

Gladesmore Community School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

[OP2]

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ATTENDANCE POLICY [OP2]

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Introduction

Gladesmore promotes excellent school attendance and punctuality for every pupil and is committed to working with pupils, families, the local authority and external agencies in order to achieve this.

There is a strong link between regular school attendance and positive educational outcomes. Pupils should attend school regularly so that they may be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities provided so as to maximise their academic performance and social development.

The School has high expectations in relation to pupils’ attendance and punctuality and in order to benefit fully from their education pupils must attend school regularly and on time. Missing out on lessons leaves pupils vulnerable to falling behind and less likely to achieve their full potential.

Courts have defined regular attendance as *attendance in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school*. The rules prescribed by Gladesmore Community School are that **all pupils should attend school every day that the school is open to them throughout the academic year**.

The School and local authorities work together to:

- Promote good attendance.
- Reduce absence including persistent absence.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education.

The School works to:

- Encourage all pupils to see regular attendance and punctuality as a priority and to recognise their importance to future economic well-being.
- Provide a stimulating educational experience to encourage attendance.
- Comply with legal requirements for recording and reporting attendance.
- Track and monitor individual pupil attendance to identify patterns early.
- Work with parents/carers, the local authority and external agencies to support pupils who are absent to improve their attendance at school.
- Communicate with parents/carers and make referrals to the local authority and external agencies where attendance is a concern.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school regularly and on time every day that the school is open.
- Engage with support provided to help improve their attendance or punctuality.

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Ensure their children attend school every day and on time.
- Notify the school and give reasons for any absence each day of absence.
- Provide evidence when requested in relation to any absence.
- Work with the school, local authority and external agencies to improve attendance and punctuality where there are concerns.

Legal background

Parents/carers of children of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive full-time education and where registered at a school, that they attend school regularly. Where parents/carers fail to meet this duty, the school will work with the local authority to consider the use of legal sanctions for non-attendance such as Penalty Notices, Parenting Contracts or prosecution.

Authorised absence means that the headteacher, or designated attendance lead, has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be absent or have accepted an explanation given for the period of absence.

Unauthorised absence means that the headteacher, or designated attendance lead, has not given approval for the absence or are not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Pupil Absence

The school will decide whether to authorise absence for illness or for any other reason(s) provided.

It is at the School's discretion whether to accept explanation(s) for absence, and whether to accept, or not, whatever medical evidence or other evidence that is provided by a parent or carer. This is especially pertinent if in the school's view the evidence provided does not appear to support the level of absence.

Medical evidence may be requested if:

- the absence is more than three days;
- the authenticity of an illness is in doubt;
- there are concerns about repeated absences due to illness.

Medical evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card, prescription, a packet of prescribed medication with a label, a doctor's letter or similar form of verification. Evidence must be recent, provided promptly, stipulating the prescribed date and relate to the period of absence and specific the child's name and date of birth to verify authenticity.

Additional medical evidence may be requested in some circumstances to examine the correlation between absence levels and parental explanations. The decision whether to authorise an absence is at school discretion, as is the decision whether to accept medical evidence where absence becomes a serious concern.

Where a pattern of medical absences begins to develop the school may involve external agencies for further information and support. The school will aim to support pupils with ongoing medical conditions to continue to attend school regularly and to manage their conditions.

Medical or Dental Appointments

Appointments should be made for outside of school hours where possible and for the shortest time necessary so that learning is not interrupted.

Parents/carers must notify the school in advance of appointments (with evidence as required) in order for the absence to be marked as authorised.

If a pupil needs to leave school during the school day to attend an appointment, parents/carers must inform the school in advance.

Religious observance

The school will authorise absence when it is due to *religious observance*. The day must be a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/carers belong. The school may ask for evidence of this.

Not all religious festivals or events will be set aside for *religious observance* and if a day is not categorised as such, the absence will not be authorised and parents/carers will have to apply for leave of absence under exceptional circumstances instead.

Study leave

Study leave may be granted to pupils approaching their GCSE examinations. The headteacher will decide what arrangements will be made for study leave on an annual basis and will communicate this to pupils and parent/carers.

Leave of absence during term-time

Regulations only allow headteachers, or designated attendance lead, to authorise a leave of absence during term-time if they consider there to be *exceptional circumstances*.

