

# 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 endeavor 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

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

## 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
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
D	Dual registration

E	Suspended
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
I	Illness
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
L	Late (before registers close)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity
Q	Unable to attend school because of lack of LA access arrangements
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
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being provided
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend due to pupil in the criminal justice system (children 10 years plus)
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
Z	Pupil not yet on roll
#	School closed to pupils (school holidays, bank holidays and staff training days)

### **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 19/08/24, parents of children who have had unauthorised absences 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 penalty is £80 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £160 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority regardless of who issued the penalty notice.

## **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, email or by phone call.
- Inclusion Team/Office staff make first day contact and attempts to contact all families who have *not* informed us as to why their child is absent. They continue to do this until contact is made. If this does not occur, a home visit may be made.
- Mrs Waller and Mrs Stapley our Family Support Workers, support families in overcoming barriers to attendance, and sign posts families to support.
- Mrs Jackson as Inclusion Nursery Nurse, supports pupils in overcoming issues and encouraging attendance.
- 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. You may also be asked to provide evidence of medical appointments if many continue over time.
- 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 celebration assembly and pupils are allowed to come to school wearing non-school uniform on the following Friday as a reward.
- Assistant Head Teachers of each year group, monitors the attendance for their year. Any pupil that falls below 96% will be monitored. Any pupil that falls below 92% will trigger a meeting or letters
- The Family support Workers will contact parents via phone calls or email if no reply.
- Graded letters of concern, stressing the importance of regular attendance are sent by Assistant Heads of year if attendance drops:
- Conversation with parent if below 96%. Teachers are to use their discretion regarding reasons for absence.
- Letter A: if below 94%, Attendance letter will be sent by Head of year with attendance being monitored, with the expectation of improved attendance over the next 3 weeks, and a meeting with the Family Support Worker offered.
- Letter B: if below 92% , Second attendance letter from Head of year offering support
- Letter C: if below 89% Action plan meeting arranged between school and parents
- Letter D, no improvement in child's attendance then a referral to EWO will happen. This is when 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 in 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 the Family Support Worker.

- Families identified as needing extra support with attendance issues, are discussed during supervision once a week with Inclusion team. Support is then put in place for each family as needed.
- 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 Attendance / 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 legislation that came into effect from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024, **holidays in term time will not be authorised** 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 penalty for unauthorised leaves of absence are set by the government (and subject to increase in the future):

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be **£80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days**, or **£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days**. This rate is in line with inflation and is the first increase since 2012. *Please note that this also applies to parents who are not residing together.*

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

*This money is retained by the local authority and the school does not receive any part of it - this is not being done to boost school funds just to increase attendance.*

### **Absence under Exceptional Circumstances**

- The decision to authorise absence is at the Headteacher'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 and the pupil's attendance over the academic year.

### **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 considering 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 programs 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 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 difficulty if he/she is excluded from a wedding. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, considering 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 (e.g. 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 Headteacher can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.**

### **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. Discussions with parents and carers will take place.

### **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. Ways to reward attendance are:

- School displays reward classes for good attendance, able to wear own clothes for the day

- House points are awarded for good attendance.
- Certificates and prizes

### **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:**

- It is an expectation that pupils attend school every day if well.
- Arrive on time.
- Make first day contact.
- Avoid holidays in term time.

**Reviewed date: September 2024**

**Next review date: September 2025**