

Attendance Policy



GILES BROOK SCHOOL

Giles Brook School
Holborn Crescent
Tattenhoe
MK4 3GB

Tel: 01908 57627
www.gilesbrook.co.uk

Written by:	Claire Britnell	Date: 13/11/2017
Last Reviewed On:	09/10/2019	Policy Number: E7
Next review due by:	01/10/2021	

1 INTRODUCTION

For a child to achieve their full educational potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

2 AIMS

This policy outlines the aims and expectations of Giles Brook School to support pupil attendance at school.

3 OVERVIEW

No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development. In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as required by law. Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.

The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

Every child is sometimes unhappy about attending school. Families may be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter; it may even make things worse.

4 EXPECTATIONS

We expect the following from parents/carers:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually;
- To ensure that they contact the school as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend;
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework;

- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.

5 IF YOUR CHILD IS ABSENT

Parents are asked to inform school on each day of absence before 8:50am if their child is either ill or if they know that their child will be arriving late. If a telephone call is not received from parents, they will be contacted by the school by telephone on each day of absence. Absences not explained can be marked as unauthorised. Should the school not require parents to telephone about absence, e.g. when a child is expected to be absent for some time for hospitalisation etc., the school will inform parents whether they are required to telephone in.

When a pupil is late into school, i.e. after the 8.50am or 1.15pm bell, it is important that their parents sign in the pupil at reception on arrival. They will receive a late mark in the register.

It is essential that our contact details are kept up to date and ask that if parents change either address or phone numbers then these details are given in at the Office so our records can be amended. Where we are unable to speak to parents/carers on their home telephone line then we will attempt to contact them on the day contact telephone number they have provided.

6 RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively for safeguarding purposes. In cases where a problem may appear to be emerging, the headteacher may telephone the families concerned or invite parents to meetings about attendance discreetly, to discuss the situation with them.

6.1 Pupil Absence

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. These are called 'persistent absentees' by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category. The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

First day absence

- Phone call home to ensure all children are accounted for.

Attendance percentages below 95%

- Parents will be contacted with a letter at the end of every term to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family

Attendance Percentages below 90%

- Parents will be contacted with a letter to outline the decline in attendance **every half term** and the offer of support, identifying the procedures that will be followed should the attendance figure continue to drop.

Attendance Percentage 85% or less

- Parents will receive a phone call outlining the concerns. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the attendance figure an action plan may be set up, parents may be invited into school to discuss the situation in greater detail and medical evidence may be requested.
- If attendance percentage does not improve parents will be invited to take part in an attendance panel held at the school. The attendance panel will include members of the SLT. All evidence of the individual situation will be reviewed and appropriate targets will be set. Regular weekly review meetings will be arranged.

Fixed Penalty Warnings/Notice

A warning letter will be issued after ten unauthorised sessions have been recorded over a period of twelve weeks. The warning letter will be effective for twelve weeks and during this time it is an expectation that the child's attendance increases. After three weeks the attendance will be reviewed. If there is no improvement to the attendance for that child a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued which will result in a fine of £60 to each parent if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days.

6.2 Absence

It is the school that authorises absence. Parents provide a reason for children being absent from school. It is at the discretion of the school as to whether this reason is acceptable or not. The School may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to each parent/carer who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child at school. This currently stands at £60 (for those who settle within 21 days) and £120 (for those who pay within 28 days). The school works within the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

6.2.1 Authorising Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as unauthorised. An absence can only be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness of the pupil concerned (Not of the parent or another family member);
- A medical or dental appointment that cannot be taken outside of school hours;
- For the purpose of religious observation;
- It is a school approved educational event / trip;
- Family bereavements;
- Medical and dental appointments where proof is available;
- Fixed term exclusion;

- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

It is important that you understand the circumstances when absence in term time will not be authorised by the school – such as:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible;
- Immediately before and during assessment periods;
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.

6.2.2 Holidays

We advise parents that Giles Brook School follows the guidance which can be found at www.education.gov.uk:

“Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.”

There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

Parents can be issued with a fixed penalty notice for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. The school works within the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

Milton Keynes Council Code of Conduct has been updated to reflect the new arrangements and now states that a fine can be incurred if a child is removed from school for ten unauthorised sessions (five days).

- If a child is removed from school for ten unauthorised sessions, it is the duty of the school to refer this to the council who may then proceed with a fine.
- When exceptional circumstances occur, parents must make the request in writing.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as “exceptional”:

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company

- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided.

6.2.3 Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised under the following circumstances.

- Shopping trips;
- Holidays in term time;
- Minding the house or looking after siblings;
- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation;
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified;
- No reason given;
- School staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or not valid.

7 PUNCTUALITY

Giles Brook will actively discourage late arrival by challenging young people who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation. Registers will remain open from 8.50 till 9.00am. In the event of bad weather this period can be extended at the discretion of the Headteacher.

7.1 Start of School Day

The school day for KS1 & 2 begins at 8.50am (9am for Foundation pupils) and it is made clear to pupils that they must be present to be registered at that time. In support of this, classrooms are open from 8.40am (8.45am for foundation pupils). Pupils arriving after registration will be marked late on the register. Pupils arriving after 9.30am, will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U code). The register for the afternoon session is at 1.15pm. Pupils arriving after this will be marked late on the register.

School will notify parents of pupils who are persistently late. The school may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to each parent where the child has persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed. This currently stands at £60 (for those who settle within 21 days) and £120 (for those who pay within 28 days). The school works within the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

8. PARENTS

Giles Brook School expects parents to:

- Make contact with school on first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence thereafter, unless the School asks you not to do this;
 - Provide signed and dated absence notes for all absences;
- Support their child and the school in achieving maximum attendance.

8.1 Ensuring Pupil Information is Up-to-date

Schools should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies are effective. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states 'Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'.

Parents/carers are requested to complete an appropriate sheet annually at the start of the academic year and to inform the office of any changes as they happen.

9 STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR ATTENDANCE

The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Claire Britnell - Headteacher

Angie Bailey – Deputy Headteacher

Debbie Williamson – Assistant Headteacher

Clare Stone – Business Support Manager

10 SUMMARY

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Thank you for working with us.