



This Framework has been adopted and approved by Gippeswyk Community Educational Trust and is to be used by all members of the Trust.

Framework for Attendance Policy	
Approved by GCET	13.12.19
Date of next Review	Autumn 2021-2022 (<i>Two yearly – odd years</i>)
Responsible Officer	Head of MAT Standards – Mr D East
Policy Number	TS6

Aims and Principles

Academies within Gippeswyk Community Education Trust aim to meet their obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons. Each academy should be aiming for attendance of 96% + across the academic year through ensuring that all pupils regularly attend school.

Legislation and guidance

It is important that all academies adhere to the latest requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refer to any DfE statutory guidance on school attendance.

School procedures

1. Attendance register

All academies are required by law to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

2. Unplanned absence

Parents must notify their academy on the first day of an unplanned absence. Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the academy may ask parents 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 will be notified of this in advance.

3. Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. However, we encourage parents 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.

4. Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

5. Following up absence

Each academy will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

6. Reporting to parents/carers

Each academy will have in place an appropriate system for reporting attendance to parents/carers to ensure that there is a clear line of communication with parents/carers

Authorised and unauthorised absence

1. Granting approval for term-time absence

Principals of each GCET Academy may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' – ensuring that they have indicated a definition for this term.

The academy will consider each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal's discretion. Valid reasons for authorised absence may include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained previously
- 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 school 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 school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- There may be a need to add further examples to above, drawing on the DfE's school attendance guidance and/or indicating possible exceptional circumstances in which the Principal may grant term-time holiday.

There will also be a need to explain other considerations relevant to your academy, such as:

- Examples of unauthorised absence, such as when term-time holiday will not be approved
- Any information about targeting unauthorised attendance and how the school identifies pupils and families where attendance is poor, and what action you take (such as meetings, letters, closer monitoring)/
- Study leave – study leave is not granted by default, and is only granted to pupils in year 11/12/13. Provision will still be made available for pupils who wish to revise in school
- Flexi-schooling requests – stating your school's processes for requesting and deciding on this

2. Legal sanctions

Academies can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from their academy, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Principal, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

3. Strategies for promoting attendance

It is important as a school that good attendance is rewarded appropriately. There may also be a need to include information on how a school works with parents to support regular attendance through communicating early about issues, acknowledging positive improvements, indicating a named contact in school, etc.

4. Attendance monitoring

A named attendance officer in each academy monitors pupil absence on a [daily/weekly/monthly] basis. Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see above). If a pupil's absence goes above 4 days, the academy should contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this continued absence and may request medical evidence from the family to authorise the absence. If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, the academy must consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. Academies must share attendance data to the national average, and share this with the local governing body and trustees. Each academy in the trust must collect and store attendance data to use for internal purposes – for example, to track the attendance of individual pupils, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

Roles and responsibilities

1. The local governing board and trustees

The local governing board are responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole academy on at least a termly basis and reporting this to the Trustees who have overall responsibility for all Trust academy's attendance figures. The local governing board also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

2. The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The Principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

3. The named Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the academy and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Principal
- Works with Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices

4. Class teachers'/form tutors

Class teachers'/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

5. Office/reception staff

Office/reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.