



Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to by law.

Gamesley Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school via our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children's Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education and guidance from the Local Authority.

Parents and Carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all parents and carers are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits for their children. The procedures explained in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the local multi agency team so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.



- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel secure and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed upon them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised Absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer, both during and after the absence. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence and then writes a letter / email on their return.
- Only the Headteacher can decide whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if absence is supported by a parent, an absence will be unauthorised.

Unauthorised Absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the knowledge or permission of the school.
- An absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without explanation or without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to adopt the following procedures to support good attendance:



- Maintain appropriate registration procedures
- Maintain appropriate attendance data
- Communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils
- To have consistent and systematic records which give details of any absence and lateness.
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- Inform parents and carers about what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents and carers to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Multi Agency Team any child whose attendance is unauthorised or unsatisfactory, or where parents or carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Derbyshire County Council and the DfE when requested.
- All staff will be aware that they should raise any attendance or punctuality issues to the Pastoral Manager.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for absence offered by children and their parents or carers.
- Informing the Pastoral Manager where there are concerns, and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken, to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their classes the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Following up absence with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted in the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at parent evenings where necessary.



Pastoral Manager

The Pastoral Manager is responsible for

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Analysing trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families when concerns are raised about attendance including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referral to the local Multi Agency Team, via Starting Point.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's link worker from the Multi Agency Team.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration Staff

Administrative staff, with the support of the pastoral manager, are responsible for

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- First day response – contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Parents

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness, attendance at a medical appointment or other unavoidable cause.
- Contacting the school office on each day of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time (for the absence to be recorded as authorised we do require an appointment card or letter from the doctor, dentist, hospital etc.)
- Making requests for absence in term time, including holidays, only in exceptional circumstances as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.



Registration

The school gates and classroom doors open at 8.40am to allow plenty of time for children to come into and settle in their classrooms. The gates are shut at 8.45am meaning any children arriving after this time will have to enter school via the front door.

Each classroom teacher has the responsibility for marking the on-line Arbor attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

All attendance records are documented using Arbor software, which is supported by the Trust. Attendance registers are legal documents and must be preserved and stored securely for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Any pupil who comes into school after 8.45am will be marked as late in the attendance register. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.00am will be marked as late after close of register (Attendance code U). This is an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come into school later than 9.00am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning and their late arrival disrupts the class. This is not fair on them, other children in the class or the class teacher, as the beginning of the day is when the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents and carers will receive a letter advising them of the school's concerns. School will provide opportunities for parents and carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Parents and carers should contact school on each day of their child's absence, unless they already know the length of an absence in advance i.e. stays in hospital or set periods of convalescence. When parents and carers notify us of their child's absence, it is important that they provide us with details of the reasons for their absence. If a child is absent from school due to illness for more than 2 days, we require additional evidence in the form of medical appointments, copies of prescriptions or receipts for over the counter medicines.

All absences are recorded in the register as either authorised or unauthorised using the appropriate codes. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents for the child's absence. This information is used by the Headteacher to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.



When children are absent from school for medical reasons, we require parents / carers to provide a letter or email on the day of their return to school detailing the dates of absence, details of the illness, and information about medical advice or treatment.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any information from the parent, we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers each morning to identify those pupils who are absent without explanation and as a safeguarding requirement, attempt to contact parents and carers by telephone. If contact is not possible then a decision may be made to undertake a home visit.

Applications for Holidays in Term Time

In September 2013, the government introduced new regulations making it clear that Headteachers must not give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any request for term time leave must be made on a "Leave of Absence request form" available from the school office and handed in at least 2 weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

Parents and carers may be issued with a penalty fine should leave be taken for a holiday which is not authorised by the Headteacher (Attendance code G).

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95% for all children and our whole school attendance target this year is 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents and carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore, where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed.

Initially when concerns are raised, we invite parents to an attendance panel to discuss the reasons for absence and to offer support. Our link worker from the multi-agency team may be invited to these meetings.

If a child's attendance record does not improve over a period, the school has the responsibility to make a referral to the local multi-agency team, via Starting Point, for intervention. Ongoing attendance concerns may lead to consideration of parental responsibility measures which include the issue of penalty notices or other statutory action.