# Gorsewood Primary School

# Attendance and Leave of Absence Policy



| Written by: | HBC<br>Emma Jackson | Date: September 2022 |
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| Approved by: | Mark Dennett - COG | Date: November 2022 |
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# Contents

**Attendance Policy**

***Be Your Best Self!***

***We aim to give all our pupils opportunities to develop their full potential within a caring and supportive environment, providing a wide and varied range of activities to enrich the curriculum and promote a love of learning.***

## 1. Rationale

This Policy outlines the underlying philosophy, purpose, nature, organisation and management of pupil attendance at Gorsewood Primary School.

The Policy is a result of consultation with the wider school community and an analysis of existing attendance data to establish current absence trends. It aims to ensure the enjoyment and achievement for all pupils at Gorsewood Primary School.

### 1a. Principles

The Governors, Head Teachers and staff wish to ensure every child has the opportunity to:

1. Fully participate in school life
2. Enjoy and achieve
3. Feel a valued member of the school community

### 1b. Aims

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

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

**We aim for all pupils to achieve no less than 95% attendance.**

## 2. Legal Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance 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 governing board

The governing board 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

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Deciding when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Involving Education Support officers to tackle persistent absences

### 3.3 The family support worker

The school family support worker works closely with head teacher to monitor and improve attendance. They are responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

> ❯ Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
>
> ❯ Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

The family support worker is Kelly Williams. She can be contacted via 01928712100.

### 3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office every morning and afternoon.

### 3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

> ❯ Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
>
> ❯ Transfer calls from parents to the head in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
>
> ❯ Monitor school-level absence data
>
> ❯ Support staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
>
> ❯ Have an oversight of data analysis
>
> ❯ Support the head teacher with paper work and attendance letters

### 3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

> ❯ Make sure their child attends every day on time
>
> ❯ Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.55am on the day of the and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
>
> ❯ Provide the school with at least 2 emergency contact numbers for their child
>
> ❯ Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
>
> ❯ Request leave in advance for holidays/extended absences in term time by following the school holiday in term time procedures (see Appendix 1)
>
> ❯ Work with the school and any other agencies to resolve any difficulties which may affect regular school attendance

### 3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

> ❯ Attend school every day on time

## 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. It will mark whether every pupil is:

> Present

> Attending an approved off-site educational activity

> Absent

> Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We use SIMS to record the attendance of all pupils.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

> For pupils of compulsory school age 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

Registers are kept electronically on SIMS.

### 4.2 Registration

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.55am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and kept open until 9.30am.

A pupil arriving after 9.05am will be marked late.

The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1.00pm and kept open until 1.10pm.

A pupil arriving in school after 9.05am should follow school procedures for late arrivals and come through the main entrance. A member of staff will sign the pupil in at the front of school stating time of arrival and reason for lateness.

## 5. Absence

### 5.1 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 8.55am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office on 01928 712100 to leave an answerphone message or emailing school sec.gorsewood@haltonlearning.net

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness or school requires medical evidence due to attendance being monitored.

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.

## 5.2 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.

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

## 5.3 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

> Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.  This is after 9.05am.
> After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. This is after 9.30am.

Children who are arrive late should enter school through the front doors.  Here they will be signed in and a reason for the lateness recorded.  Children will then go to their classes.

Punctuality is monitored in school. If a child is repeatedly late, school will notify parents/carers through letters and if no improvement is made set targets to improve punctuality.  School will also work with the Educational Welfare Team to ensure punctuality is addressed and improved.

## 5.4 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 of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may carry out home visit.
> 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.

See Appendix 3 for further steps taken.

## 5.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. At parent evenings parents will be provided with an up to date record of their child's attendance and punctuality. At the end of each term parents will receive an attendance letter clearly showing what their child's attendance is. These letters will use a traffic light system to help parents/carers recognise when attendance is good and when it needs to be improved.

**We aim for all children to be in the GREEN or GOLD band.**

Where attendance has been identified as a cause for concern, school will make contact with parents on a more regular basis (half termly) so the issues can be addressed and work alongside parents to improve attendance.

### Attendance Traffic Light Colours

| Colour Band | Attendance | Description |
|---|---|---|
| GOLD | 100% attendance | This level of attendance will ensure that your child has the greatest opportunity to fulfil their potential. |
| Green | 95-99.9% attendance | Equivalent of up to 9 days/less than 2 weeks' absence. This level of attendance will ensure that your child has the greatest opportunity to fulfil their potential. |
| Orange | 90-94.9% attendance | Equivalent of up to 19 days/nearly 4 weeks' absence over the year Over the course of a full academic year, this level of attendance will begin to impact negatively on your child's progress and attainment. |
| Red | Below 89.9% attendance | Equivalent of up to 29 days/nearly 6 weeks' absence over the year Over a full academic year, this is a high level of absence and your child's progress and attainment and potential is being held back. |

## 5.7 Authorised and unauthorised absence

### Categorisation of Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

The parent must provide an explanation for any period of absence from school, it is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised.

