



Attendance Policy

Approved by: Governing Body **Date:** November 2019

Last reviewed on: November 2017

Next review due by: November 2021

Introduction

At Grimsdyke School we encourage all pupils to aim for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day during term time unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Good attendance at school is essential for a pupil's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. All children are entitled to attend school for 190 full days each year. We would wish to support all families to achieve this with their children. At Grimsdyke School we expect that children will have an attendance rate of at least 95%.

Why is attendance so important?

- Government legislation requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives efficient fulltime education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence have to be reported to the School Governing Body, Local Authority (LA), and the Department for Education (DfE) and are therefore used as one of the many measurements of the effectiveness of educational provision.
- Parents, guardians and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy as any absence will have a huge impact on your child's learning.
- Regular school attendance is essential and parents, guardians and carers, together with our school staff all have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved. There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement.
- To help us all to focus on this we will celebrate good attendance by awarding 100% certificates annually and awarding a certificate for the best class attendance in the Infant School and one in the Junior School each half term. On-time owls are awarded to classes weekly to reflect good attendance and low levels of lateness.

Aims

- To safeguard the welfare of the children attending Grimsdyke School.
- To ensure that all children access the maximum amount of learning time available to them.
- To ensure that all parents are aware of the importance of regular timely attendance and their legal responsibilities.
- To support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- To achieve an unauthorised absence rate of nil.
- To ensure that parents and school staff are aware of the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence and the reasons for which authorisation may be given.
- To ensure attendance meets target set in the school development plan.

Equal Opportunities

We will take account of the different circumstances which families are experiencing, in so far as we can be aware of these and so far as possible, and how this may affect their children's pattern of attendance and lateness.

Monitoring

This policy is monitored by the Governing Body, Head teacher and administrative staff. Figures are shared with the Governing Body through termly reports to the Pastoral and Well-being Committee and reported to parents as necessary. Regular returns are made to the Local Authority and the DfE (Department for Education).

Responsibilities:

School responsibilities

- To communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school.
- Maintain appropriate attendance data.
- Have appropriate registration processes in place that meet statutory requirements set by the DfE.
- To follow up absences and lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school: initially with a first-day absence contact.
- Inform parents/carers of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.
- To alert parents if their child's attendance has fallen below the expected 95% attendance rate.
- Provide parents with an annual summary of their child's attendance report.
- To have systematic and consistent daily records which chart absence and lateness.
- To report to the EWS (Educational Welfare Service) and support their work with pupils as necessary.
- To report to the Government on attendance three times a year.
- To consistently administer the attendance procedure and evaluate its effectiveness when and where required.
- To ensure that registers are taken twice daily: at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- To promote good attendance.

Parent responsibilities

- To have children in school ready for teaching by the start of the day at 8.45 a.m.
- To inform school on **the first** day of any absence.
- To request leave as far in advance as possible in writing. (Minimum timescale of two weeks)
- To work with the school and EWS to improve lateness and attendance.
- To avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day as far as possible.
- Where the school has informed parents that children need to be taken to or collected from an off-site location e.g. for a school trip or sports event, they advise the school of any difficulty or delay so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school you should talk to your child's class teacher in the first instance. Alternatively, please talk to the Welfare Officer (Mrs Patel) or the Deputy Head teacher/ Assistant Head teacher

Child's responsibilities

- To attend school every day.
- To attend school punctually.
- To attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- To discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

Governors

It is the Governors' legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in their schools. The schools attendance figures are shared with the Governing Body on a termly basis and this is recorded in the minutes of the relevant meetings of the Pastoral and Well-being committee.

THE PROCESS OF MONITORING ATTENDANCE

Rewarding good attendance

The Welfare Officer and class teachers, Head teacher and Deputy Head teacher/ Assistant Head teacher endeavour to give children and parents positive feedback when they succeed in maintaining an acceptable and good level of attendance/punctuality.

An owl award trophy is given to the classes in each phase of the school which has had the best attendance regularly.

Children whose attendance rate 100% are celebrated publicly in an assembly at the end of each term, or the beginning of the subsequent term. At the end of the year a certificate is awarded.

We remind parents of the importance of regular and timely attendance on a half termly basis through texts and newsletters.

Following up instances of absence and lateness

The Welfare Officer will discuss absence and lateness regularly (at least half termly) with the Head teacher.

