



GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST



GREEN OAKS
PRIMARY ACADEMY

Attendance policy

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| Approved by: | Madeline Dunckley | Date: September 2024 |
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| Last reviewed on: | 9 th September 2024 |
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| Next review due by: | 9 th September 2025 |
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Introduction

Green Oaks Primary is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils. We believe it is extremely important for pupils to attend regularly and on time. This will give them the best opportunity to progress and succeed at school.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent / carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason may result in prosecution.

At Green Oaks Primary Academy, we

- provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the Academy feel secure and valued.
- expect students to arrive on time every day.
- will support parents in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.
- believe leave of absence should not be taken during term-time. We will not authorise requests for leave of absence during term-time, except in exceptional/ unavoidable circumstances.

How to notify the Academy of an absence

If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or unavoidable circumstances, please contact the school **on each day of absence** by telephoning the school office on 01604 715249.

Please inform us of any planned absence in advance, this includes unavoidable medical appointments during the school day.

To inform us about a planned absence, please complete exceptional absences form which can be located in the school office or be requested from the school office to be sent via email to you. As stated above, holidays during term time will not be authorised.

1. Aim

Ensuring all pupils have high attendance is a key priority of the academy. Pupils are entitled to a full-time education, and we know that pupils with high attendance do better at school than those with high absence rates. We also know that absence can be a sign of other risks in a young person's life. This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#)

The aim of this document is to set out how we create and maintain a positive culture that supports and values good attendance. It includes how we aim to:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of GAT's Attendance Policy. The Trust policy details the relevant legislation and guidance documents. In particular, this policy carefully follows DfE guidance in this area.

Our work on attendance is linked closely to our approaches to safeguarding and behaviour.

3. How we promote a culture of high expectations in attendance and punctuality

- Set expectations about attendance from the outset – from Nursery onwards.
- Explain to parents, carers and pupils why good attendance is important and how it helps pupils to thrive.
- Build good communication and relationships between home and school.
- Listen to families carefully to find out why their children are not attending well enough so that we can effectively plan ways to overcome the barriers to better attendance.
- Challenge families who do not make sure that their children attend and are on time, but also support as necessary.
- Support pupils who have had absences to be reintegrated back into the school environment and learning.

4. Our expectations of attendance and punctuality

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50am each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:30 for Nursery and 1:00pm for years Reception – Year 6 and will be kept open until 1:10pm.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at a school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, this means their child must attend every day 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 academy.

(Note - where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them).

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.
- Contact the academy on 01604 715249 to report their child's absence before 9:00am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the academy with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting Madeline Dunckley, the Principal, who can be contacted via the school's office.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.
- 'Be Ready'
- Tell a member of staff about any problem which is making it hard for them to attend school regularly and/or be punctual.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the office at 9:00am and 13:10pm each day
- making positive links with parents and carers to work together to create a positive school life.

- positively promoting good attendance and punctuality within the classroom with regard to the academy's Attendance Policy.

Office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/ carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the academy system.
- Record electronically reasons for absence on each child's register. Reasons must be specific e.g. type of illness (not 'unwell' or 'sick').
- Transfer calls from parents to the Attendance Officer as appropriate in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school.
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and making sure they are followed by all staff.
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues.
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The attendance champion is Madeline Dunckley and can be contacted via the school office.

The principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the academy
- Monitoring academy-level absence data and reporting it to the trust.
- Monitoring the impact of processes and attendance strategies
- Monitoring the impact of work with local partners to improve attendance in identified cases.
- Working with local partners when formal procedures such as parental contracts, supervision orders and penalty notices are required.

- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.
- Communicating the Academy's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

5. Recording attendance

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

We will use the national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00 am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office on **01604 715249**.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the absence is prolonged, the academy may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the academy in advance of the appointment and provides evidence such as a text message, email or medical appointment card.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. This can be done by completing a Leave of Absence form which can be obtained from the school office.

Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the academy can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Lateness and punctuality are monitored weekly as part of the Safeguarding Team meeting. Contact will be made with parents where lateness and punctuality is a concern so that any barriers to attending school on time can be identified.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend does not, or stops attending without reason, the academy will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the academy cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the academy may:
 - Send a text message to the parents/carers of any children with unexplained absence at 10:00
 - Carry out a home visit.
 - Contact police/social care.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the academy will consider involving an education welfare officer or similar.

The Academy Safeguarding Team reserve the right to make a home visit at any point during a child's absence.

Reporting to parents/ carers

The academy will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels through termly attendance reports.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The principal will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as an unavoidable one-off event. Examples may include but are not limited to:-

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence/abuse
- Weddings of parents or siblings
- Serious illness of a close relative
- Participation in out of school events at a competition level and operating at a high level of achievement in arts, sport, music etc...

The academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, **at least 2 weeks before the absence**, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, available from the school office. Evidence may be required to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the academy will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the academy, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

Holidays should not be taken during term time due to lower cost or parental work commitments as they damage progress and continuity of learning. We will not authorise any holidays unless in very exceptional circumstances.

Legal sanctions

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or not appropriate (such as an unauthorised holiday in term time), the local authority can take forward legal intervention to formalise support and / or enforce attendance. This includes fines or a penalty notice. The arrangements for these procedures are found via [this link](#).

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

We believe that a proactive and preventative approach towards supporting children's attendance is the best. However, we understand that there may be complex reasons why a child's attendance is not at least 95%. We use a range of resources to improve this and to support the child and their family. This may be through the Early Help Framework or additional support in school through ELSA or working with the school's pastoral team. We may also involve the local authority on a case-by-case basis.

Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where a child's mental or physical health or any identified special needs may be impacting on their attendance we will work with the child and family to understand the nature of the need and to plan strategies that help support the child, making reasonable adjustments where necessary. This may include a 'soft start' to the day through Meet and Greet, a part-time timetable or other appropriate strategies. We may also employ the services of outside agencies to support the child with this. Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the academy must inform the local authority.

Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Where pupils return to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, we will speak to parents and try to ensure that there are opportunities to catch up with missed learning. Where we know that pupils will be off for a prolonged period of time but are mentally fit (for example following a hospital operation), work can be sent to parents for the child to complete at home.

8. How we monitor attendance

Monitoring attendance

The academy will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the academy and at an individual pupil level.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term by the trust and DfE and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The academy will compare attendance data to the trust and national average.

Analysing attendance

The academy will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.

- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

Using data to improve attendance

The academy will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis.
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium lead)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The academy will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the academy (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, at risk of or persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance such as
 - Families offered support through the Early Help Assessment process.
 - The drawing up of a parental contract to include specific strategies for improving attendance and punctuality.
 - Involve the local authority School Attendance Support Service

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the trust or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the principal.