupils' attendance at our school should be at least 95%. This is important because progress can be seriously affected and it is your legal responsibility to make sure that they are in school.

I would like to meet with you to discuss this further. Please can you come into school on

If this time and date is not convenient, contact the school office to rearrange a more convenient time to come in or a telephone call.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Garland

Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Champion

Letter 3

DATE

Dear Parents of

Third Attendance Monitoring Letter

Following a further review of the school attendance data, I am writing to you because since September your child's attendance has now dropped below 90% and has not improved since we met.

As we have already met and discussed any issues, put actions in place and your child's attendance has still not improved, further action is required. I would like you to meet with our Headteacher and Chair of Governors for a School Attendance Panel to discuss actions moving forward.

Please can you come into school on ???.

If this time and date is not convenient, contact the school office to rearrange a more convenient time to come in or a telephone call.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Garland

Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Champion

Letter 4

FORMAL WARNING (Persistent Absence)

Ref:

Date

Dear

IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL: FORMAL WARNING

NAME OF YOUNG PERSON:

DATE OF BIRTH:

REGISTERED PUPIL AT:

I need to draw your attention to the fact that parents have a duty in law to ensure their child attends school regularly, unless they are unable to do so by reason of ill-health or other legally acceptable reason.

During the period , was absent from school on out of a possible half-day sessions and no valid reasons have been provided. This is an unacceptable rate of attendance and I attach for your information, a copy of the Pupil Absence Record Sheet.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure their child receives suitable efficient full time education either by regular attendance at school or education otherwise. Section 444 (1)(a) of the same Act states that where a parent of a child who knowingly and without reasonable justification fails to ensure regular attendance of a registered pupil at that school, the parent of the child shall be guilty of an offence against that Section. The Local Education Authority may, where necessary, institute legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under this section of the Education Act 1996 against those parents concerned. Alternatively Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Education Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of either £60.00 or £120.00.

Please contact the school to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jayne Watson

Headteacher

FINAL WARNING (Persistent Absence)

Ref:

Date

Dear

IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL: FINAL WARNING TO PARENTS

NAME OF YOUNG PERSON:

DATE OF BIRTH:

REGISTERED PUPIL AT:

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly thereat, the parent of the child shall be guilty of an offence against that Section.

TAKE NOTICE that the Local Education Authority considers that you have been guilty of a breach of the law in that you have failed, despite this matter having been previously brought to your attention, to send regularly and punctually to school in accordance with the requirements of the Education Act 1996. In view of this you have made yourself liable to be summoned before a Magistrates Court for each alleged offence.

This warning is issued in the hope that there may be no necessity to take further steps to enforce the law. However, you are warned that if you do not cause to attend school regularly, proceedings will be taken against you. You do not have to answer this letter and may well wish to seek the advice of a solicitor.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jayne Watson

Headteacher

Late Letter

DATE

To the Parents of _____

Dear Parents

I am writing because I am concerned that _____ is regularly late for school.

As you know, pupils should be at school for registration at 8:50am so they can get ready to start the day. This helps us to ensure that lessons begin promptly by 9.00 am. It is really important that your child is settled in class from the start so **HE/SHE** does not miss key information that will hinder **HIS/HER** learning for the rest of the lesson. Even being a few minutes late can be disruptive to the class as a whole and distressing to your child. Furthermore, your child can grow up lacking the vitally important social skill of punctuality.

Please also note that children who arrive after the register has closed could be given an 'unauthorised absence' for that session.

I am sure that you will do your best to ensure _____ arrives on time for school but should you have any concerns you would like to discuss with me, please don't hesitate to make an appointment.

Yours Sincerely

Sarah Garland

Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Champion