



GOLDFINCH PRIMARY
Building Excellence

ATTENDANCE POLICY

2020/22

Spring 2020

Next Review Date: Spring 2022

Signed: Chair of Local Governing Body

Head Teacher

This policy outlines procedures operating in Goldfinch Primary School to monitor the attendance of pupils. It provides a basis for evidence, should the need arise, for children to be referred to the Education Welfare Service (EWS). It aims to complement the local authority Attendance Policy.

Official **Rationale**

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential components of a child's education. In order to make the most of the learning opportunities provided within school, children need to have the continuity of provision which consistent attendance allows.

Aims

- To promote excellent attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- To ensure every pupil has the access to full time education to which they are entitled.
- To ensure that routines are in place for monitoring attendance and for early identification of any difficulties.

Objectives of the policy

- To meet the government attendance targets.
- Create a clearly understood attendance procedure that is effectively communicated to and understood by parents/carers.
- Ensure pupils attend school for the maximum number of days.

Legislation and guidance

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

School procedures

Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register from the expected first day of attendance. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school and be in their line by 8.55am on each school day.

Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – before 9am or as soon as practically possible.

Official Absence due to illness will be 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 parents 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.

Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold is not acceptable.

Repeated absences may result in a request to obtain medical evidence from the doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit or prescription or medicine bottle. Any of the above must be shown to a member of the school office. (Please note that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost.)

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. However, we encourage parents 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.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code **L** (late) and **U** (unauthorised) code.

Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Encouraging good attendance and punctuality

It is important to remember that the vast majority of children at Goldfinch arrive on time and every day. An important part of our attendance policy is that this good practice is commended and applauded publicly. In order to do this, we:-

- Publish class attendance on a weekly basis in the class newsletters.
- Reward the classes with the highest attendance each half term by giving a certificate and a trophy (Key Stage 1, Lower key Stage 2 and Upper Key Stage 2).
- Award certificates to individual children who have 100% attendance every term and if a pupil has 100% attendance at the end of the academic year, they will be awarded a certificate.
- Regular newsletters informing parents about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be exceptional circumstances, for example a family funeral or severe illness. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion. Parents will be informed within seven school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in the previous section.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. 1 day only will be given. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes. 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.

Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed 'Application for leave of absence during term time'. These may be obtained from the school office.

Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. There are approximately 190 school days (380 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. Holidays must be taken during school holidays.

Legal sanctions

Local authority fine parents following a referral from the school - the local authority to request to fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the local authority, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission for 5 days or more absences (10 sessions)
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

The process for monitoring attendance

When a pupil does not attend school, we will respond by taking the steps below:

- On the first day of absence, if no note, telephone call or advice in person is received from the parent/carer by the close of registration (9:30am), the school will endeavour to contact them that day, by phone, asking them to call the office to report the reason for absence.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If, by the end of the second day, there has still been no contact made, (third day if waiting for a response to a letter/email), the school will send a letter of concern to parents/carers or invite them into school to discuss their concerns. The school will tell parents that if the absence persists that a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service (EWS).
- Children's attendance is monitored carefully throughout the year by the school and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO.) When attendance falls below 95% by the end of the first half term, a letter may be sent home, or a phone call made, to the parents informing them that their child's attendance is being monitored. Parents may be invited to attend a School Attendance Panel.
- Termly School Attendance Panels are set up by the school and the EWO. Parents are invited to attend the panel to discuss their child's attendance and ways in which it could be improved. The school will also invite the School Nurse to attend the meeting where there are ongoing medical problems or patterns of sickness as she might be able to provide support and advice to parents.
- If lateness or absence is persistent, a referral will be made to the EWO who will support and advise the parent/carer and the school, with a review to resolving any difficulties and improving punctuality.
- Late Cards are given to children who arrive at school after the bell has gone at 8:55am (Years 1 -6) and to reception or nursery pupils after the door has closed at 9am. EYFS pupils arriving after the door has closed must report to the office. Lateness is monitored carefully to highlight patterns.
- The EWS will make repeated efforts to contact the parent/guardian to discuss the reasons for the pupil's non-attendance. If the problem is quickly resolved and the pupil returns to school, or if a legitimate reason is provided for the absence, the EWS will continue to monitor the situation. If non-attendance continues, an EWO will be allocated to work with the family.

