



# Attendance Policy

September 2017

Approved by the Governing Body Strategy Group 20/09/17

**This Policy is due for renewal in Term 1  
2019–20**

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

## **OF**

### **GODINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

#### **SECTION ONE – INTRODUCTION**

Godinton Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

Ensuring regular and punctual attendance will:

- Give children the best possible start in life
- Help children make the most of educational opportunities
- Instill in children good timekeeping habits
- Prepare children for the world of work

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

#### **SECTION TWO – PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

2.1 Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should update the school daily on any subsequent day of absence and inform the school when their child is returning. The school has a designated telephone line on which parents can leave a message to report a child's absence.

2.2 Pupils are expected to arrive by 9.00 am. All pupils that arrive late must report to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded. Where parents have brought their child to school, parents should accompany their child to the office.

2.3 On a child's return to school, the parent must provide a written explanation for the

absence. An absence will only be authorised if a legitimate and acceptable reason has been provided by the parent / carer. If no explanation is received, the school will telephone to request a reason for a child's absence from school. If the parent does not respond, a second call will be sent out. If still no response is provided, then the child's absence is marked as unauthorised.

However, the school is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation as a reason for granting an authorised absence; a letter from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. The school's Admissions and Attendance Administrator will review the given reason for a child's absence and if they feel the absence may warrant being unauthorised; they will refer it to the Headteacher for consideration.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

If the Headteacher decides that an absence is not authorised, the parents will be notified in writing.

Parents must inform the school of medical or dental appointments made for their child and show any letters or appointment cards. Full day absence for a medical appointment is usually unnecessary and parents should try and make appointments out of school hours. If an appointment has to be made during the day, the child should attend school during the morning and be collected in time to go to the appointment. They then must return to school after their appointment if fit to do so.

### **SECTION THREE – THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL STAFF**

At Godinton Primary School, there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

Mrs Gemma Smith (Admissions and Attendance Administrator) has overall responsibility for

monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers complete an online register at the beginning of each morning and at the start of the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher or Admissions and Attendance Administrator notifies the Headteacher of children whose attendance is causing concern. The Family Liaison Officer may also be informed.

It is the responsibility of the Admissions and Attendance Administrator to ensure that:

- Electronic registers have been reviewed daily
- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call. It is parents' responsibility to ensure that contact information is up to date and that the school is notified of any changes. If contact cannot be made with a parent, they will if possible leave a telephone message to explain that the child has not been registered as being present at school and ask the parent to confirm that the child is safe.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed three times a year of the child's attendance figure. This is sent out on school reports. Parents may request attendance information about their child at any time.

Attendance meetings are held each term with the Headteacher and Admissions and Attendance Administrator.

## **SECTION FOUR – MANAGING POOR ATTENDANCE**

### **4.1 Low Levels of Attendance**

- 95 - 100% attendance – the class teacher investigates and notifies the Headteacher or Family Liaison Officer of concerns. Parent's may be contacted if appropriate by a member of staff.
- 90 - 95% attendance – school intervention letters/meeting with parents are actioned
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate,

the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.

- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

#### **4.2 Children Missing Education**

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

#### **4.3 Lateness**

At Godinton Primary School the register is taken at 9.00 am and then 12.40 for Lower School, 1.00 for Middle School and 1.30 for Upper School in the afternoon. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.30 am and 12.50, 1.10 and 1.40 pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

#### **4.4 Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness**

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)

- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

#### 4.5 Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will **not** be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some very rare exceptions)

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. **Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised (with some very rare exceptions – see exceptional circumstances below).**

Examples of exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from

school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

**Local Authority Action may include:-**

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

#### **4.6 Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance**

4.6.1 Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

4.6.2 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are guilty of an offence of

failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

4.6.3 Holidays will not be authorised.

For unauthorised family holidays (code “G”). Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council’s Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017. A Penalty Notice will be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.

4.6.4 The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

4.6.5 If an absence is not authorised and is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

## **SECTION FIVE – SUPPORT WITH ATTENDANCE**

The Family liaison Officer works closely with the school’s Admissions and Attendance Administrator and regularly monitors attendance.

They check how many children have attended school and how many children have been absent or late and will contact parents if issues are noticed. Our FLO may visit parents in their homes or arrange meetings in school to support parents with attendance issues.

The Flo can accompany parents to court where where each parent/carer may be fined. A parent/carer may go to prison if he/she lets a child miss school often.

## **SECTION SIX – EQUAL OPORTUNTIES AND RACIAL EQAULTY (Refer also to these specific policies)**

All school policies have an explicit aim of promoting race equality and will be reviewed in



terms of their contribution and effectiveness in achieving this aim.

## **SECTION SEVEN – CHILDREN IN CARE**

As for all our pupils, Godinton Primary School is committed to helping every Child in Care achieve the highest standards they can. Staff are aware that Children in Care can be at risk of underachieving at school because they have experienced disruption to their family life and education. Some may have low expectations, poor emotional and psychological health and a lack of family support. Godinton Primary School will support Children in Care with their attendance.

## **SECTION EIGHT – MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Headteacher and the policy is reviewed by staff and the Strategy Group of the Governing Body. The policy is reviewed every two years.