The headteacher, or designated attendance lead, will consider each request for a leave of absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context of the request. The headteacher, or designated attendance lead, will decide whether to authorise the leave of absence or not.

Parent/carers must request leave of absence in advance and outline the exceptional circumstances leading to the request. The school may ask for evidence to support the request. holidays or family trips during term-time will not be authorised by the headteacher unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If a leave of absence is not approved and parent/carers decide to continue with the absence anyway, it will be marked as an unauthorised absence and may be referred to the local authority. The local authority could issue a penalty notice to each parent/carer of each child registered at the school.

Attendance data

Pupil attendance data will be monitored and shared with the local authority and the Department for Education where there is a statutory requirement to do so. The school will also share attendance data with the local authority or other agencies where there is a cause for concern regarding attendance or punctuality.

The Attendance Team:

- Monitor attendance and punctuality to identify trends and pupils requiring support;
- Follow up concerns about attendance;
- Communicate with parents/carers to discuss concerns about attendance and lateness;
- Work with pupils and parent/carers to plan interventions and arrange support designed to improve attendance and punctuality;
- Work with external agencies to tackle non-attendance;
- Make referrals to the local authority Education Welfare Service where there is persistent absence or ongoing cause for concern;
- Provide legal documentation and appears in court in cases where legal action has been undertaken against the parent/carers of pupils with irregular attendance.

The following attendance levels will be used to identify pupils requiring support and interventions to improve their attendance:

- **96-91% attendance** – the school will work with pupils and parents/carers to discuss and implement strategies for improving attendance. If attendance does not improve the case will be considered for referral to the Education Welfare Officer for further action.
- **90% or lower** – where attendance falls below 90% this will be classed as *persistent absence* and the case will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer for further action.
- Where attendance has deteriorated rapidly, where there are concerning patterns of absence, a number of unauthorised absences, or parents/carers have not engaged or responded to school interventions, a referral may be made to the local authority Education Welfare Service.

Persistent absence

The Department for Education has defined attendance at less than 90% as *persistent absence*. Absence at this level is potentially damaging to a pupil's educational prospects. The Education Welfare Officer will identify pupils who are persistently absent, or at risk of becoming persistently absent and put in place appropriate interventions. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for support. If parents/carers fail to engage with support and attendance does not improve a referral will be made to the local authority Education Welfare Service which could result in legal proceedings through a penalty notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court. Parents found guilty could receive a criminal record and a fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence.

Support to improve attendance

Gladesmore recognises that non-attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a pupil's life related to problems at home or at school. Parents/carers should make the school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that might affect their child's attendance or behaviour.

Gladesmore also recognises that some pupils are more vulnerable to non-attendance or more likely to need support to achieve regular attendance for example some pupils with special educational needs, mental health needs and looked after children. Gladesmore will consider the circumstances and aim to support improved attendance.

Where parents/carers fail, obstruct or refuse to engage with support and further absence occurs, Gladesmore will refer the case to the local authority to consider the use of legal interventions.

Local Authority Legal Interventions

In cases where irregular attendance is a serious concern or not improving, the school will consult with the local authority Education Welfare Service with a view to commencing legal proceedings against parents. Further information can be found on the Haringey Council Website:

<https://www.haringey.gov.uk/children-and-families/schools-and-education/informationparents/education-welfare-service-ews>

Fixed Penalty Notices

A Fixed Penalty Notice issued by Haringey Council is a penalty of £160 (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days), payable by each parent, for each child that has been absent from school for unauthorised reasons. There is no appeal against the issue of a penalty notice.

Prosecutions

It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their children receive a full-time education. This is set out in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 a parent is guilty of an offence if:

(1) If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, their parent is guilty of an offence.

(1A) If in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (1) the parent knows that their child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails without reasonable justification to cause him to do so, they are guilty of an offence.

Strategies for promoting attendance and punctuality

The school will use a range of strategies to promote attendance and punctuality to all pupils and their parents/carers including assemblies, tutor group and individual rewards or sanctions.

Attendance and Safeguarding concerns

Gladesmore Community School has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all its pupils and those who do not attend school regularly may be at risk of harm. Where there are safeguarding concerns regarding attendance the school will follow procedures set out in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.