

Attendance Policy

Date last reviewed	October 2024
Committee Responsible	SBS
Designated member of staff	DWE
Date of next review:	October 2025

STATEMENT OF INTENT

In order to promote and support our students' learning and enable each one of them to achieve their full potential, we encourage the students to achieve excellence in all aspects of their work and behaviour. Our organisation of their learning promotes enjoyment, perseverance and self-discipline.

Each student is entitled to the high quality education offered at this school and consistent attendance is an essential part of this process. We expect that students' attendance and punctuality should be as close to 100% as possible. We hope that all parents will recognise the value of attendance and punctuality, not only to take full advantage of the opportunities offered at Grey Court but also as training for adult life.

As referenced in the August 2024 Statutory Guidance, 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance': *the law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full time education...it is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education*'. As a school, we have a duty to ensure that this is the case, and to uphold that statutory guidance.

Key Objectives

- Ensure that the school promotes and maintains high levels of attendance for all our students
- Provide clear procedures for recording and monitoring attendance
- Provide clear procedures for following up authorised and unauthorised absence
- Provide clear procedures for following up repeated lateness
- Support students returning to school after a period of absence
- Satisfy legal requirements for reporting absence

Promoting High Levels of Attendance

The school promotes and maintains high levels of attendance by communicating its expectations clearly to all members of the school community through:

- a clear statement in the school prospectus
- an attendance officer, phase leaders and school based Family Support Worker
- letters and the weekly bulletin

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- the teachers discussing the importance of good attendance with the students
- the promotion of regular attendance and punctuality in assemblies
- having a system of appropriate rewards for groups and individuals who have consistently high levels of attendance and improved attendance
- the deployment of a dedicated attendance officer
- running 'In Touch absence alert'
- 'In Touch late alert' notification

PROCEDURES FOR RECORDING AND MONITORING ATTENDANCE

Completing the Register

Each form tutor is responsible for completing the register for their class. It is a legal requirement to complete the register at the beginning of each school session morning and afternoon. At the start of each school year, staff are reminded of the procedures for completing the register.

The school day starts at 8.25am. Registers are completed by 8.45am on SIMS or Edulink One. If a hard copy has had to be used this must be returned to the Attendance Office immediately. If a child arrives at school after the completion of the register, they must report to the Attendance Office and are marked late.

Monitoring Attendance

Phase leaders, Student Support Officers and school based Family Support Worker monitor the attendance of students supported by the Attendance Officer. When a student is absent and no notification is received from the parents after two days, the attendance officer will make contact by phone or email with the parents to ascertain the reason for absence. If contact is still not established then the matter should be referred to the Student Support Officer and the Phase Leader, as well as the Family Support Worker who will try and establish contact with the parents. Failing this, appropriate action will be discussed with the school based Family Support Worker at the weekly meetings with the Student Support Officer. It is the responsibility of the Student Support Officer to initiate action regarding absence and they must keep the Phase Leader, Family Support Worker and Attendance Officer informed of any concerns or patterns of absence that need further investigation. Phase Leaders and Student Support Officers will monitor overall patterns of attendance and will report to both the SLT members who oversee these year groups and the Family Support Worker.

PROCEDURES FOR AUTHORISED & UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Schools are required by the Education (Student Registration) Regulations 1995 to distinguish in the attendance register between authorised and unauthorised absences for all students of compulsory school age.

Authorised

Reasons for authorising absences:

- sickness or some unavoidable cause
- the student was absent with leave granted by the school
- because of attendance at another registered school (e.g. dual registration), college or work

placement

Leave of Absence

Students may be granted leave of absence by the school for the following reasons:

- following the death of a close member of the child's family
- attendance at an offsite unit or educational establishment
- when attending medical or dental appointments (upon receipt of an appointment letter)
- the student is taking part in approved work experience
- the student is excluded
- the student is on study leave

The school endorses the national advice given to be sparing in granting leave of absence. Parents are requested to avoid making medical appointments during school hours whenever possible. We do not allow leave for family holidays in term time. If there is a written application to the Headteacher to go away for exceptional circumstances the Headteacher would consider this. Request for absence in term time is normally declined.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is defined as unjustified absence from school for any period as a result of a premeditated or spontaneous act by the student or parent or both. This includes parentally condoned absence. The school regards absence as unauthorised until such time as an acceptable reason is provided and the school is able to authorise the absence. Absence is not authorised for students whose current attendance is less than 90%. Examples of unauthorised absences include:

- shopping or trips out
- sickness of family members
- looking after younger children
- apathy of parents or inability to control the child
- indulgence of a child's wish to stay at home
- lateness after the register has closed
- special occasions such as birthdays
- taking a half day off before or after a medical appointment or interview
- absence from a work experience placement without an authorised reason
- staying at home to complete coursework assignments
- going on holiday
- Low level/ generalised mental health concerns e.g. anxiety
- SEN needs

On receipt of the parent's explanation of the reason for their child's absence, the attendance and pastoral team will determine whether it is classified as authorised or unauthorised according to the above criteria. Failure to explain the reason for an absence will result in it being categorised as unauthorised.

A small number of students may have a high authorised absence rate due to frequent illness. This needs to be monitored carefully and where necessary a home visit by the school based Family Support Worker should be considered. Where a student continues to have a high level of unauthorised absence the parents will be invited into the school to discuss the matter with the school based Family Support Worker and the Student Support Officer. Where there is no improvement the matter will be referred to the school based Family Support Worker for further work with the child, family and other agencies. If no progress is made then legal action will be considered. The school reserves the right to fine parents for extended leave during term time.

Attendance Letters

Student attendances are monitored weekly on SIMS by the Attendance Officer, Phase Leader, the Student Support Officer and school based Family Support Worker. The school has a target of 96% attendance. When a student's attendance drops below 94% after the first half term Letter 1 will be sent to the parents, this highlights the concern.

The student's attendance will be monitored; if there is no improvement or as attendance drops below 90%, a Letter 2 will be sent, inviting the parents to attend a meeting with the school based Family Support Worker and the Student Support Officer to discuss these concerns. This letter informs parents that the school will no longer authorise further absences without evidence, unless they are due to an exclusion imposed by the school or for religious observance. In addition unavoidable medical appointments may be authorised.

The student's attendance will continue to be monitored; if the level continues to drop or goes below 85% a Letter 3 will be sent. This letter invites parents to a final meeting at school to discuss their child's attendance with an Assistant Headteacher and the school based Family Support Worker. If attendance continues to drop following this meeting a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service for a Legal Attendance Meeting. The outcome of this meeting can result in legal proceedings, according to the August 2024 Statutory Guidance, 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' which could be a Court Warning or Fine.

The percentages and procedures are subject to the Pastoral team and or the Attendance team's discretion, and will be viewed on a case by case basis.

PROCEDURES FOR FOLLOWING UP REPEATED LATENESS

Form Tutors and the Attendance Officer report any persistent lateness to the Phase Leader; parents will be called into school to discuss the problem. If necessary, this may be pursued by the Family Support Worker. Detentions will be set for lateness daily. This occurs in the daily PM detention afterschool run by the Pastoral Team.

Supporting Students during an Extended Period of Absence and When They Return To School Following a Period of Absence

The school will support children in the following ways:

- when a child has extended absence liaising with parents and subjects teachers to arrange for appropriate work to be accessed at home via Google Classroom.
- the Form Tutor may prepare the other children in the class for the child's return
- the Form Tutor and/or Student Support Officer inform teaching staff
- the Form Tutor and/or Student Support Officer liaises with the child's parent to ensure there are no problems

Children Absent from Education

We recognise that full attendance at school is important to the wellbeing of all our students and enables them to access the opportunities made available to them at school. Attendance is monitored closely and we work in partnership with Achieving for Children (AfC) when patterns of absence give rise to concern.

A child absent from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation of children (county lines). We will ensure, where possible, that we have more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. This will give the school additional options to make contact with a responsible adult when a child is absent from

education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern. Our attendance policy is reviewed regularly by the Governing Body. The school operates in accordance with statutory guidance 'Children Missing Education' (DfE 2016) [Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance](#). Page 5 states: Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. The school also operates in accordance with statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance 2024' and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 (note the language has changed in this document from 'children missing education' to 'children absent from education').

Children who run away or go missing from home or care

Grey Court school recognises that children who run away or go missing - and are thus absent from their normal residence - are potentially vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, offending and placing themselves in situations where they may suffer physical harm. 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022' references the 'Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or go Missing from Home or Care' (DfE 2014) which requires that every child or young person who runs away or goes missing must be offered a return home interview (RHI) within 72 hours of their return.

When necessary and in conjunction with AfC or other relevant local authority, Grey Court School will facilitate return home interviews, both in terms of releasing the young person from their normal timetable to participate in an interview and in providing an appropriate and safe space on the school or college site for the interview to take place.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PUBLICATION OF ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

Reporting to Parents

On every written report parents receive details of their child's attendance and punctuality. This information includes the possible attendance, the number of authorised absences (and therefore by deduction the actual attendance), the number of unauthorised absences and the number of lates.

Parents and carers will also receive information regarding their child's attendance termly.

Reporting to Governors

Each half term the school produces attendance and late statistics. These are shared with governors at the termly meetings.

ATTENDANCE LEGAL INTERVENTION

In accordance with the statutory guidance, August 2024 Statutory Guidance, 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance': *the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents.*

Fixed Penalty Notices and prosecutions are always used as a last resort. The school will consider every other avenue of support, prior to taking legal action. The school has a thorough strategic procedure it will use, including Attendance Contracts and review meetings, as well as working with the local authority to see what other interventions can be used. If no support is deemed necessary, or support would not be the appropriate course of action, e.g. a holiday in term time, a penalty notice could be issued, subject to other conditions.

According to the statutory guidance, August 2024 Statutory Guidance, 'Working Together to Improve

School Attendance', local authorities have the power to prosecute, if a child of compulsory age fails to attend school regularly.

Penalty Notices

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. According to the statutory guidance, August 2024 Statutory Guidance, 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance': *Strategies for promoting attendance are to ensure fairness and consistency across the country. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).*

When the school becomes aware that the threshold has been met, the school must consider if this is the appropriate course of action. Please note that *if in an individual case the local authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met.*

The school will act in accordance with the statutory guidance, August 2024 Statutory Guidance, 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance', in addition to consultation with the local authority. More information about the legal process, and collaborative working with families to support attendance can be found in the government guidance here: [School Attendance Guidance](#).

If Grey Court school consider fining parents for unauthorised absence, the procedure is as follows:

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £80 per child, per parent within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. All monies go to the local authority, not to Grey CourtSchool.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may consider:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.
- If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.