Where issues persist the following will be initiated:

Stage 1: Where there are concerns about attendance and punctuality the school will make verbal contact with home.

Stage 2: If the concerns persist the school will write to the parents/carers informing parents of their child's current attendance. A review will take place at the end of every half term or as and when an intervention is required

Stage 3: If the concerns persist the school will arrange a meeting between the parent/ carer, and a school representative. A plan will be agreed to address any issues and this may include referral via a CAF (Common Assessment Form) to social services to access support for the family or child.

Stage 4: If the concerns persist the school will make a formal referral to the Local Authority Educational Welfare Service to deal with the on-going issues.

The EWS will agree action (as above) and where necessary meet with the parents/carers. **Please note that ultimately the Local Authority can take legal action.**

Absence from school

There are two main categories of absences:

Authorised Absence: this is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence.

For example:

- genuine illness of the pupil
- hospital appointment for the pupil; (proof of appointment needs to be given)
- major religious observances as agreed by SACRE – please check with the school
- visits to prospective new schools
- external exams or educational assessments.

Unauthorised Absence: this is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request. Please be aware that when a parent telephones the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness, or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. Your child's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.

For example:

- a shopping /day trip / visit to a theme park
- a birthday treat
- parental lateness
- oversleeping due to a late night
- looking after other children / other family member
- holidays
- appointments for other family members

If your child is not in school and we do not have a reason for the absence, the school will telephone you to find out the reason.

Sickness

Please notify the school on the first day of the absence.

We may request a doctor's/consultant's letter regarding recurring and frequent illness.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Harrow Attendance Officer.

Where persistent absenteeism becomes an issue the school will instigate the Local Authority directed process of issuing a Educational Fixed penalty notice. Please see further into the policy for more information.

Exclusions

If a child is behaving in a way likely to lead to exclusion the school will seek the support and guidance of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) in an attempt to avoid an exclusion. If a child is to be excluded the EWO will be informed.

Lateness to school

Regular and punctual attendance is both the legal requirement and essential for your child to maximise the opportunities available to them.

- Children need to be in the school playground by 8.45am. The gates open at 8.30 a.m.
- Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time. Children will be marked late if they arrive at school after the registers have been taken.
- The school gates will be closed at 8.45a.m. Children who arrive after that time must come into the building via the main office and Welfare Room, where they will be entered into the late book with their name and time of lateness. You will be asked why your child is late for school. This is then transferred into the registers.
- If the arrival at school is after the registers have closed at 9.30am, the pupil will receive a 'U' if the lateness is unauthorised. This equates to an absence although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety. Any arrival after school start time could be considered an **unauthorised** absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an **authorised** absence coded 'M'.

Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Persistent lateness by a child is treated as seriously as any other absence from school. Parents of children who seem to be developing patterns of lateness (more than 1 late per week or 5 late marks in a half term) will be reminded in writing of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists parents will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem with the Welfare Officer or Headteacher and will be warned of the legal consequences of continued lateness. If the lateness continues, the school concerns will be referred to the Education Welfare Service for advice and support. A Penalty Notice may be issued by the Court Attendance Officer or Prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Leave of absence during term time

Regular and punctual attendance is both the legal requirement and essential for your child to maximise the opportunities available to them.

Guidance from the Department of Education means that Headteachers **may not** grant **any** leave of absence during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances**.'

Please respect these regulations under which we legally work, and if you do need to take your child out of school during term time, you need to make it very clear in your request how the circumstances are **exceptional**. If this is not clear then under the legislation, the Head teacher will not be allowed to grant leave. Legally the Head teacher cannot authorise absence retrospectively, therefore all requests for a period of authorised absence must be made in advance and should be made **two weeks** in advance except in emergencies. Parents should not book annual leave or pay for any travel arrangements until they have received confirmation that the Head Teacher has authorised the period of absence requested.

- Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in writing in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides. Please note, documentary evidence (for example, travel provisional bookings, invitations, relevant letters) will be required.
- Leave of absence will only be granted where the Head teacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. The parent will be informed within 7 school days of receiving the request as to whether it has been authorised or unauthorised.

The Head teacher may only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Head teacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Head teacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Head teacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there **WILL** be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance.

