



## **Goldington Green Academy Attendance Policy**

### **Safeguarding**

Goldington Green Academy recognises it has a statutory duty under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to ensure arrangements are in place for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

We recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and that school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. Our school will endeavour to support these pupils by providing an ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment, providing a sense of being valued.

All staff, governors and volunteers must be made aware of, and adhere to the safeguarding policy and procedures within the school.

At Goldington Green we recognise our legal and ethical duty to keep pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. As such we incorporate the principles of the PREVENT agenda into all practice including the curriculum. Additionally, we ensure that all speakers are carefully vetted by senior staff and that all material available in school, both electronic and otherwise, is suitable. We also ensure that sufficient training is in place so that all staff understand what radicalisation means and why people may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism as a consequence of it. Staff know what measures are available to prevent people from becoming drawn into terrorism and how to challenge the extremist ideology that can be associated with it. Any concerns are dealt with in line with our safeguarding policy working in conjunction with Bedfordshire Police and other agencies as appropriate.

### **Equal Opportunities**

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for staff to discriminate directly or indirectly, or to harass staff or pupils due to any of the nine protected characteristics.

Goldington Green Academy aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential.

Everyone within the school community has a responsibility to ensure that this statement is adhered to. Senior Leaders in particular, should lead by example, identify any inappropriate behaviour when it happens and take prompt action to deal with inappropriate behaviour.

We aim to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevents individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to our school's performance. In removing these barriers, we aim to develop a school culture that positively values diversity.

We are committed wherever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a workforce that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

Every possible step will be taken to ensure that individuals are treated fairly in all aspects of their employment, engagement or whilst volunteering at our school.

## Philosophy

Amendments have been made to the 2006 pupil registration regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013. This requires schools to keep accurate records of attendance and punctuality.

Our school is committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. It is essential that a child attends school regularly and punctually in order to maximise their educational opportunities.

## Aims

1. To monitor levels of attendance and punctuality to ensure that a child's right to education is valued.
2. To ensure good practice in dealing with attendance and absence issues.
3. To reward very good and improved attendance.

## GUIDELINES

### Managing Registration

All registers at Goldington Green Academy are maintained using the SIMS Attendance module. A return is made to the DfE each year.

All registers are completed directly onto SIMS by class teachers.

Registers are marked by the class teacher promptly at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and saved immediately. In line with Government guidelines parents have been advised of the need to contact the school on the first morning of the child's absence. If no such notification is received the school will contact the parent by telephone to ascertain the reason for absence. All contacts may be rung and if no response is achieved a home visit may be conducted.

When a telephone message is received it is recorded and passed to the reception/office staff who record the information. This may be stored in pupil folders in the office.

All children who arrive late for school (after the register has closed) must report to reception. Parents sign in late pupils using the online signing in system at the office giving a reason why the child is late. The register is then amended with a late mark for the pupil concerned.

The following codes are used when completing the registers:

Code	Reason
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (NOT dual registration)
C	Other authorised circumstance
D	Dual registration

E	Excluded
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers close)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers close)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
X	Non compulsory school age absence
Y	Enforced closure
Z	Pupil not yet on roll
#	School closed to pupils

## **The Law, Penalty Notices and Fines**

Parents of a child of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16 years) are legally bound to ensure regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is registered.

The Government, under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 has empowered Local Authorities (LA) to issue parents with Penalty Notices to tackle poor attendance. From 01/11/04, parents of children who have had unauthorised absences of 5 days or more during the previous 12 weeks and who have not cooperated with the Education Welfare Service, may be issued with a Penalty Notice. This includes unauthorised holidays during term time and children picked up on truancy patrols. The fine attached to a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 21-28 days. This is per parent per child.

## **Monitoring Attendance**

We aim to identify potential problems at an early stage.

The information contained on registration forms is transferred to the computer system weekly.

We ask parents to contact school on the first day of a child's absence to let us know why the child is not in school. If parents do not contact us we will attempt contact the parents that day, by text or by phone call.

Mrs Hotchkiss, Administrative /Finance Assistant makes first day contact and attempts to contact all families who have not informed us as to why their child is absent. She continues to do this until she makes contact. If this does not occur a home visit may be made. The Inclusion Team support this. Mrs Waller, Family Support Worker, supports families in overcoming barriers to attendance, and sign posts families to support.

Mrs Jackson as Inclusion Nursery Nurse and Mrs Stapley and Mrs Atwal (Inclusion Team) support pupils in overcoming issues and encouraging attendance.

Where a child has been absent and no explanation received parents are contacted by letter and asked to complete and return a reply slip giving reasons for the absence.

Where an absence remains unexplained a reminder letter is generated and forwarded to the parent or the reception staff contact the parent by telephone. If the absence is still not explained it becomes unauthorised.

Parents are asked to provide a medical certificate from the doctor for when a child has been off school due to illness for over 5 days.

A weekly report of attendance by class is generated and used to produce an attendance display to reward good attendance. The class with the highest weekly attendance is announced in assembly on a Friday morning and allowed to come to school wearing non-school uniform on the following Friday.

