# Attendance Policy (Pupils)

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| **Senior Attendance Champion:** | Katie Keyte | |

# Attendance Policy – Pupils


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## Introduction

- In Greensand schools we expect children to attend school every day, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.
- Excellent attendance and punctuality is important if children are to benefit from everything school has to offer. Regular attendance at school is vital for children to be successful.
- School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life and research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance, punctuality and educational progress and attainment.
- Parents/carers and the school staff are partners in making this a success and this partnership is very important to the school. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.
- As parents/carers, it is your responsibility to ensure your child/children arrive at school and return home safely.

This policy has been developed in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' (DfE August 2024), and will be updated in response to any future changes in national guidance or legislation.

Attendance is a key safeguarding indicator and forms part of the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

**Aims**

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Promote a whole-school culture of attendance
- Ensure all pupils attend regularly and punctually
- ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning
- improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
- clearly set out the processes that are made available to parents to report absence
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets

The Trust is committed to working proactively with families to identify and address barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity. We will offer support and signpost families to appropriate services, including Early Help, before attendance concerns escalate to legal intervention. Our approach is to work in partnership with parents/carers to improve attendance and avoid escalation wherever possible.

Our Trust aims for all pupils to achieve at least 97% attendance, in line with national expectations. Attendance below this level will be monitored and support offered to families to help improve attendance.

The Trust recognises that some pupils, including those with medical needs, SEND, or other vulnerabilities, may face additional barriers to regular attendance. We are committed to making reasonable adjustments and providing tailored support to ensure all pupils can attend and benefit from education. The attendance policy will be applied with due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice.

**Expectations**

We expect that all children will:

- attend school every day as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so
- attend school punctually
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- discuss promptly with their class teacher, or the school office, any problems that may affect their school attendance

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day
- ensure that they contact the school **daily** in the event of absence
- ensure they inform the school if absence is known in advance
- contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
- notify school immediately of any changes to contact details
- engage with support from school to ensure their child's regular attendance at school

We expect that the school will:

- provide a welcoming atmosphere
- provide a safe learning environment

- provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's/carer's concerns
- keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, and monitor individual children's attendance and punctuality
- Submit daily attendance data
- Analyse attendance data regularly and use to identify children needing support
- contact parents on the first day of absence when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers. Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the Headteacher can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested
- encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of recognition
- regularly inform parents/carers of the % attendance of all children
- work collaboratively with children and their families to support children's regular and punctual attendance at school
- make initial enquiries regarding children who are not attending regularly
- meet regularly with the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams
- notify the Local Authority after 15 days sickness
- notify the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams after 10 days unexplained absence

We will take a Support-First Approach

Stage 1: Universal - Promote good attendance

Stage 2: Early Help - Identify concerns early

Stage 3: Targeted Support - Attendance plans

Stage 4: Formal Support - Attendance contracts

Stage 5: Legal Intervention

We expect that the Governors will:

- monitor attendance against the annual target set by the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams and the Trust Board
- receive updates regarding attendance levels and any children whose attendance is causing concern, although not by name, from the Headteacher in a termly report.

Trustees will:

- Monitor attendance against targets
- Annually review policy

**Definitions**

- Every day counts as two sessions.
- Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone.
- Regular attendance means that a child must attend school every day, unless there are justified reasons, and arrive at school on time.

Categorisation of attendance

| | |
|---|---|
| Good | 97%+ |
| Monitor | 95–96.9% |
| At risk | 90–94.9% |
| Persistent absence | Below 90% |
| Severe absence [NEW] | Below 50% |

**Authorised Absence**
An absence is classified as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. The Headteacher authorises the absence.

**Unauthorised Absence**
An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher.
Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable, or for which no reason has been given. The school will use the DfE guidance to support decision making

| Examples of Authorised Absences: | Examples of Unauthorised Absences: |
|---|---|
| *genuine illness of the pupil<br>*hospital/dental/doctor's appointment for the pupil<br>*major religious observances<br>*visits to prospective new schools<br>*external exams or educational assessments | *shopping / day trip / visit to a theme park<br>*a birthday treat<br>*oversleeping due to a late night<br>*looking after other children / other family member<br>*appointments or illness of other family members<br>*holidays |

