

Greenwich House Independent School

Attendance Policy (School)

The Department for Education School Attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities of August 2020 ("the Attendance Guidance") states:-

"Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated - pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The government expects:

- Schools and local authorities to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
 - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
 - act early to address patterns of absence. Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
 - All pupils to be punctual to their lessons."

A copy of the Attendance Guidance (which has been quoted and referred to throughout this policy and, which provides further details of the obligations incumbent on the school so far as attendance) is available on the following website:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

As at the time of writing this policy, the Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020 to 2021 academic year should be followed so far as government policy requires. The Addendum is also available at the above mentioned website. Therefore, from the start of the 2020/21 academic year, the following attendance and absence codes should be used in addition to the pre-existing codes:-

pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' should be recorded using code X4
schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak

Further guidance on the use of the COVID-19 code X4 etc is provided in the Addendum.

The Department for Education Children missing education Statutory guidance for local authorities September 2016 (available on the following website) also discusses schools duties so far as attendance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

Greenwich House Independent School is required by law to keep an admission register and an attendance register - all pupils are required to be placed on both registers.

Upon admission to the school a pupil's personal details (for example, including the date of their admission (or re-admission), information regarding parents and carers and the school at which a pupil was last in attendance) will be entered into the admissions register. The local authority is required to be notified following a pupil's admission to the school in accordance with the Attendance Guidance. Amendments to the register are also required in light of a change in a pupil's personal circumstances eg. they leave the school. When a child leaves the school, the local authority would also require to be notified in accordance with the Attendance Guidance. Other changes in personal circumstances that would require an amendment to the register would include, by way of an example, where the school is notified that a child will be living at a new address.

The attendance register is required to be taken twice a day and is required to show whether any absence is authorised or not and the type of authorised or unauthorised absence - the codes used to record attendance, an authorised absence and an unauthorised absence are set out and described in the Attendance Guidance. Authorised absence is where the Head Teacher has approved the absence, either before or afterwards. All other absences are unauthorised. The law is clear that it is schools, not parents, that authorise absence. You should write to the school to ask permission for an absence or to explain one that has already taken place.

When the school must authorise absence

The school must/would usually authorise your child's absence for the following:

- sickness (unless exceptionally the school is aware that the illness is not authentic);
- where school transport is unavailable, e.g. because a road is impassable (unless the child is near enough to walk,)
- days exclusively set apart for religious observance
- any other 'unavoidable cause' (which means unavoidable individual circumstances, e.g. flight delays from abroad or a 'catastrophic event' at the child's home).

Reference will always be made to the Attendance Guidance.

Sickness

Some cases can be quite complicated and the school will need full information to decide how it should treat the absence. If, for example, your child has a mental health problem such as depression or school phobia or a long-term condition such as chronic fatigue syndrome (sometimes called ME) you should send a letter from your doctor to show your child was too ill or distressed to attend school. Your child may need to see a specialist to show the absence is genuine. Keep a note of any appointments you have made and what the specialist said. If your child is too ill to attend school for more than 15 working days, the Local Authority (LA) should then provide some education for them e.g. home tuition.

When the school can decide to authorise absence

In the following examples the school can decide whether to authorise the absence:

- family holidays
- special occasions such as weddings
- family bereavements and other compassionate reasons
- family crises e.g. the child needs to care for a relative for a short period or go on a prison visit.

Family holidays or other absence

Time off for family holidays is not a legal right – the government recommends schools to allow absence in ‘exceptional circumstances’, but it is up to the school. If you want to take holiday during the term you must contact the school and get permission beforehand.

Traveller absence

Where children of traveller families can’t attend school because they are travelling, the school will normally authorise their absence. Travellers must attend at least 200 sessions a year, i.e. 100 days. Note that ‘travellers ’means people of no fixed abode who travel with their families for their trade, not people on extended holidays.

Lateness

Subject to any special arrangements in place during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the School register opens at 8.50am each day. If your child arrives at School after 9.00am but before the register closes they will be marked present but arrived as late, but once it is closed, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. The school closes the register at 9.15am.

If you let your child stay off school without permission, you will be breaking the law and might be fined and/or taken to court.

In line with its statutory and safeguarding duties the school will make enquiries to ascertain the reasons for a pupil’s absence (in the absence of a valid explanation) and in some circumstances share such information with the local authority and other appropriate authorities.

School records

You may request a copy of your child’s school record which includes a record of your child’s absence. This is important because it will tell you which absences have been allowed by the school. Write to the head for this. Subject to data protection requirements or other conflicting duties, we will provide the record within 15 school days of receipt of your letter

Authorisation of a pupil's leave of absence in exceptional circumstances form

Please ask the Head Teacher or her designated representative for a copy of this form if required as soon as possible in advance of any proposed absence. A copy of the form is attached for reference.

Signed on behalf of the setting by:

.....*Head teacher*

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