

POLICY FOR PARENTS

GREENWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance as defined to be in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.

Regular attendance is attendance at school on each day the school is open for the pupils unless there is an authorisable reason to be absent; and in accordance with the registration regulation 2006 (amended). Section 444 of the education act 1996. “If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.” A pupil’s Unauthorised Absence is an offence for the parent.

Information for Parents

As a school we aim to:

Maintain a maximum attendance for all children with a minimum of unauthorised absence
Maintain a low rate of persistent absenteeism
Maintain parents’ and pupils’ awareness of the importance of efficient and full time attendance
Maintain punctual time keeping

Good attendance is important because:

Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
Regular attenders settle into High School more easily and rewardingly

As a parent you can help us by:

- Ensuring your child attends school regularly. (Attendance at school on each day the school is open for the pupils, unless there is an authorisable reason to be absent; only the school can authorise an absence)
- Absence should only happen
 - a) When your child is significantly/symptomatically ill and therefore unfit to attend school. There should be an observable symptom; ‘feeling unwell’ is not enough. We may ask for medical verification where illness-absence is frequent, prolonged or where there are absences before or after a school holiday. If your child has a documented medical condition that hinders regular attendance, please let us know.
 - b) If there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty/period of difficulty
- Telephoning on the first morning of any absence to give us the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school; please keep us updated daily thereafter
- Keeping the school updated by telephone, email or letter if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness (or other reason)
- A timely reason; satisfactory to the school needs to be given for an absence; otherwise the absence will remain unauthorised
- Providing medical verification where illness-absence is frequent or prolonged or where asked to do so by the school

- Arranging all non-emergency medical and dental appointments out of school hours or during school holidays
- If you as a parent, suffer with any underlying health issue, please make arrangements in the event you are unwell and unable to bring your child to school i.e. a friend, neighbour, another parent or a family member to help you. Parental illness is legally not acceptable for a child missing school
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers i.e child minders and emergency contact details
- **If you are leaving** the area or changing schools, please complete a **Leaver's Form** (available at the school office). Schools and the local authority are obliged to track pupils missing from school. This can be intrusive in the absence of reliable or confirmed information

School will:

- While we expect a parent to contact us with a reason for absence, on occasions they might forget to inform the school we will endeavour to call text or contact parents and may follow up unexplained absences by phone calls, emails, letters as necessary. Schools also have a safeguarding role so on occasion, home visits may be made by school staff or by the Local Authority School Attendance Officer if a parent cannot be otherwise contacted.
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in our letters, the school brochure, on our website, at open evenings, in the Home-School Agreement and in pupil's annual reports.
- Publish our attendance data on the school website
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance and punctuality
- If your child has a documented medical condition, we will devise a care plan with you/your GP to support your child in school; this might also require us to refer to the school nurse.
- If your child has a documented medical condition that hinders regular attendance we will wish to discuss this with you and devise a care plan to support missed learning as necessary.
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance or punctuality. The school will express '**a concern**' either verbally or by letter. If attendance does not improve or explanations for absence are unsatisfactory you may be invited to a meeting. The school will also outline what the attendance expectations are and what actions will follow and we will seek to support you. You may be asked to agree a 'Parenting Agreement/Contract'. A referral may also be made to the Borough's School Attendance Service, whose officers visit the school regularly to review and support attendance and punctuality issues.
- Where attendance concerns persist, the school will escalate the matter to the Borough Court Officer; this includes unauthorised absence due to significant lateness.

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences". That is when the school accept a reason given for absence.

We realise that there are rare, unavoidable occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent such as sudden bereavement, unexpected parental illness or a family crisis. If this happens, please let us know and we shall try to deal with the matter sympathetically. Following such incidents, parents are expected to make any necessary arrangements for their child to return to school as soon as possible (ideally the next day). Parents must apply in writing to the Headteacher if absence for these reasons is likely to be prolonged.

However, please note that when illness is a frequent reason given for absence then the school will ask for evidence other than a parent's word.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons not acceptable to the school, Unauthorised absence is an offence in law. Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting for a delivery or repair
- Taking or collecting a relative to/from the airport
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Going shopping for shoes, uniform or for a haircut
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Term time holiday/cheap flights
- Parent's illness (other than in an emergency)
- Where there is no explanation for an absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory.
- Extended leave following a period of approved leave such as for religious observance; (other than where satisfactory evidence has been provided)

Unauthorised Absences are reported to the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service may contact you where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem. The Local Authority and the school will then work in partnership with you until matters improve.

Unauthorised absence could result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or other legal action.

Sanctions for continued, unauthorised absence include warnings, penalty notices (fines) prosecution in the magistrate's court or an education supervision order through the family proceedings court.

Persistent Absence

Once a child's attendance falls to 90% for whatever reason, he/she is automatically defined by the Department for Education (DfE) as a Persistent Absentee irrespective of the reason for absence.

