

Grace Academy Solihull

Attendance Policy

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Introduction and Background

At Grace Academy Solihull we recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential to raising standards in pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible. Good attendance is everyone's responsibility.

It is well documented that children who attend school regularly have better outcomes in their attainment as well as their well-being and positive life experiences.

The Education Act 1996 (section 444) states every child of compulsory school age is entitled to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education, either by attendance at a school, or by education otherwise than at a school.

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly. This means your child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education has produced guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities: Working together to improve school attendance. Our Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of that guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Promoting and maintaining excellent school attendance is a whole school responsibility and our policy details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved as well as the procedures that are in place to ensure and monitor regular pupil attendance. Our aim is to:

- promote a positive and welcoming environment where children feel safe, secure and valued
- promote and ensure children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled to enabling them to succeed both in school and in the future
- Raise awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently
- Provide help and support for pupils and families where there are barriers to school attendance

Who is Responsible for Attendance Issues in School

At Grace Academy Solihull, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life. We recognise the connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing and work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils at our school.

The name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school is:

Mrs Humphries - judithhumphries@graceacademy.org.uk

The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents/ carers should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is:

Miss Pickard - gas-attendance@graceacademy.org.uk

Procedures and Registers

An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial to ensure safeguarding procedures are in place for children, for data analysis and to support statutory intervention, if necessary.

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately and in accordance with legislation.

Every half a day of absence from school (known as a session) is marked by the school as either authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence is where the head teacher has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be absent or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence.

Unauthorised absences are absences which the school does not consider reasonable, exceptional, or unavoidable. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will be likely to have a detrimental impact on your child's education and the school may follow attendance procedures if a child is classed as persistently absent.

Severely persistent absenteeism (SPA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'severely persistent absentee' when they miss 50% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will have a detrimental impact on your child's education and the school will follow attendance procedures if a child is classed as severely persistently absent.

Procedures -

If your child is absent from school you must:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 8.20 am
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 8.20 am
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence

If your child is absent, we will:

- Contact you on the first and every subsequent day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- If we are unable to contact parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters/emails and a home visit may be made in the interests of safeguarding
- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be "missing from education."

Requests for leave of absence (exceptional circumstances)

The law is very clear that you are not entitled to take your child on holiday during term time, and you are likely to be referred for legal action if you choose to do this.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances"

A leave of absence will not be granted in term time unless the reasons are deemed exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed form provided by the school. Where a parent/carer removes a child when the application for leave was refused, or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by this school in accordance with the Solihull Code of Conduct. A Penalty Notice may be issued where there have been at least 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence for the purpose of a holiday.

Procedure for Requesting a Planned Absence:

We will not authorise any leave of absence requests unless the circumstances are granted as exceptional. If you need to request this, complete an absence request form ([Appendix 1](#)) and submit this to the school at least two weeks prior to the date required to give the school sufficient time to consider the request and respond. If we are aware of any language difficulties that may preclude a request form being completed, appropriate support will be offered to the parent/carer. There is a requirement that parents/carers provide evidence of exceptional circumstances. The headteacher will consider requests for leave of absences and will confirm if they are either authorised or unauthorised leave of absence requests. A letter confirming this will be sent to the parent/carer. (Please see Appendices 1 for model pro-forma).

Leave that was taken which had not been granted will be marked as an unauthorised absence on the pupil's register. We may refer these absences to the Education Inclusion Service and this could result in the issue of a fixed penalty notice.

Deletion from School Roll

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 state that where a pupil has been granted extended leave of absence and subsequently fails to return to school within 10 school days of the expiry of the agreed period of absence, and the failure is not due to sickness or any other unavoidable cause, his/her name may, following consultation with the Local Authority, be deleted from the admission register.

Absence Data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve. Persistently absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Improving Attendance

If we are concerned about your child's attendance, we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is a concern and falls below 95%, or where punctuality is a concern
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with our School Attendance Officer, Head of Year or Assistant Principal if absences persist.
- Create a personalised action/support plan to address any barriers to attendance.
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services if appropriate
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

Our aim is to work with you to address any reason for the absence and address issues early. We hope this early intervention will ensure that any issues are addressed quickly and successfully.

As Parents, you can support regular school attendance by:

- Making sure your child leaves for school with plenty of time to ensure they are not late for school.
- Making medical appointments, such as dental/doctors appointments, outside school hours where possible
- Supporting and encouraging your child by attending parents evenings and other events.
- Contacting the school to discuss any concerns regarding their child's attendance as soon as any issues arise.
- Working partnership with the school to resolve any issues that are impacting on your child's attendance.

Understanding Barriers to Attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, you as the parent/carer and the child. If as a parent /carer, you think your child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with you and your family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain; however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners where appropriate.

Local Authority Attendance Support Services

As a school, we are required to make the local authority aware of every registered pupil who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 10 school days Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulation 12.

The Local Authority has an Education Inclusion Team who work with schools, families, and other professionals, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

As a parent/ carer, you are expected to work with the school and the Local Authority to address any attendance concerns. You should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice (see *Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's Education Enforcement Code of Conduct February 2019* - <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Schools-and-learning/school-attendance>), prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of an Education Supervision Order, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance. The school will endeavour, where possible, to solve attendance issues informally, before going down a formal / legal route.

Sharon Dunbar is Grace Academy Solihull 's allocated inclusion officer.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to further absence. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed, miss vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 8.20am when children can begin to come into school
- Registers are taken at 8.30am and your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time
- Children arriving after 8.30 am are required to come into school via the late gate through the canteen. Students must provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded and sent to Head of Years to consequence where appropriate.
- At 9.30 am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site - 'U', but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding lateness
- Every morning a member of school staff will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the students Head of Year/Assistant Head of Year, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time.

Promoting Good and excellent attendance.

As a school we will reward good attendance and improved regularly through reward schemes.

If you would like to discuss anything in this policy, please contact us at school to discuss further. Good attendance is everyone's responsibility and working together means issues are identified and addressed quickly and effectively. Good attendance means your child will have their best educational outcome.

Appendix 1: Student Absence Request Form

Completed forms are to be returned to the school with a minimum of two weeks notice

Please note that there is no automatic right for students to be granted authorised leave of absence and requests will only be considered where there are exceptional circumstances, in line with guidance from Solihull MBC and the Government.

Name of Student:	Date of Birth:	Tutor Group:
Address:		Postcode:
Detailed reason for absence:		
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		
Please enter below the dates that you are requesting for your child to be absent from school. (first date of absence): ____/____/____ (last date of absence): ____/____/____ Number of school days that your child will be absent from school:		
Name of Parent/Carer:	Signature:)	Date:

**NB: Any leave of absence which has not been agreed will be marked as unauthorised.
These may be referred to Solihull MBC which could result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice.**

For School Use Only:

Attendance to date:	
Previous requests for leave of absence: Yes / No	
Evidence provided for exceptional circumstance: Yes / No	
DSL reviewed request: Yes / No or N/A	Date:
Outcome of DSL Review:	
Arrange to meet/speak with Parent/Carer: Yes / No	Staff Initials: Date & time:
School Notes:	
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Authorised OR Unauthorised (please select one)	
Reason:	
Principal's Signature:	Date:
Parent informed of outcome by:	Date: