



Attendance Policy

Responsible staff member: Deputy Headteacher (HC)

Governor Lead: Chair of Governors

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School Values: A culture of achievement where all can succeed.

At Guildford Grove, we

- are responsible and respectful members of our diverse community
- are empowered to make safe, informed choices
- have high aspirations and a “can do” attitude to learning

develop and foster our individual abilities and interests.

1. ATTENDANCE AIMS

At Guildford Grove, we are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- ❖ Promoting good attendance
- ❖ Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- ❖ Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ❖ Acting early to address patterns of absence
- ❖ Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- ❖ Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons.

2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the ‘Working Together to Improve School Attendance’ guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on school attendance and parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- ❖ Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- ❖ Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- ❖ Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- ❖ The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- ❖ The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- ❖ This policy also refers to the DfE’s guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Local Governing Body (LGB) is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school’s policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Headteacher & Deputy Headteacher are responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

3.3 In partnership with the Head & Deputy, the Home School Link Worker (HSLW) and key

administration staff are responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Using a systematic and rigorous approach to attendance data analysis
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to the Headteacher and LGB and reporting concerns about attendance to the Headteacher.
- Working with Surrey Attendance Advice Officers to tackle persistent and severe absence

SLT Attendance Lead: Hannah Cover (Deputy Headteacher)

HSLW: Quirien Buchanan

School Administrator: Danielle Hummersone

3.4 Class Teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office (first thing in the morning and after lunch)
- Noticing attendance patterns or trends for children in their class and reporting any concerns to the HSLW
- Providing high-quality teaching and learning and an engaging curriculum to mitigate potential absence

3.5 School administration staff will:

- Take calls from parents and carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Monitor Studybugs for absence messages and ensure that this is transferred to SIMS.
- Reply to Studybugs parent messages
- Use Studybugs alerts to inform group or whole school parentmail messages

3.6 Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school or message via Studybugs to report their child's absence before 8:40 am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 2 emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

4. RECORDING ATTENDANCE

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes which will be used to record absences (authorised and unauthorised).

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive on time each school day:

- Morning register opens at 08:40 and closes at 09:00
- The register for the second session (afternoon) will be taken at 13:15

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 08:40 or earlier by calling the school office or messaging the school via the Studybugs app.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance and asked to come in for a meeting.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. The school requires proof of the appointment such as a text message, appointment card or letter.

Parents/carers can inform the school of appointments by telephoning the school office, emailing info@guildfordgrove.surrey.sch.uk or via Studybugs.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. If a parent/carer is applying for a leave of absence, a request form must be completed in advance of the absence.

Request for leave forms are available from the school office.

Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- before the register has closed, will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- after the register has closed, will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)

The school tracks lateness weekly. We will always engage with families with ongoing lateness or absence to see how we can support them in getting their child to school on time.

4.5 Following-up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning (by 10am) of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts by 10:30, we will make a risk assessment and decide whether we need to visit the child's home. If we visit the child's home and there is no answer, we may call the police for assistance/a welfare check in order to meet our safeguarding duty of care;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not;
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained (this will be no later than 5 working days after the session);
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken, where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will report to parents/carers their child's annual attendance at the end of the school year. If a child's attendance is below 95%, a parent will be informed prior to this, as attendance is of concern.

5. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher (or DHT on their behalf) will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as one off, unavoidable events.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office.

The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for authorised absence may include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Pupils from a traveller community travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- To attend a family wedding or funeral
- A housing crisis which prevents attendance
- Unavoidable transport problems, e.g. broken-down car or cancellation of public transport

5.2 Legal sanctions

There is no longer an entitlement for parents to take children out of school for a leave of absence.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. To request leave, parents should fill in an Application for Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances form and return it to the Deputy Headteacher or Home School Link Worker.

In accordance with the above Regulations, requests for Leave of Absence are treated sympathetically, but *only in exceptional circumstances* can they be approved.

The policy of Surrey County Council to which this school has agreed, states that where a child (over statutory school age) is taken out of school for 5 days or more and 'Leave of Absence' is without the authority of the Headteacher, each parent is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who is absent.

In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they may be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 10 school weeks (1 session is equal to half a day).

The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or the Surrey Attendance Advice Officer will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice.

Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Unauthorised Leave of Absence for 5 or more school days may result in the following;

- 1. If you have not incurred a penalty notice relating to your child/children since 19th August 2024, then each parent/carer will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices are issued per parent/carer per child and will be charged at a rate of £80.00 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160.00 if paid after 21 days but before 28 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.**
- 2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to your child/children since 19th August 2024, a rolling 3-year period will be activated from the first Penalty Notice and the second Penalty Notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00 per parent/carer per child, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.**
- 3. If you have incurred 2 penalty notices relating to your child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first Penalty Notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, per parent/carer per child, in the Magistrates Court under s444 Education Act 1996.**

Pupils may be at risk of losing a school place in cases of unauthorised absence.

6. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

- Making school a happy and safe place to be so children enjoy coming and are therefore eager to attend;
- Ensuring the curriculum is engaging and exciting so that children want to learn;
- Ensuring positive relationships are fostered with all children and families who attend Guildford Grove;
- Reporting attendance for each class regularly in the newsletter;
- Sharing attendance and punctuality for each class during a weekly assembly;
- Ensuring all stakeholders (governors, staff, pupils, parents/carers) understand that 'attendance is everyone's responsibility'
- Reminding/Informing parents/carers of the impact of taking their child out of school.

7. ATTENDANCE MONITORING

The school monitors attendance daily and weekly, analysing reports received via Studybugs and FFT. These reports include: severe absentees, persistent absentees, attendance by group e.g. pupil premium and SEND, attendance by registration group and year group. The school looks for any trends to see if attendance is improving or declining and decides what action needs to be taken.

The school also monitors attendance half termly under the guidance of a Surrey Attendance Advice Officer.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, the local average (e.g. Surrey and South East data) and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and the HSLW to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share attendance and punctuality data with all pupils in a weekly attendance assembly, providing trophies to the winning classes.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school (i.e. when their attendance is below 90%)

Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school (i.e. when their attendance is below 50%)

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence;
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school and Surrey considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school;
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance;
- Only authorise pupil absence if it is backed up by medical evidence.

7.5 Changing education provision

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school, they inform school staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until they are on roll at their new school.

The school requires the following information:

- The date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next school;
- The address of the new school;
- The new home address (if appropriate and known).

If a family are moving to another country, we will still require the information above. If the child is of statutory school age to the country they are moving to, we will contact the new school to check they are on roll and attending.

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Attendance Advice Officer. If a parent removes their child from the roll of the school to home educate, the school will notify the Attendance Advice Officer as soon as we have received written notification from the parent of their intention to home educate.

The Inclusion Officer will then visit the family to ensure parents are aware of their responsibilities and know where to access support.

7.6 Deletions from registers

There is legislation around taking children off roll (Education Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and 2013.

- If a child moves schools during the year, they come off roll on the day they start the new provision.
- If the parent puts in writing that they intend to home educate, the matter should be referred to EHE and a copy of the letter attached. If the case is open to Inclusion a copy of the letter should be provided to the IO. The child can only be taken off roll if the parent specifies in writing that they intend to home educate.
- If the parent advises that they are moving abroad and school have any reason to suppose that this might not be true they should refer the matter to the Surrey Attendance Service to investigate. Otherwise it is good practice to request this advice in writing from the parent so that this letter can be placed on the school file in explanation for taking the child off roll.

7.7 Deletions after continuous absence of not less than 20 school days

When taking children off roll due to twenty days absence and in order to comply with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and the Education Act 1996, guidance states that schools **must** ensure that the following applies:

That the pupil has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and

(i) at no time was the absence during that period authorised

(ii) the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and

(iii) both the school **and** the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is.

If any parts of this are not complied with, the pupil cannot be taken off roll and this may result in the school being vulnerable to legal action and having to put the pupil back on roll.

In the case of a pupil where the parent has requested a leave of absence of over twenty school days, it is important that the school notifies the parent in writing that failure to return within the twenty days could result in the pupil being taken off roll. Once the absence begins, and within the twenty days, even if the school believe that the family are not at home, they must endeavour to make enquiries with the family and are advised to write to the home address stating that if the pupil does not return by a specified date, they will be taken off roll. At the same time, a referral should be made to the Attendance Advice Officer, as representative of the LA, for enquiries to be made.

If the pupil does not return by the specified date and enquiries have been made, the pupil can be taken off roll and the parents should be notified. It is not enough just to warn parents that the pupil may be taken off roll, enquiries must be made by school and the LA.

For further information regarding when children can be taken off school's roll please contact your AAO or the SW Attendance Advice Service on 01483 518187.

8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually, by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code Definition Scenario:

- / Present (am) Pupil is present at morning registration
- \ Present (pm) Pupil is present at afternoon registration
- L Late arrival Pupil arrives late before register has closed
- B Off-site educational activity Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
- D Dual registered Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
- J Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
- K Education provisions arranged by the local authority (e.g. alternative provision or as part of an EHCP)
- P Sporting activity Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
- V Educational trip or visit Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
- W Work experience Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code definition scenario

Authorised absence

- C Authorised leave of absence - Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
- C1 Authorised leave of absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad
- C2 Authorised leave of absence for pupils on part-time timetables
- E Excluded - Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
- H Authorised holiday - Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
- I Illness - School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
- M Medical/dental appointment - Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
- Q Absence due to lack of access or arrangements such as disability access
- R Religious observance - Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
- S Study leave - Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
- T Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence - Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Unauthorised absence

- G Unauthorised holiday - Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
- N Reason not provided - Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
- U Arrival after registration - Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Other code definition scenario

- X Not required to be in school/ Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
- Y Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances is split into seven separate sub-codes:
 - Y1- Absence due to usual transport not being available
 - Y2- Widespread disruption to travel
 - Y3- Absence due to part of the school being closed
 - Y4- Unexpected whole school closure
 - Y5- For pupils in the criminal justice system
 - Y6- Absence due to following public health guidance or laws.
 - Y7- Absences due to any other unavoidable cause
- Z Pupil not on admission register - Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
- # Planned school closure whole or partial school closure due to half term/bank holiday/INSET day