School will usually authorise absences where a pupil is:

- Unable to attend school due to illness
- Requires emergency dental/medical appointments. Wherever possible routine dental/medical appointments should be made after school or during school holidays
- 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

- Traveller pupils 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

- Absent due to other exceptional circumstances.

School will not authorise absence for:

- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Days out
- Oversleeping
- Looking after brothers/sisters
- Holidays

The parent must provide an explanation for any period of absence from school. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised.

## 5.8 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher 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.

It is the decision of the Headteacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term time leave will be considered on an individual basis.

Exceptional leave is **NOT**:

- Availability of cheap flights and/or holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Parent/carer work commitments
- Poor weather experienced during school holiday periods
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term, half term.

Exceptional leave **MAY** be:

- Grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill – and you must leave in an emergency
- Significant trauma in the family recently and a holiday will benefit the child – this must be backed up by a doctor's letter
- A one-off, never to be repeated occasion that can only happen at that time, eg family wedding/funeral.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering 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 4 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.
Parents/carers will be notified within 7 days of receiving the absence request form whether it has been authorised or not and therefore classed as unauthorised absence. If additional information is required, this will be requested within a set time frame.

## 5.9 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.
If issued with a fine, or 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.
Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

> The 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

> 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 or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance
Gorsewood Primary School is committed to promoting good attendance for all pupils and will endeavour to do so using a wide range of strategies including:

- Promote good whole school attendance through working together to earn whole school rewards – we have an attendance wall to build!
- Implement a range of rewards for pupils with high levels of attendance and those improving attendance
- Celebrate good attendance through themed weeks with prizes and recognition for good attendance and punctuality
- Provide a full and diverse curriculum to engage and motivate pupils and promote emotional well-being
- Make parents aware of the impact of poor attendance and punctuality on attainment
- Contact parents on first day of a pupil's absence, where no notification has been received from the parent/carer by 9.30am to ensure the safety of the pupil. Follow this up with welfare visits if no contact is made.
- Analyse individual attendance pupil data to identify patterns of absence causing concern
- Use Individual Attendance Support Plans for pupils with attendance difficulties
- Work proactively to engage with parents and carers to resolve any difficulties which may be affecting school attendance, through parents evenings, pupil reviews and home-school agreements
- **Contact parents by letter when pupils' attendance falls below 95% to highlight concerns**

*When setting attendance targets, the time of year and personal circumstances will be taken into account.*

## 7. Attendance monitoring
At Gorsewood Primary School attendance is monitored throughout the year.

## 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, and share this with the governing board.

## 7.2 Analysing attendance

<mark>The school will:</mark>

- 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

<mark>The school will:</mark>

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, 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

## 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

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/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- School will request medical verification where a pupil's attendance falls below 85% or where attendance is being monitored.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Consider referral to Education Welfare when school action has failed to bring about an improvement in the pupil's attendance
- Use Parenting Contracts where exclusion or behavioural issues are affecting a pupil's attendance in school
- In partnership with LA use a full range of strategies, including legal interventions, to support improvement to attendance
- Provide appropriate support to pupils to ensure successful reintegration following long term absence
- Complete a Multi Assessment Plan where complex and significant factors requiring a multi-agency response is identified

**8. Monitoring arrangements**

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

- This policy will be less formally reviewed on an annual basis
- A copy of this policy is available on the school website
- The policy is given in full to all parents of children who are starting at Gorsewood Primary School
- The principles of this policy will be raised in the school newsletter regularly throughout the year
- Any complaints arising from the implementation of this policy should be addressed to the Head Teacher in the first instance

**9. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

> Child protection and safeguarding 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 another setting where they are also registered |
| **J** | Interview | Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/school |
| **P** | Sporting activity | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved 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 granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| **E** | Excluded | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made |
| **H** | Authorised holiday | Pupil 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 |
| **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, traveller | 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 (amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence) |
| **O** | Unauthorised absence | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence |
| **U** | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed |

| 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 exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| **Z** | Pupil not on admission register | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school |
| **#** | Planned school closure | Whole school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day |

