



ATTENDANCE POLICY

ABSTRACT

For children to gain the greatest benefit from education they need to attend school regularly

APPROVED	Chair / Headteacher
POLICY DATE	Autumn 2021
REVIEW	September 2022

Introduction

Grange Primary School aims to maximise attendance rates and secure high levels of punctuality to ensure that all pupils can take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them. Our partnerships with parents is playing a vital role in ensuring that this is achieved.

We recognise that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. At all times, parents are encouraged to take an active role in the school life and to share and support their children's learning. Through our home-school agreement, parents agree to ensure their child's the regular and punctual attendance. This Policy represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable, and achieved by many children.

Principles:

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is every child's legal entitlement
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social, emotional development and positive attitudes towards school
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children while they are not in the care of their parents
- All pupils whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable

These principles are preserved in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

Aims of the Policy:

- To ensure that all pupils attend school full-time as much as possible, so as to maximise their educational achievement and social development
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard its pupils to the best of its ability
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and act on their responsibilities about attendance
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence
- To improve the life chances of Grange's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood

Policy objectives:

- To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children
- To reduce persistent absence
- To reduce or eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence
- To promote commitment to education and high achievement
- To maximise the potential of every individual pupil

The Headteacher will not grant any Leave of absence during term-time unless she considers there are **MOST EXCEPTIONAL** circumstances relating to the application. Exceptional circumstances being defined as, being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, this outweighs the loss of teaching time.

Why attendance matters:

98%+ attendance is equivalent to less than five days absence

93.5% attendance is equivalent to 14 days absence

90% attendance is equivalent to 20 days absence

88% attendance is equivalent to 30 days absence

If a child achieves 80% attendance, this means that they have missed approximately 40 days of education over the academic year, averaging one day per week.

Rewards

- Each week the class with the highest attendance will receive a certificate and a £2 coin. At the end of each term, the winning class will receive a certificate and they can spend the total amount of the money (monetary value of the £2 coins) on something of their choice
- Individual pupils with 100% attendance for a whole term will have a star placed on the attendance board in the school hall and receive a certificate
- Pupils with 100% attendance through the whole school year will receive a certificate and a medal

Reluctant attendees/school refusal

We will endeavour to encourage the children to attend and to put in place appropriate procedures. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to rectify it. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

School refusal or school phobia is a psychological condition that usually has been medically diagnosed. Other arrangements may be put in place for a child with genuine school phobia.

Understanding types of absence coding

Every absence (including half-day absence) from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc.

Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are:

- Illness
- Hospital appointment which unavoidably falls in school time
- Bereavement

Types of absence which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents, birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members of the family are unwell (with the exception of Covid)
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark

School procedure

1. Registration and punctuality procedures

Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day and once during the afternoon session. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes after the start of the session. Pupils arriving before the end of the registration period will be coded L (Late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register.

Only the Headteacher or designated member(s) of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence of registration, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not one of the above reasons listed under the authorised absences, and evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as 'O' (Unauthorised absence). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year; or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action. If a pupil is persistently late, the Learning Mentor and/or attendance officer will arrange to meet with the family as soon as the pattern is identified.

2. First Day Absence Contact

Parents must notify the school if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. If the school does not receive notification, a member of staff will call their parents to ascertain the reason. 'First day contact' will be carried out as soon as the register is closed, to notify parents whose children may have set off for school, but not arrived.

3. Second Day Absence Contact

If the child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, another telephone call or a home visit will be made. The family may be asked to come to school for a meeting.

4. Frequent/Persistent Absence Procedures

The definition of persistently absent (PA) pupil as set by the DFE for 2015 - 2016 is a pupil with 10% or more absence (90% or less attendance). The table below, derived from the census guidance, gives an indication of the minimum number of sessions a pupil would miss by each half term to be classed as PA.

Half-term	10%
Half-term 1	7 or more sessions
Half-term 1-2 (autumn term)	14 or more sessions
Half-term 1-3	20 or more sessions
Half-term 1-4 (autumn term and spring term combined)	25 or more sessions

Half-term 1-5	31 or more sessions
Half-term 1-5	31 or more sessions
Half-term 1-6 (full academic year)	38 or more sessions

Regular trawls of the registers will be made to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA). The Learning Mentor will be responsible for identification of any emerging concerns and put in place actions for each pupil of concern.

The school will inform the parent/carer by sending:

- An orange warning letter will be sent when a pupil's attendance falls below 90% in any period
- A red warning letter will be issued, if absences persist and continue to drop below 85%, and will result in the school either conducting a meeting or a home visit. This will also constitute a monitoring period of 15 days where the child should have no unauthorised absences

Initially, the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues the school will refer to the School Health Advisor if the problem appears to be a medical one. In cases where there appear to be issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child, a referral may be made through the Triage system for external agency support.

5. Punctuality Notice

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

- 1) The school may ask the Council to issue a Penalty Notice on its behalf. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 20 days, it rises to £120 per parent, per child. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated
- 2) The school may ask the Council initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500 or even imprisonment

6. Children who Cease to Attend without Prior Notification (CME) procedures

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in the CME Policy and Procedures. However, if, after ten days continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to the school. If after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, they will be removed from the school roll.

7. Non-starters

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the local authority CME team for further checks.

Vulnerable Children

Attendance of children who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with the highest priority and will be known to the Learning Mentor. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home or home visit if deemed necessary. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will be treated with similar priority so that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

Safeguarding

There is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and antisocial behaviour and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend school regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