Official

- The EWO will make arrangements to meet with the parent/guardian to discuss the reasons for the pupil's non-attendance. The EWO will support and advise the parent/guardian and the school, with a review to resolve any difficulties and improve the pupil's attendance.
- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the EWS/EWO may result in further action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

Persistent Absence

If a child's absence falls below 90% (19 or more school days missed over an academic year) the child will be classified as a Persistently Absent (PA) student.

Children whose attendance is less than 90% will be monitored on a weekly basis. Depending on their circumstances they will receive support in line with the school's Persistent Absence Procedures

Lateness

Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite.

- Children must be in the line by 8:55 a.m. each day. Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time.
- The school gates will be shut at 8:55am once the bell has been rung. Children will be marked late if they arrive at school after the registers have been taken. Children who arrive after that time must come into the building via the main office, where they will be given a late slip. Lateness will be monitored and the EWO will follow this up.
- At 9:30 am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be at school, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an **unauthorised absence**. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a **Penalty Notice** if the problem persists. All "lates" after the close of the register will be coded as 'U' i.e. unauthorised.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. It is important that the school has an appointment card/letter from the doctors to authorise it. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher/Assistant Head Teacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

If your child is late, please think how your child might feel when s/he arrives late to the school. Your child may not feel special or valued. Your child may feel stressed and anxious, embarrassed to walk into the classroom late and disrupt the lesson, unable to follow the instructions that were given at the start of the lesson or keep up with the lesson.

By being on time s/he will be able to get distracted by the morning events at home or in the journey to school, line up, have time to relax with the classmates before the start of the school day.

Lateness at the end of the school day

It is also important that children are collected from school at the end of the day on time. School finishes at 3.30pm and an agreed adult should be in the playground ready to collect the child from school. Your child may feel; stressed, anxious, worried that something might happen to you..

If you know that you are going to be late, please call the office before 3.30pm so that a message can be given to the class teacher and to your child.

Parents who are persistently late to collect their child will be challenged by the headteacher and there may be a charge to parents who are persistently late. Children who are not collected by 3.40pm on a regular basis could be charged £15. If the child is not collected after 4.30pm, there will be an additional charge of £5 for every 15 minutes that they are not collected. If the Head teacher is concerned about a child who is constantly picked up late or hasn't been collected by 5pm without any contact from a family member explaining the reason for not collecting on time, this could be referred on to Social Care.

If you are looking for after school provision, please speak to a member of the school office who will pass your information to our E Play Manager Mrs Ulain Mireku. She will contact you to see how we can try and meet your needs after school.

Arrangements for collecting your child at the end of the school day

If you know that you are unable to collect your child, please inform the class teacher and/or a member of the school office as soon as possible who you have arranged to collect your child in your absence. If you would like a different adult to collect your child on a regular basis, please put this in writing and again inform both the school office and the class teacher. The office will make a note of this arrangement on the school system.

If your child is collected by an unfamiliar adult and the teacher or office team have not been informed prior to the child being collected, you will be challenged. The safety of your child is paramount. Please help to avoid these situations by always informing the class teacher and the office of a change to who is collecting your child.

Children in Year 5 and Year 6 with written permission from their parents can walk home on their own. The written permission must be given to the school office where the class teacher will be informed, and the permission will be kept on record for the academic year.

We do not allow anyone under the age of 16 to collect children unless the child they are collecting is in year 5 or year 6 or if the parent/guardian has given written permission to the school.

Changing Schools or Moving abroad

It is important that if families decide to send their child/children in their care to a different school that they inform Goldfinch School staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next.
- The address of the new school.
- The new home address, if it is known.

The pupil's school records will be sent on by request to the new school. If the school has not received the above information, the family will be referred to the EWS.

Going to live abroad permanently

If you are moving abroad, please:

- Complete the forms to inform us the date you are moving abroad
- Provide an address where you will be living abroad
- To give us the name and address, contact details of the school, including the date your child starts as soon as possible
- Provide us with your email address or telephone number so we can contact you if necessary.