# Day to day Absence and Punctuality

| Punctuality and Absence | Action |
|---|---|
| Child arrives at school after 9.05am or 1.00pm. | Marked as L in the register |
| Child arrives at school after 9.30am or 1.30pm. | Marked as U in the register (represents an absence for that session) |
| Parents should try to arrange dental and doctors' appointments for children outside of school hours e.g. After school/during holidays etc. | Medical appointments may be marked as authorised if documentation is provided e.g., appointment letter/card. |
| Parents should contact school on the first day of absence and then again on the third day if still absent | Recorded as ill in the register if ill or other relevant code. |
| If no reason provided for child's absence or no contact with parent/guardian . . . | School will contact parents via phone call and/or school text message. |
| If still no contact on second day . . . | School will make a home visit to check on the safety and well-being of the child(ren) and parent(s). <br><br> If no contact at home visit, a letter will be left asking parents to contact school as a matter of urgency. <br><br> If the family and child(ren) is/are known to Children's Social Care, then Social workers and family support workers will be informed of the absence. |
| If following the home visit, no contact still on day 3 or day 4. . . | School will contact parents via phone call and/or school text message. <br><br> School will make a second home visit to check on the safety and well-being of the child(ren) and parent(s). <br><br> If the family and child(ren) is/are known to Children's Social Care, then Social workers and family support workers will be informed of the absence. |
| If no contact has still been made on day 5… | Police may be asked to complete a Welfare check if there has been no contact following day 5. <br><br> Education Welfare Officer may be informed, and further action taken. <br><br> If the family and child(ren) is/are known to Children's Social Care, then Social workers and family support workers will be informed of the absence. |

# Absence and Punctuality Actions

| | Action | Further action |
|---|---|---|
| Whole school and individual targets shared with pupils and parents/carers | Assemblies used to share key targets and celebrate good attendance and punctuality<br>Traffic light system used for attendance<br>Letters home informing parents/carers<br>Key targets on the website<br>Displays to show whole school and encourage good attendance and punctuality | Frequent reminders |
| Individual attendance and punctuality | Shared with parents/carers termly – letter with traffic light colour banding on<br>Teachers to share in reports and at parents' evening<br>Celebration of good attendance and punctuality | Regular reminders about good attendance<br>Regular reminder about good hygiene to promote good attendance |
| If attendance falls below 95%<br><br>If more than 5 late marks within half term<br><br>Orange band | Letter sent home outlining concerns and improvement period given<br><br>Support form pastoral team offered | Parents invited into school for meeting following no change in improvement period |
| If attendance falls below 90%<br><br>If more than 10 late marks within a half term<br><br>Red band | Letter inviting parents into school to discuss<br>Improvement period given and attendance support plan implemented<br>Support offered through FSW, pastoral team<br>Medical evidence required for any absences | Involvement of Education Welfare officer involvement if no improvement |
| If attendance falls below 85%<br><br>Red band | Involvement of Education Welfare<br>Possible MAP | Possible legal action if no improvement is made |

## Attendance Traffic Light Colours

| Colour Band | Attendance | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **GOLD** | **100% attendance** | **This level of attendance will ensure that your child has the greatest opportunity to fulfil their potential. Thank you for supporting your child's attendance at this level.** |
| **Green** | **95-99.9% attendance** | **Equivalent of up to 9 days/less than 2 weeks' absence. This level of attendance will ensure that your child has the greatest opportunity to fulfil their potential. Thank you for supporting your child's attendance at this level.** |
| **Orange** | **90-94.9% attendance** | **Equivalent of up to 19 days/nearly 4 weeks' absence over the year Over the course of a full academic year, this level of attendance will begin to impact negatively on your child's progress and attainment.** |
| **Red** | **Below 89.9% attendance** | **Equivalent of up to 29 days/nearly 6 weeks' absence over the year Over a full academic year, this is a high level of absence and your child's progress and attainment and potential is being held back.** |

# Addendum to Attendance Policy September 2021 – updated September 2022

## Absence Related to COVID-19 – Guide for Parents

| Circumstance | Action needed | Return to school when… | Absence Code |
|---|---|---|---|
| Your child has Coronavirus symptoms | ▪ Attend school if well enough<br><br>**There is no requirement to carry out a test**. | Attend school if well enough. | **I** |
| Your child has a positive test result for coronavirus | ▪ Do not come into school<br>▪Inform school immediately about test result<br>▪Self-isolate for 3 days or until well enough to attend school | …they feel better. | **I** |
| • If a member of the household is classed as clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable or is pregnant then the child SHOULD attend school. | ▪ None | …Child to continue to attend school | |
| • If a child is clinically vulnerable and has not been advised to shield | ▪ None | …Child to continue to attend school | |