



Attendance Policy

June 2023

Approved by the Governing Body Strategy Group 29/06/23

**This Policy is due for renewal in Term 6
2024–25**

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.

This policy has been reviewed in line with the DfE document ‘Working Together to Improve School Attendance’ 2022.

SECTION TWO – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL

2.1 The Role of School Staff

All staff at Godinton Primary have the responsibility of supporting our children’s positive attendance at school and ensuring that this continues to improve.

Jill Talbot, Headteacher, is the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school

Gemma Smith (Admissions and Attendance Administrator) has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues and for the day to day management of attendance, including maintenance of the school registers.

Both Miss Talbot and Mrs Smith can be contacted via the following means:

Email: office@godinton.kent.sch.uk or headteacher@godinton.kent.sch.uk

Telephone: 01233 621616

If parents have a query about their child's attendance, such as requesting an absence report or an administrative issue they should contact Mrs Smith in the school office.

Any requests for holiday absence or other extended periods of absence should be directed to the Headteacher

If support is required in managing a child's attendance, parents should contact their child's teacher, our Family Liaison Officer (Jacqui McGibney) or the Headteacher.

2.2 Responsibilities of Godinton Primary School Staff

2.2.1 For all pupils at Godinton Primary, our staff will:

- Implement a clear school attendance policy, available on the school website, which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance (Miss Talbot – Headteacher).

2.2.2 For children at risk of becoming persistently absent, Godinton Primary School staff will:

- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance.
- If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service.
- Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

2.2.3 For Persistently absent pupils, Godinton Primary School staff will:

- Provide continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

and:

- Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.
- Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

2.2.4 For severely absent pupils, Godinton Primary School will:

- Provide continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.

2.2.5 Godinton Primary School staff will provide support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers by:

- Proactively using data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.
- Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.

2.2.6 Godinton Primary School staff will provide support for pupils with medical conditions (including mental health) or SEND with poor attendance by:

- Maintaining the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.
- Implementing pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan. If applicable, the school will ensure that the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed. This may require the involvement of the SENCo or FLO.
- Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.
- Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at Governing Body meetings and with the Local Authority.

2.2.7 Godinton Primary School staff will provide support for pupils with a social worker by:

- Informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.

2.3 Responsibilities of the Governing Body

For all pupils at Godinton Primary School, the Governing Body will:

- Take an active role in attendance improvement, supporting their school to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.
- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

The lead Governors for attendance are Amanda Stevenson and Alex Prickett.

2.4 Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

Parents and Carers of all children must:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.

2.5 Responsibilities of the Local Authority

Our Local Authority (LA), Kent County Council (KCC), are committed to ensuring the good attendance of all children within the county. Godinton Primary School works pro-actively with the LA to ensure positive attendance outcomes for our children.

2.5.1 For all pupils, the LA will:

- Implement a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.
- Have a School Attendance Support Team (PIAS) that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.

- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

2.5.2 For children at risk of becoming persistently absent, the LA will:

- Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.
- Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance.
- If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate. Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a Local Authority service is best placed to lead.
- Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

2.5.3 For children who are persistently absent, the LA will:

- Provide continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

and:

- Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).

2.5.4 For children who are severely absent, the LA will:

- Provide continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:
- Ensure that all services make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision.
- Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans.

2.5.5. The LA will provide support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers by:

- Tracking local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.

2.5.6 The LA will provide support for pupils with medical conditions (including mental health) or SEND with poor attendance by:

- Working closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families.
- Ensuring suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.

2.5.7 The LA will provide support for pupils with a social worker (VSK – Virtual School Kent) by:

- Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area.
- Putting in place personal education plans for looked-after children.
- Securing regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.

SECTION THREE – DAY TO DAY PROCESSES FOR MANAGING ATTENDANCE

3.1 Start times and finish times.

From 1st September 2023, all children are expected to arrive at school by 8.50 a.m. Any children that arrive late must report to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded on the Entrysign system. Where parents have brought their child to school, parents should accompany their child to the office.

Afternoon registers are taken at the following times:

Lower School (EYFS and Year 1) – 12.40 p.m.

Middle School (Years 2 and 3) – 1.00 p.m.

Upper School (Years 4 to 6) – 1.30 p.m.

From 1st September, the school day finishes at 3.20 p.m. EYFS (Reception) children finish at 3.10 p.m.

3.2 Class Registers

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 under (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils

present, absent or late. Attendance in the morning and afternoon equates to two sessions per day.

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
- The appropriate attendance codes are entered into the register (National Attendance Codes are used – see Appendix 1)

3.3 Notifying the School about a Child's Absence

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 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.