Children at Risk of Missing Education

We will inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education.
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered.
- have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school.
- have been permanently excluded.

The Local Authority should be notified in advance of the deletion, when the school becomes aware that the deletion will be made.

The EWO and EWS have a duty and responsibility to follow up and investigate all children missing education to make sure they are safe and well.

Parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices

The Local Authority and school have legal powers to use parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices to address poor attendance and behaviour in school. In addition to using these powers, the Local Authority and school can develop other practices to improve attendance.

School Attendance Orders

If it appears to the Local Authority that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, then they will begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order. The order will require the child's parents to register their child at a named school. If they fail to comply with the order the parent can be prosecuted.

Prosecutions by local authorities

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at school or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the Local Authority. Only the Local Authority can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs.

Local Authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

Section 444 has two separate but linked offences - Section 444 (1), where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and Section 444 (1A), where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. Section 444 applies the offence to where parents fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the Local Authority or Governing Body has arranged alternative provision. There are statutory defences for parents to use under the 1996 Act.

The fines available to the courts if parents are found guilty of the Section 444 (1) offence include a level 3 fine of up to £1,000. If they are found guilty of the Section 444 (1A) the fine is at level 4, up to £2,500 and the court can also sentence them to imprisonment for up to three months. The Local Authority has the power to prosecute parents of pupils found in a public place during school hours after being excluded from school. The fine is a level 3 fine of up to £1,000.

Parenting contracts

A parenting contract is a formal written signed agreement between parents and either the local authority or the governing body of a school and should contain:

- a statement by the parents that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are set out in the contract.
- a statement by the local authority or governing body agreeing to provide support to the parents for the purpose of complying with the contract.

Parenting contracts can be used in cases of misbehaviour or irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. Parenting contracts are voluntary, but any non-compliance should be recorded by the school or Local Authority as it may be used as evidence in court where an application is made for a behaviour parenting order.

The Local Authority or Governing Body should fund any support required to implement a parenting contract (such as referral to parenting classes) and provide information to parents about other types of support available, such as details of national and local agencies and helplines.

Parenting Orders

Parenting orders are imposed by the court and the parent's agreement is not required before an order is made. Parenting orders are available as an 'ancillary order' following a successful prosecution by the Local Authority for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are fines of £60/£120 imposed on parents. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

In Wandsworth, Penalty notices can only be issued by a Local Authority officer. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

Penalty notices can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school. Penalty notices may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Supporting the school in making attendance a high priority and ensure that children are receiving messages about the value of education.
- Ensuring that the child/children in their care arrive punctually, prepared for the school day, by 8:55
- Encouraging regular school attendance and being aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensuring that in the event of late arrival, their child goes directly to the office.
- Ensuring that they contact the school on the first day of any absence.
- Requesting leave as far in advance as possible.
- Making applications for leave in writing on the school's '**leave of absence form**', giving the reason for the request.
- Working with the school and Educational Welfare Officer(EWO) to improve lateness and attendance.
- Avoiding medical and dental appointments during the school day.
- Bringing concerns about their child's attendance at school by:
 - ✓ talking to their child; it may be something simple that needs your help in resolving.
 - ✓ talking to your child's class teacher in the first instance.
- Collecting their children from school on time and/or arranging for their child to be collected from school on time

The Local Governing Board

The Local Governing Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and makes referral to the Local authority for penalty notices to be issued, where necessary.

The Attendance Officer

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to refer to the local authority for a Penalty notices

Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information online

Office staff

Office staff take calls and messages from parents about absence and record it on the school system. They follow up unplanned, unreported absences daily.

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The Education Welfare Officer strives to support schools, parents and pupils with the aim of ensuring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. However, the Education Welfare Service also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness. The EWO has regular contact with the school to monitor attendance and punctuality.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the policy

The practical application of this policy will be reviewed annually or when the need arises by the Governing Body, Headteacher and Office Manager.

Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy.

Updates

In light of government focus on attendance, policies may change quickly. Any advice given by the LA will be followed should guidance change after this policy has been agreed and without prior notice to parents.

Guidance used to review this policy - DfE document 'School Attendance' – July 2019.

Official

Spring 2020