Such low attendance is well below our expectations and as such, the school will work in partnership with and the Local Authority and the parent to improve matters. In such cases, parents might be invited to agree a 'Parenting Agreement/Contract' with the school as a way of measuring improvement.

Persistent absence is a serious problem for children. Much of the work they miss when they are off school is never made up; these gaps in their learning leave children at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. Statistics show a direct link between poor attendance and under-achievement

Absence around school holiday periods

- Un-notified absence before and or after school holiday periods will be regarded as unauthorised leave (parents are reminded that the school attendance policy requires the parent to notify the school of absence on each day)

- Absence claimed by a parent as illness before or after a school holiday must be reported during the period of absence and contemporaneous medical evidence produced to the school, otherwise it will be regarded as unauthorised leave.
- Except as in the case of an emergency, retrospective approval cannot be given without an application having been made and/or satisfactory evidence provided.

Exceptional Leave - Term Time Leave of Absence

Amendments to the 2006 Attendance Regulations make it clear that a Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time for holidays. That only in **exceptional (and documented) circumstances** can leave be allowed. We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of term time leave. There is **no entitlement** to time off during term time. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances (e.g. if there is an emergency) at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body.

It is our policy:

- Only in an exceptional circumstance will term time leave be considered. All leave is granted at the Headteacher's discretion. Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form well in advance and before booking tickets or making travel arrangements (forms are available at the school office) Parents whose first language is not English are encouraged to arrange a meeting with the school and bring a friend or companion to assist them. Parents sometimes confuse 'telling' the school as being good enough, this is not so, you will need explicit permission from the school for any leave.
- If a child goes abroad during a school holiday period, the parent must make definite arrangements so that they return in good time for school re-opening. Absence claimed as illness before or after a school holiday must be reported during the period of absence and medical evidence produced on return to school otherwise, the absence will be regarded as unauthorised leave. Medical Documentation should be in English.
- If a child is not present at the beginning of a school term, we cannot guarantee that a place will remain available on their return to school. If you experience delays in returning from a trip within the UK or abroad for whatever reason, the school will require documentary evidence accompanied with proof of original return dates i.e. tickets or an official travel plan showing intent to return on time.
- If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and you may be liable for a fixed-penalty fine*. Where a child's whereabouts cannot be established he/she may be regarded as a 'Child Missing Education'. In certain instances the child may also risk losing their school place.

**Payment of the penalty discharges liability for the offence. It is an alternative to prosecution. There are 2 levels of penalty notice - £60 (if paid within 21 days of issue), and £120 (if paid later than 21 days but within 28 days). Failure to pay will result in prosecution in magistrate's court for irregular attendance, where, on conviction a fine of up to £1000 may be imposed as well as a record of criminal conviction.*

Punctuality

Good punctuality is pre requisite to good learning and shows a respect between pupil, family and school.

- Late arrival after registration closes, without an acceptable reason can be marked as an 'unauthorised absence'. Parents remain responsible for their child's punctuality. Arriving late to school on a consistent basis can have longer-term academic effects. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for the child. If showing up late to school becomes a habit, children may develop the notion that lateness is acceptable behavior. This belief can negatively impact their future work ethic and employment opportunities.
- Morning registration is at 8.55 am. You need to aim for your child to come through the school gate by latest 8.50 am.
- Arrival after the close of registration (particularly if the lateness is frequent or persistent and there is not an acceptable reason) will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with the DfE guidance; this has the value an unauthorised absence. When late arrivals are frequent or persistent we will want to discuss this with you.
- All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness, if known, will also be recorded. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness.

Please remember that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. A good understanding of the work and good progress can only take place when the child is in the classroom regularly and on time.

Collection from School Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day or from an agreed after school activity. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected child to a place of safety (often a police station) and might share concerns with other agencies including the Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service ECIRS (formally Social Services).

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of Year 6 to go to High School) parents are asked to:

- You must give the school comprehensive information about your plans; including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing. A leaver's form is available from the school office which you should complete. (A destination country or another named Local Authority is not sufficient).
- When a child leaves and we do not have information about where they have gone/will be educated, then he/she is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (formerly Social Services), the Police, benefits/council tax records and other agencies, to try to locate your child. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Withdrawals:

- Parents who remain resident locally can only withdraw their children from school if they have a confirmed start date at another school or are undertaking to educate the child at home (Home Education). If the latter, this must be confirmed in writing to the school by the parent. Pupils remain registered at school until such conditions are satisfied.

Legal Note

Parents have a legal duty to ensure efficient and full time attendance at school of registered pupils of statutory school age (Education Act 1996). This is the legal requirement. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine).

We value your support in helping us to maintain the high standards to which we always aspire.

“Every day counts and Every Child Matters!”

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