Each child's attendance can be broadly summarised as:

| | |
|---|---|
| 97%+ Good | Well done! This will give your child a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic. Your child's attendance is at, or above, the school target. |
| 96% – 95% Monitor | Strive to build on this. Your child's attendance is below the school target and will be monitored.<br>You may be sent a letter of concern from the school's lead on attendance. |
| 94% - 90% At risk | Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. This is a cause for concern and will be closely monitored. The school and Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams may work with you to improve your child's attendance and/or punctuality.<br>You will be sent a letter of concern from the school's lead on attendance and you may also be asked to provide medical evidence for future absence. |
| Below 90% Persistent absence | This level of attendance is known as **persistent absence** and is unacceptable. Absence is affecting attainment and progress and disrupting your child's learning. Your child's attendance is now a major concern. A formal discussion with the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams may take place. |

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| Below 50% Severe absence | This level of absence is known as severe absence and is unacceptable. Absence is affecting attainment and progress and disrupting your child's learning. Your child's attendance is now a major concern. Formal Support will be in place, including an attendance contract. |

The school and their Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams work closely together and regularly monitor both attendance and punctuality. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

**Rewards**

- The main benefit from regular and punctual attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured.
- As a school, we acknowledge improvements in attendance directly with families.

**When to Report Absence to the School**

All absences must be reported on a daily basis. In all cases of absence the parents/carers should:

- only keep your child away from school if really necessary. The school will always call and send home an unwell child. If you are not sure about whether or not to send your child in to school, more information and advice can be found at: Is my child too ill for school? - NHS
- record the reason for your child's absence on Arbor at the earliest opportunity but by 8.30 am at the latest. If you are unable to use the Arbor App, telephone the school on 01737 245515. The office has an answer machine and messages can be left there.
- record on Arbor or call daily and keep the school informed if more than one day's absence is necessary.
- if medical appointments are absolutely necessary during the school day, children are expected to return to school for the rest of the school day.

Our School uses a '1st day calling' system. If your child fails to register or is absent and we have not received notification by 9.30am, a call will be made to you. If we have been unable to make contact with you by 10.30 am, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be informed and if necessary we may visit your home to make sure that everything is OK and your child is safe.

It is the parent's/carer's responsibility to call the school each day their child is off school and explain the reason why.

If a child is absent for five consecutive days or more, we may request medical evidence to confirm the reason for their absence. Examples of medical evidence include:

- evidence of a call with your GP at the time your child is unwell, to demonstrate that you have sought medical advice and opinion - such as a screenshot of a call log;
- evidence of an appointment with a GP or other medical professional, for your child - such as a screen shot of a text or email confirmation of an appointment time;
- evidence of the issuance of prescription medication - such as a photo of the prescription or the prescribed medication;
- evidence of the purchase of over-the-counter medicines from the pharmacy, such as a photo of a till receipt.

If a child is absent from school and no explanation is offered by the parents/carers, and the school office are not able to contact the parents/carers, the Designated Safeguarding Lead may refer the child's absence to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams. After ten days of

unexplained absence, the school is required to refer the absence to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams.

If a child is absent from school and no explanation is offered by the parents/carers within two weeks of the absence, it will automatically be recorded as an unauthorised absence. If an appropriate reason is given by parents/carers within two weeks of the absence, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will decide if the absence is authorised in retrospect.

For further information about school procedures in the event of illness and injury during the school day, and the school policy for administering medicines, please see the Medical Matters Leaflet for parents – available on the school website.

**Registers, Punctuality and Lateness**

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other children in the class. It is paramount therefore that all children arrive at school on time. A member of SLT will be on the playground from 8.35 a.m. Children need to remain with their parents until they enter the classroom from 8.40 a.m. Children should be in class and ready to learn by 8.50 am. Registration takes place promptly at 8.50 a.m.

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every child

- Registration takes place at 8.50 a.m and children who arrive after this time will be recorded as late to school. The gates are locked at 9.00 a.m. If you arrive after this time you will need to go to the main office.
- Registers close at 9.00 a.m and after this, lateness may be recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority.
- Afternoon registration is taken at 1.05 p.m.
- Persistent lateness by a child may be dealt with through the Team Around the Child Champion and/or may be referred to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams.
- Children's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools.

**Children Leaving During the School Day**

During school hours, the school staff are legally *in loco parentis* and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day.

- Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission and agreement from parents/carers and the school.
- Whenever possible, parents/carers should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents/carers are requested to **confirm in writing,** by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, and the expected return time.
- Children must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return.
- Where a child is being collected from the school, parents/carers are to report to the school office before the child is allowed to leave the site.
- If a child leaves the school site without permission, their parents/carers will be contacted. *Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the child as a missing person* (Memorandum of Understanding between Schools in Surrey and Surrey Police in relation to Children Missing During the School Day – July 2018).

