

Together, we nurture the future

Greenmount Primary School Pupil Attendance Policy

Autumn 2018

Review: Autumn 2019

Rationale

By law, all children of compulsory school age (5–16) must receive suitable education. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child receives suitable education either by registering the child at a school or by arranging an effective alternative to school (section 7, Education Act 1996). A child of compulsory school age who is registered at school must by law attend regularly. Through the implementation of this policy, the governors of Greenmount Primary School seek to monitor and support the attendance of registered children, and to put in place services to assist those families who cannot – for whatever reason – comply. The governing body seeks to work in partnership with other schools in the locality to foster a strong culture of good attendance. School staff and others working to support the children are expected to set a high standard of attendance, working to support the ethos outlined in this policy.

Parental Support:

The role of parents and carers in securing high levels of attendance is critical. At Greenmount Primary School we strive to maintain close, effective and positive links with parents and ensure that they are contacted at an early stage to deal with any unexplained absences of their child. The Local Authority (LA) has clear policies and guidelines for school attendance explaining the regulations and giving guidance to schools. These are attached to this policy, and are open to inspection by parents. The key points of this policy will be communicated to parents when their children begin school at Greenmount.

Early Intervention:

Monitoring and encouraging attendance is an integral part of the class teacher's role. Class teachers will receive support from the head teacher and deputy head teacher.

It is acknowledged that an early response to developing patterns of absence can be most effective. The circumstances of the individual pupil or group of pupils must determine the nature of communication regarding attendance. At Greenmount we are particularly sensitive to issues of linguistic differences in matters of communication, and of cultural differences in perception regarding attendance.

Major early signs of absenteeism are:

- Unauthorised absences
- Lateness
- Occasional/developing patterns of absence

Strategies to be used by Class Teachers when tackling these early signs of absenteeism:

- Discussion with pupil
- Communication with parent/carer by telephone, text, email or letter*
- School based interviews/meetings with parent/carer*

* Using translation / interpretation if necessary and where possible

Statutory Requirements for Pupil Registration:

Parents, schools and the LA share legal responsibilities in respect of school attendance:

Parents of children of compulsory school age **must** ensure that they receive an efficient and suitable full-time education (Section 7 Education Act 1996)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- _ present;
- _ absent;
- _ present at approved educational activity; or
- _ unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

LAs **must** ensure that parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations as to their children's education including, where necessary, by action through the Courts. (Sections 437-448 Education Act 1996)

Schools have a duty to report to their LA on

"continuous pupil absences of two weeks or more and on those pupils who fail to attend school regularly, except where such absences are covered by a medical certificate".
(Pupils' Registration Regulations 1995)

Schools should ensure that Registers are properly recorded and maintained in the school office so they may be available for scrutiny by the educational welfare service and other authorised officers - 'in the case of every school maintained by an authority the.... registers shall be open to inspection by officers authorised by the Authority for that purpose" (Pupils' Registration Regulations 1995)

Schools are required to collect and publish data on their rates of unauthorised absence for the preceding year.

"All schools.... must distinguish in their attendance registers between authorised and unauthorised absences of pupils of compulsory school age; school prospectuses and annual reports must include specified information on rates of unauthorised absence.
(The Pupils' Registration Regulations, the Education (School Information) Regulations 1981) (The Education (school Curriculum and Related Information) Regulations 1989)

It is important that records of pupil attendance are carefully maintained. Information about a child's

absence is recorded both by insertion of the appropriate symbols when the weekly register is entered in the computerised attendance system, and by filing correspondence relating to absences in the right hand pocket of the register. Correspondence will then be placed in the pupil's individual files at the end of each term. **If the school receives no satisfactory explanation the absence is marked as unauthorised.** Careful register-keeping is an indication that all pupil absence is being questioned and followed up.

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of absence. When the child returns, they should provide a written note. It is a legal requirement that parents send in a note, making an allowance for parents who have poor literacy skills or who do not have English as their first language. These written notes should be signed by the teacher responsible for registering the class, and filed as outlined above.

In exceptional circumstances, the school may ask the parents for further evidence of the child's illness, such as a doctor's note although parents are under no legal obligation to provide medical certificates.

Family holidays during term time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 removes references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold for ten school days. The amendments make it clear that the head teacher **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The head teacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if exceptional leave is granted.

There are 175 non-school days in which holidays can be taken.

The Local Authority expects schools **to not** grant any period of leave during term time unless sufficient evidence to support an exceptional circumstance is provided by the parent.

Exceptional circumstances are not:

- a trip to work in the family business
- cost
- seasonal work
- work commitments (exception given to armed forces)
- family get together
- 'once in a lifetime'
- birthdays
- weddings

This is not a definitive list. When reaching a judgement of whether an exceptional circumstance has been met, the head teacher may discuss with EWS as necessary.

Where leave is not granted but taken by the family the absence must be unauthorised and the school implement the Penalty Notice procedures.