A weekly report of pupils with less than 96% attendance is generated. This report triggers meetings, letters or phone calls to parents from the Deputy Headteacher or Family Support Worker. Graduated letters of concern, stressing the importance of regular attendance are sent by SLT leaders if attendance drops below certain levels:

- Letter 1, Below 96% - an alert letter
- Letter 2, Below 92% attendance letter – attendance being monitored with the expectation of improved attendance over the next 3 weeks, and a request for a meeting with the Family worker
- Letter 3, Below 90% warning of monitoring, possible Education Welfare Office (EWO) referral
- Letter 4, Continued below 90% and a request to meet the EWO. Targets will be set and monitored. No further improvement will lead to a live referral, with possible home visits, fines and court proceedings.

The Education Welfare Officer requests a register check electronically once a term which they then return with actions. The Family worker follows these up and arranges meetings. If the child meets the criteria for a referral to EWO this will be done and the EWO will follow their procedures. An EHA is offered to all families whose child is referred. This is completed by Family Worker.

Families identified as needing extra support with attendance issues, are triaged during supervision once a week with Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Inclusion Nursery Nurse and Family Worker. Support is then put in place.

The school newsletter informs parents of our annual attendance target and termly attendance figures. A letter from the Bedford Learning Community behaviour improvement coordinator indicating the effect of low attendance on performance is sent out to parents annually.

## **Lateness**

Lateness is monitored by the Family Support Worker via the late file and the registers. Parents are reminded of the importance of punctuality via school newsletters. Where appropriate, lateness to school letters reminding parents of the need for punctuality are sent. Regular late patrols are organised with the Education Welfare Officer. Any continuing concerns relating to individual pupils arriving late for school will be referred to the education Welfare Officer.

## Holidays in Term-Time

In line with new legislation that came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> **September 2013, holidays in term time will not be authorized** unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Government is insisting that schools across England and Wales take a much firmer stand against parents who remove their children from school to take a holiday during term time. Government ministers wish also to dispel the myth that children have an entitlement to time away from school for such reasons and that parents or indeed Head teachers can authorise such an absence. **The new law states that:** “as of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 Head teachers cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time.” From **September 2014** either school or the local authority are obliged to issue a fixed penalty notice.

## Exceptional Circumstances

The decision to authorise absence is at the head teacher’s discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Heads will rightly prioritise attendance. Absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Goldington Green Academy has agreed the following examples of such exceptional circumstances as a guide when considering leave of absence requests.

Before deciding whether to authorise leave of absence the Headteacher will consider

- the impact for the student’s academic progress of any absence
- The pupils attendance over the academic year
- Whether it falls within any key stage national tests;

## Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – the Headteacher will use discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence- up to a

maximum of 3 days.

- Serious illness of a close relative – only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
- Teenage parents responsible for the care of their own child – at the Headteacher's discretion.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement.
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs".
- This would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions. The Headteacher may specify that only one day will be authorised at a time (most of the families who request leave on religious grounds are Muslim and the request is for the two Eids).
- Weddings of parents and siblings – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave will only be authorised for this purpose when the Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use her discretion in granting leave, for example where natural parents are separated, and in new relationships and it may cause a child further difficulties if he/she is excluded from a wedding. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.
- School will take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.

#### **Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional**

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Pilgrimages by parents (eg. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). They are not regarded as exceptional as children themselves do not perform Hajj, but tend to travel with their parents when they go.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.

**It is important to note that the head teacher can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.**

**Unless exceptional circumstances are granted, any holidays of 5 days or above will be referred a Fixed Penalty Notice.**

## **Other Circumstances**

Where a child's absence from school does not fall within the normal categories, these will be dealt with on an individual basis, for example, bereavement or persistent health difficulties. Parents should be reminded that authorisation for absence is not automatic.

## **Truancy**

This is not a problem at this school. However, all staff and governors need to be vigilant to ensure that all children remain on the premises and are not avoiding lessons.

## **School Refusal**

This is usually an indication of some deeper problem in the child's personal or family life as well as major emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties. In such cases support from the EWO and other agencies would be sought.

## **Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents. All parents receive information about attendance in their child's annual report. The school produces an attendance leaflet telling them about our attendance policy and our whole school attendance targets. Class and year group attendance figures are displayed in school.

Very good and improved attendance is rewarded with stickers and certificates termly and with prizes in the Spring and Summer term.

School displays reward classes for good attendance.

## **Guidelines for Parents**

The school has a duty to make children's time at school interesting and worthwhile. Parents have a duty to ensure that their children attend regularly – every day. Receiving a good full time education is the best possible start in life for a child. Children who miss out on education are at an immediate disadvantage relative to their peers, at great cost to themselves and to the community as a whole. By working together and seeking to keep absence from school to the lowest possible figure we can ensure that as few children as possible experience such difficulties. Taking such a task seriously is in everyone's interest. Remember:

- Attend school every day
- Arrive on time
- Make first day contact
- Avoid holidays in term time.

COVID update: A COVID ammendment is in place which is updated regularly to reflect current government guidance.

This will be reviewed annually by the F&GP.

**Reviewed date: September 2021**

**Next review date: September 2022**

**Date: September 21**

**Staff responsible: Rachel Clay and Jackie Waller**