



# Attendance Policy

January 2020

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## Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential. Pupils need to attend school to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law (Section 444, Education Act 1996). Godmanchester Community Academy fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at our school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils via our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the staff and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

**Attendance should be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.**

## Definitions

### Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority.

### Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## Responsibilities

### Parents'/Carers'

Parents/carers should ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unanticipated reason, such as sickness, they contact the school by 9.10 am at the latest on

the first morning (and each subsequent day) of absence. This may be done by telephone, email, letter, or in person at the school office. Parents/carers may not authorise their child's absence - only the school can do this.

If your child has scheduled medical appointment or other exceptional circumstance a request for absence must be made in advance. The school may request evidence such as appointment cards/letters or prescriptions.

Should parents/carers fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence, the school will record such absence as unauthorised.

Examples of authorised absences are:

- Serious illness of the child
- Unavoidable hospital/dental/doctor's appointment for the child
- Major religious observances
- Visits to prospective new schools
- External exams or educational assessments

Parents/carers are requested to inform the school of any circumstances which might affect the child's attendance. Following requests, parents/carers will receive confirmations of whether the absence has been authorised or not.

Children should not be brought into school via the main office unless this has been agreed by the class teacher or the school leadership.

### **Leave of absence**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states: is amended to:

*Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained state school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.*

*Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service this may result in prosecution proceedings or a fixed penalty notice. If a fixed penalty is issued a separate notice would be issued to each parent for each child.*

All applications will be treated on an individual basis by the Senior Leadership Team. Parents/carers will be informed of the decision of the school by letter/e-mail. If the School does not agree absence, and the child is taken on holiday, absence is unauthorised.

### **Penalty notice**

If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice, or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices may only be served in accordance with the County Council's code of conduct.

The amount of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 per parent per child if paid after 21 days and before 28 days. Should a parent or carer on whom a notice is served fail to pay the fine in full within the specified time he/she will be liable to prosecution in a Magistrates court where on conviction a sentence of a fine up to £2,500 or up to three months in prison may be imposed.

## School Responsibilities

**Our principle responsibility is to do everything within our power to ensure 100% attendance for all pupils.**

The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance with the statutory requirements.

Teachers will complete registers in accordance with the guidance contained in the staff handbook. Registers will be monitored by the office staff and the Senior Leadership Team. Both absence and punctuality will be monitored and concerns addressed directly with parents/carers.

### The Registration process:

AM

Period	Time
Arrival at school <i>through playground entrances only</i>	8.45 - 8.55am
Registration	8.55 - 9.05am
Late (L)	9.05 - 9.10am
Absent (U)	9.10am onwards

- The register will open at 8.55am and close at 9.05am.
- Children absent during this time will be marked by the class teacher as N (no reason yet for absence).
- Children arriving in school after 9.05am will be marked by the office staff as L (late). The number of minutes will be noted to enable to school to calculate missed learning time.
- Children arriving after 9.10am will be marked as U (absent)
- From **9.10am** the office staff will investigate N codes.
- Should no explanation be received from the child's parent/carers, the office will send a text message to listed contacts to seek explanation.
- If by **9.30am** the office have received no explanation, a follow up phone call to listed contacts will be made.
- If by **9.45am** the office have received no reply to their communication, a member of SLT will conduct a home visit as there may be welfare concerns. A paper log of the home visit will be posted to the house if no reply is received.
- At this point, the unexplained absence may be logged with the police.

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- The register is re-taken every afternoon between 1.00-1.10pm by the class teacher or cover teacher.

### **Monitoring Systems: Informing parents**

#### **Lateness**

Lateness will be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team on a weekly basis. Where lateness is deemed to be effecting learning, a letter may be issued stating the number of lates and minutes of learning time missed. The letter also emphasises the urgent need to stop late arrival happening and the possibility of informing the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

#### **Absence**

Absence will be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team on a regular basis. Where absence is deemed to be causing concern, a letter may be issued stating the current attendance and the urgent need for regular attendance. At this point, depending on the circumstance, the school may offer a meeting or wider support to the family. If attendance does not improve, the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) may be contacted and, depending on the circumstances, penalty notices and/or court action may result.

#### **Suspected holiday letter**

If a request for leave form has not been submitted, but the school has good reason to believe that absence is due to a holiday a suspected holiday letter may be issued. This will usually require families to provide evidence of authorised circumstances e.g., medical appointments, prescriptions etc. Where evidence is not provided and the school feel that the weight of evidence strongly indicate a holiday a penalty notice may be issued.

**Please be open and honest with the school if you are considering term time holidays - it is very unlikely we will authorise them but an honest and transparent relationship with the school is always preferred.**

### **Policy Details**

	Date	Name
Policy approved by Senior Management:	January 2020	Tess Fielden
Policy approved by Senior Governor	January 2020	Ian Phillips
Date of next review:	January 2022 (or sooner if deemed appropriate)	

### ***Policy Section: Section 1B - School Management Policies (Pupils)***

#### **Appendices:**

- **Leave of Absence Request Form**



# Godmanchester Community Academy

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM – exceptional circumstances

The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. Permission must be sought in advance. Recent government regulations have removed the discretion on head teachers agreeing to term time holiday requests except in exceptional circumstances, considered on a case by case basis. You are advised not to make arrangements until your request has been considered by the school.

If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absence may make you liable for a Penalty Notice (fine). Failure to settle a Penalty Notice may lead to prosecution by the local authority.

**To: The Attendance Officer, Godmanchester Community Academy**

I wish to have an absence of ..... days authorised due to exceptional circumstances, for:

Child's Name ..... Class .....

Do you have other children at another school? (please share their name and the name of the school here)

Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s).....

First day of absence..... Last day of absence .....

**Please fully explain the exceptional circumstances that you would like the school to consider. *Before completing this section please read the guidance overleaf.* Please continue on a separate sheet if needed.**

Signature of Parent(s)/Carer(s).....Date.....

### Office use only

Date form received	No of school days absence requested	Current % attendance	Authorised	Attendance Code	Date entered onto SIMS
			Yes / No		

Signature of Attendance Officer.....Date.....

Copy to parents  Scanned in SIMS

## ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL IN TERM TIME

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives an education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special needs. Receiving a good full-time education will give your child the best possible start in life. Attending school regularly and punctually is essential if children are to make the most of the opportunities available to them. Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed, and younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.

As a parent/carer you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.

The law allows schools to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient information/evidence in order to establish this fact.

**Applications must be made in advance, as schools do not have the power to authorise absence retrospectively.**

### Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these outside school hours if at all possible)
- Days of religious observance
- Forces personnel on leave from a foreign posting
- External examinations
- Exceptional significant family events or circumstances

### Other examples of absence from school that will not be authorised:

- Shopping during school hours
- Family day trips
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives
- Holidays which have not been agreed
- Cheaper holidays in England and abroad

### **WARNING**

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