In difficult family situations the Head teacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above, the Head teacher may consult with the governing body prior to any authorisation being given to the parent. Evidence would be required in each case and would be shared with the school governors consulted.

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Head teacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

- 1) The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils).
- 2) Transition days e.g. meet the teacher sessions
- 3) National testing weeks for pupils in Year One. Two and Six

When considering exceptional term time leave requests, the following factors may help to reach a decision:

- Time of the academic year when the leave has been requested
- Duration of the absence – number of school days being missed
- The child's current attendance and punctuality rate
- Exceptional Term time leave requested/taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose
- Whether parent/carers have considered limiting the amount of time the child would be absent from school e.g. wrapping around school holiday
- Have alternative care arrangements been considered by the parent/carer to limit the time away from school
- Impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family e.g. family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN
- The impact that the absence will have on the child.
- Whether it falls within any key stage national tests or exams;

The Head teacher will inform the parents of the outcome of any request for authorised absence in writing within two weeks of receiving the request or before the date any absence is due to start, whichever is sooner.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation will be recorded as unauthorised. There is the possibility that if persistent absence, poor punctuality or unauthorised leave of absence is recorded, the Local Authority may issue an Educational Penalty Notice.

Educational Penalty Notices

As part of promoting good attendance and punctuality, Harrow Local Authority will use its legal powers to enforce school attendance where this becomes problematic, including powers to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (Section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

In addition, the Local Authority will impose Penalty Notices as an alternative to prosecuting the parents for unauthorised absence and may also be issued where parents allow their children to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification.

The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 sets out the details of how the Penalty Notice scheme must operate. Harrow Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices will be made available for schools, parents/carers and other interested parties.

Harrow's Code of Conduct provides that Penalty Notices / prosecutions may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

Absence from school

- At least 20 sessions (10 school days) lost to unauthorised absence within a period of no more than 12 weeks.
- A leave of absence of at least 10 consecutive sessions (5 school days) not approved by head teacher as exceptional.

Lateness

- In cases where a child persistently arrives at school after the register has closed (ten unauthorised late marks) within a period of no more than 12 weeks.

Harrow Council will also be conducting Pre Court Panel meetings in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984. The Local Authority will hold Pre Court Panels for cases where there is persistent absenteeism/lateness and despite other interventions, issues are still continuing and it is necessary to pursue formal legal action.

The Harrow Attendance Guidance and Resources provides a clear outline of the process for escalating cases for legal action, which is called Attendance Intervention Model (AIM). This is available on the school website.

For further information please see the Harrow Council guidance at:

http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200086/school_and_college/1951/education_penalty_notices/3

Sanctions could be imposed including:

- Your child could lose their school place.
- You could be subject to legal action by the authority that could result in a fine of up to £2,500.

Late collection from School

Children should be collected on time at the end of the school day at 3.20 p.m. for Reception pupils and 3.30pm for all other students. Teachers will remain at their exit point with the children until 3.40 p.m. At this time they will be brought to the school office and registered as being late to be collected. We realise that occasionally children can be collected late for a variety of reasons. Please let us know in advance by telephone if you think you will be late to collect your child or if you have made arrangements with an alternative adult to collect your child.

The first time each half term that you are late to collect from school you will be given a warning letter. The second and further times you are late your child will be taken to our after school club and you will be required to pay for a full session when you collect your child.

If your child has not been collected by 4.00 p.m. **and we have not heard from you**, we may phone Children's Services to seek advice.

Children Missing from Education

'Children missing from education' refers to all children of statutory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision).

The school follows the systems and processes currently in place in Harrow to ensure that relevant children and young people are identified, supported to attend school and then have their attendance closely monitored.

Parents should be aware that when a student has not attended school for 10 consecutive days and the school has had no contact from the parent then we are required to inform Harrow Council who will remove the child from our school role and begin a 'Child Missing from Education' investigation.

Children who have been authorised to be absent from school

We provide guidance for the families of these children to ensure minimum disruption to their education. This is contained in the letter authorising their absence.

Children who are absent from school due to recovery from 'illness'

We will offer guidance, if requested, on activities to complete at home for those who have to be at home due to illness but are well enough to complete some learning e.g. recovering from chicken pox or a minor operation.

Policy created: Nov 2017

Policy reviewed: Nov 2019

Next review due: Nov 2021