The Education Act 1996 states that a parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at a school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law, *unless* one of the following can be demonstrated

- i. that the pupil was absent with leave (defined as granted by the head);
- ii. that the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;
- iii. that the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
- iv. the school at which the Child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home. That is 2 miles for a child under 8 and 3 miles for a child at 8 and over, and that the Local Authority has not made arrangements for any of the following;
 - the child's transport to and from school
 - boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school
 - enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his or her home

The LA is ultimately responsible for the satisfactory attendance of every pupil. In some cases legal action may be required, either to ensure parents uphold their responsibilities, or to safeguard the child's welfare. During such proceedings, the detail of school attendance could become important evidence, making accurate and consistent registration crucial.

Marking registers

All school registers should be marked electronically at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions.

Class teachers hold important responsibilities for the general welfare of pupils in their classes; attendance and punctuality is an important feature of their responsibility and is part of good primary practice. The Attendance Register is a legal document and must be completed accurately and on time. Teachers are responsible for marking the register twice a day (see above).

It is important for teachers to be aware of the number of pupils present at each session in the event of emergency evacuation.

Registration at Greenmount is carried out using the SIMs electronic system. Teaching staff will fill in the class register on their laptops and send these to the central office by 09.00 each morning and by 13.15 each afternoon.

The following marks should be made:

Pupil present at time of registration

Pupil absent at time of registration

Marks indicating pupil lateness or the nature of their absence will be completed by administrative staff. The period of registration closes 30 minutes after the beginning of each session (09.15, 13.40)

All letters received from parents, or sent to parents with regard to pupil attendance must be kept in the central office – these are then placed in individual pupil folders at the end of each term, as stated above.

The school's administrative staff ensure that the registration data on the computerised system at the end of each week is accurate, completing the number and reasons for authorised absence, and the number of unauthorised absences at that time.

"Only the school, within context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence', (Policy and practice on Categorisation of Absence 1994)

Under no circumstances should an un-notified/unverified absence be regarded as authorised.

To distinguish between poor punctuality and non-attendance, it is necessary to set aside a time after which the register is closed. The LA recommends a period of 30 minutes from the beginning of registration to the formal closing of the register as being reasonable. Where pupils miss registration altogether and fail to provide an adequate explanation, they should be marked as Unauthorised Absence for that session. (Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence, (1994).

The register is called by 9.00 a.m. each morning. Those pupils who arrive after this time are required to report their presence to the school office, where the register is updated. Registration for the morning session closes at 9.15 am. Pupils arriving after this time are recorded as an Unauthorised Absence for that session, unless a satisfactory explanation is given by their parent/carer.

Attendance documents must show the names, dates of birth and current addresses of all pupils in the class. Parent's names, if different, should be recorded, along with telephone numbers.

Electronic records of each week's attendance details are kept in the office and made available to the school's EWO and other authorised personnel. The school must keep all attendance records for 3 years after the year registered.

Follow up action in cases of non attendance:

- 1) In all cases of absence, every effort should be made by the school to obtain the reason for absence in the event of parents/carers not contacting the school. In the first instance, this will involve a phone call home during the first session of absence. If no reply is obtained, within 2 days a letter will be sent home requesting information regarding the absence.

If the absence continues, and no acceptable reason is given, the head teacher will contact the parent/carer, possibly through the EWS, to discuss the issue further.

The same procedure should be followed in cases where a pupil is persistently late, and in addition the times of arrival should be noted. Parents should be reminded that being too late for registration constitutes failure to attend regularly and could lead to prosecution.

- 2) In obdurate cases, where a child has persistent unauthorised absences, schools should initially invite parents to a meeting to discuss reasons for the absence and possible solutions.
- 3) All action taken by the school should be carefully dated and recorded in the pupil's file
- 4) If attendance remains poor, after all efforts by the school to resolve the problem within the framework of this policy then the situation should be discussed with the school's EWO, either as part of the regular multi agency meetings including family support, or as a separate issue. This may then lead to a referral being made to the Education Welfare Service.
- 5) Once a decision has been taken by the school to refer the matter to the EWO, it is important that the school informs the parents of this in writing.
- 6) Referrals should be made with the fullest information after consultation with all staff involved with the child and discussion with the family – where possible, and should include details of all action undertaken by the school.
An attendance printout detailing the previous 6 weeks' absence should be made available, along with any correspondence with the parents.
- 7) Once the referral has been accepted by the EWS it is important that schools continue to work in partnership with the allocated EWO to ensure the child's return to maximum attendance. All members of staff who have contributed to the referral should be kept informed of progress. In cases where an Education Supervision Order (under the Children Act 1989) is to be sought in court, the school will be involved in agreeing the Education Plan for the child and may well have a clear role to fulfil in carrying out that plan.
- 8) Systems of communication within the school between the Head, teachers and EWS should be efficient in the identification of irregular attendance, and in the subsequent support offered to children and parents.

Early identification and effective follow up of non-attendance rely on efficient communication both within the school, between the school and its support services, and between the school and parents/carers.