**The Law**

By law, parents and carers must ensure that all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 18) receive a suitable, full-time education (Education Act, 1996). Surrey County Council employs Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams to monitor school attendance and to support both schools and parents/carers to ensure that every child attends school regularly. As a parent/carer, you may be committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice, prosecution or application for an Education Supervision Order.

**Leave of Absence**

- Please be aware that the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, which came into effect on 19th August, states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are those considered to be the rarest of incidences.
- Any absence must be requested as far in advance as possible, and **no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date**. A form (Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time) will need to be collected from the office or downloaded from the school's website and completed.
- The guidance from Surrey County Council and West Sussex County Council that if a parent/carer takes their child out of school e.g. on holiday or other unauthorised leave of absence, for 5 days (10 sessions) or more, without the authority of the Headteacher, each parent/carer **will** be liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who is absent.
- If leave is taken without authorisation by the school, it may be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams may be notified. A Penalty Notice **will** be issued.

**Penalty Notices**

The Schools Attendance and Advice Service, acting on behalf of Surrey or West Sussex County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and require the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

1. Pupils identified by police and Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

2. The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

   Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the Headteacher, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

3. The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 10 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

4. Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time (Paragraph 2 above) parents will be sent a 'Notice to Improve' their child's attendance, warning them of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Amount Payable Under a Penalty Notice: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

1. If a parent/carer has not incurred a penalty notice relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child,** if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in the Local Authority considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

2. If a parent/carer has incurred a penalty notice relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in The Local Authority considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

3. If a parent/carer has incurred 2 penalty notices relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the parent/carer will NOT receive a third penalty notice – The Local Authority will have no option but to consider a prosecution against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.

In accordance with the DfE's Children Missing Education statutory guidance, the school will inform the Local Authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register under any of the prescribed grounds. This includes when a child leaves the school without a known destination, or fails to attend for a prolonged period without explanation. The school will work closely with the Local Authority to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils.

**Changing Schools**

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

- 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 to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams.

If a pupil moves out of the area and they are no longer feasibly able to attend this school, but do not yet have a place confirmed at a new school in their local area, the family will be referred to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams so that the matter may be passed on to the Children Missing Education Team within the new Local Authority.

**Children on modified timetables or who are accessing alternative provision**

In collaboration with all relevant agencies, Greensand Schools will work to ensure and monitor the regular attendance of those children who are attending school on a modified timetable, or who are accessing alternative provision off-site for all or part of the school week. The school is required to report this attendance information to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Teams half-termly, as part of data collection for Pupils Missing Out On Education (PMOOE).

Policy Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes to DfE guidance or relevant legislation. Any updates will be communicated to staff, parents/carers, and pupils.

# Application for Leave of Absence

Please read the following guidance carefully.

As parents, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school. During the academic year, children are at school for 190 days and at home for 175 days.

**Please be aware that The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.**

Unauthorised absence of 5 days or more will result in the following action being taken:

1. If you have not incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child,** if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in The Local Authority considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child,** if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in The Local Authority considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
3. If you have incurred 2 or more penalty notices relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, then you will **NOT** receive a third penalty notice – The Local Authority will have no option but to consider a prosecution, **per parent/carer per child,** in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.
4. The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 10 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

Please complete and submit the form overleaf if you want the Headteacher to consider your request for your child's leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. We may ask for evidence to support your request.

The Headteacher will consider the reasons for your request and will notify you of their decision as soon as possible.

For further information about requests for a Leave of Absence, please refer to our School Attendance Policy.

# Application for Leave of Absence Form

**To be completed by the parent / carer**

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| Name of child: | |
| Class: | |
| First day of absence: | Number of school days: |
| Date of return: | |

| |
|---|
| Please outline the special circumstances for which leave is requested: |

| | |
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| Signed: | Dated: |
| Leave requested by: Mother/ Father/ Both<br>Name/s:<br>Address: | |

**To be completed by the Headteacher**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Having considered your request carefully, my decision is that leave of absence is: | | |
| Approved | | The absence will be recorded as authorised. |
| Not approved | | The absence will be recorded as unauthorised. |
| Explanatory notes:<br><br>**N.B. Unauthorised absence of 5 days or more may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice.** | | |
| Signed: | | Date: |
| Name: Mrs Katie Keyte | | |