Any exceptional request for leave of absence, should be directed to the Headteacher.

3.4 Following Up Absences

- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by telephone. 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. The school office will be persistent in calling parents until contact has been made and a reason for the absence ascertained.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence. External agencies may be alerted or a home visit carried out if the school is unable to make contact with a parent whose child is absent.

- On a child's return to school, the parent must provide a written or verbal explanation for the absence, if this has not already been provided. 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. A ParentMail request for the parent to contact the school will also be made. If still no response is provided, then the child's absence is marked as unauthorised.
- The school is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation as a reason for granting an authorised absence; a letter or call 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 school may ask for evidence to support the reason for an absence.
- 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.

3.5 Medical Appointments

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.

3.6 Attendance Information for Parents

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.

The school has an attendance information page for parents on the school website.

SECTION FOUR – MANAGING POOR ATTENDANCE

4.1 Addressing Low Levels of Attendance

The responsibilities of the school in addressing low attendance, including those children with persistent or severe absenteeism, is outlined in section 2.

The National definitions of attendance are used at Godinton Primary School:

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school sessions.

Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school sessions.

- 95 – 100% attendance – the class teacher investigates and notifies the Headteacher or Family Liaison Officer of concerns. Parents may be contacted, if appropriate, by a member of staff.
- 90 – 95% attendance – school intervention letters/meeting with parents are actioned
- Where absence is greater than 10%, the school will action strategies as outlined in section 2.
- 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 our appointed School Liaison Officer (SLO) for advice. Concerns may also be raised at termly meetings with the SLO.
- 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, from September 2023, the register is taken at 8.50 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 the school office 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 9.20 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 June 2020, when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions (50 school days) 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. 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 a 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 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 June 2020.

- 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 – ATTENDANCE MONITORING AND DATA ANALYSIS

The Admissions and Attendance Administrator regularly monitors attendance and provides termly reports to the Headteacher on individual attendance, class attendance figures and persistent absenteeism. Reporting and analysis takes place on the attendance of vulnerable groups such as children with SEND, EAL, CiC or those in receipt of pupil premium.

School data is compared with national data, through the DfE’s attendance data collection service.

Data (not at individual pupil level) is shared with the Governing Body in each Headteacher report in order for Governors to understand the school’s position regarding attendance.

Data may be shared with class teachers, the Assistant Headteachers or the FLO to aid conversations with parents regarding attendance. Class attendance data is provided for class teachers, three times a year as standard.

SECTION SIX – SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE

The Headteacher and Admissions and Attendance Administrator work closely with the Family Liaison Officer to identify those children who may require further support with their attendance. This may be provided by school based pastoral support or by the involvement of outside agencies as outlined in section 2. 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 each parent/carer may be fined. A parent/carer may go to prison if he/she lets a child miss school too often.

The school may use attendance incentives, such as certificates to promote good attendance.

SECTION SEVEN – TRAINING

Training is provided for staff as required in order to fulfil their role and responsibilities.

Attendance forms part of staff safeguarding induction.

SECTION EIGHT – EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

At Godinton Primary School, we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all members of our school community irrespective of race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy or maternity, marriage and civil partnership or socio-economic background. We are determined to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and ability to participate fully in school life.

We tackle discrimination through the positive promotion of equality by challenging stereotypes and by creating an environment that champions respect for all. At Godinton Primary School, we believe that diversity is a strength that should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit us.

All school policies have an explicit aim of promoting equality and will be reviewed in terms of their contribution and effectiveness in achieving this aim.

Whilst this policy is applied fairly and consistently, the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance will be considered, along with the schools' obligations under the:

- Equality Act 2010: guidance – [GOV.UK](http://gov.uk)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

SECTION NINE– CHILDREN IN CARE As for all our pupils, Godinton Primary School is committed to helping every Child in Care to 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 participation in physical activity.

SECTION TEN – MONITORING AND REVIEW

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Headteacher. This policy is reviewed every two years.

APPENDIX ONE – ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE CODES

Attendance Codes

Code	Definition
/	Present (a.m.)
\	Present (p.m.)
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
D	Dual registered at another school
B	Off-site educational Activity
J	At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience

Absence Codes

Code	Definition
<i>Authorised Absence</i>	
C	Leave of absence granted by the school
H	Leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday granted by the school
E	Excluded but no alternative made
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
M	Medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
<i>Unauthorised Absence</i>	
G	Holiday not granted by the school or in excess of the period determined by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet provided
O	Absent without authorisation
U	Arrived in school after registration closed

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Code	Definition
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole or partial school closure