(Prompt action on non-attendance is an important area of Child Protection; this policy should be seen in conjunction with the school's child protection policy and guidelines.)

Publication of Information about Unauthorised Absence:

The school prospectus must show the percentage rate of unauthorised absence and the percentage of pupils with unauthorised absence for each year and for each of the three terms.

Monitoring Procedures:

The Head teacher will have overall responsibility for monitoring levels of attendance and will monitor them on a day to day, weekly and monthly basis

The Senior Leadership Team will monitor the above records half-termly, discussing any concerns with the class teacher involved.

A representative of the EWS will visit the school each month to discuss any issues with attendance. He/she will also check registers each term.

The following indicators will be used to monitor and highlight pupils causing concern;

- a letter to parents advising them of the potential impact of absence from school
- **attendance below 90%** - invitation into school for discussion of the potential impact of absence from school with Head teacher or senior member of staff, and, where appropriate, family support worker/EWO.
- **where attendance falls below 85%** - referral to the Education Welfare Officer who will follow up with parental contact and formal warnings
- Termly and annual attendance figures will be sent to the LA, and annually to the DfES as part of local and national monitoring of attendance.

Staff Attendance

The governors and staff at Greenmount Primary School fully appreciate the role of staff in setting an example of good attendance and commitment to school life. By setting a standard of punctuality and good, well-managed attendance at school, teachers and support staff are a key influence on the positive attitude of parents in this area. It is accepted that there may be reasons for staff to be absent from school and the Governing Body have adapted the Local Authority's guidance in their approach to these. These occasions may include

Compassionate Leave with Pay

- **Death** - up to five days' leave with pay on the death of partner, son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister (may also apply to in-laws). More time may be granted at the discretion of the governing body.
- **Sickness** - up to five days' leave with pay in any 12 month period in the case of sickness of the relatives referred to above who are living with the employee or living alone. As a general guide such leave should only be granted in an emergency, ie where the illness occurs suddenly, cannot be predicted or planned for and requires prompt attention. More time may be granted at the discretion of the governing body.
- **Death** - up to one day's leave with pay on death of a grandparent. More time may be granted at the discretion of the governing body.

Additional Leave

- With or without pay up to a maximum of five days in special circumstances.

Other Cases

- **Interviews** - Leave with pay.
- **Attendance at own graduation ceremony** - Leave with pay for one or two days dependent upon location of ceremony.
- **Attendance as son's/daughter's or partner's graduation ceremony** - as above.

- **Accompanying child or dependent relative to medical appointment** - Leave with pay.
- **Moving house** - up to one day's leave with pay.
- **Accompanying partner on official engagement** - Leave without pay.
- **Magistrate's duty** - Leave with pay. Up to nine days' leave with pay for support staff may be granted to enable employees to undertake duties as a Magistrate. Teacher absences are fully covered by the Teacher Absence Insurance Scheme
- **Jury Service** - Leave without pay. NB The employee should not however lose pay when taking account of payments made by Court. Monies should be made up by school.
- **Attendance at Coroner's Court** - Leave with pay.
- **Witness at other Courts/defendant at Court** - Leave without pay. Claim should be submitted to Court for loss of earnings as appropriate.
- **Attendance at Court associated with pupil at school** - Leave with pay.
- **Service in non-regular forces** - Volunteer members of the non-regular forces shall be granted up to two weeks leave with pay to attend summer camp. Such leave should normally be granted automatically unless the employee's absence would jeopardise the service. Volunteers may also be required to undertake up to 16 days additional training per annum (usually on Saturdays and Sundays). Territorial Army and Volunteer Reserve Units should be in a position to offer alternative dates and the onus is on the employee to try to arrange for this additional training to be undertaken during off-duty times.
- **Study/Examination Leave** - Employees who are sponsored by the School or Council to undertake courses leading to examination based qualifications may be granted the time necessary for attendance at the examination. In addition, at the discretion of the Headteacher, half a day's leave may be granted for each examination for the purpose of final revision.
- **Elections** - Leave of absence with pay will be granted to employees who are appointed to assist in any capacity at all elections and referendums, to include European Parliamentary, United Kingdom Parliamentary, Regional Assemblies, Isle of Wight Council, Parish and Town Councils and Parish Polls, within the area covered by the Isle of Wight Council. All employees are required to obtain the prior permission of their Headteacher before agreeing to take up any such appointment, in order to ensure continuity of service delivery.
- **Extension of school holidays** - Various requests are received to take leave of absence for one or two days prior to or at the end of school holiday periods to allow extended holidays/cheap flights. These are not encouraged and are unlikely to be granted unless under exceptional circumstances – see above. If granted, these absences will be without pay
- **Extended holidays during term-time** - Visits to relatives etc in other parts of the world during term time are unlikely to be supported, unless under exceptional circumstances – see above.
- **Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave** - Please refer to the Local Authority's separate provisions regarding maternity, paternity and parental leave.

This policy will be reviewed biannually, and updated in the light of changes to the procedures and practices used/LA guidance and advice.