

Gig Mill Primary School

Attendance Policy

September 2021



Attendance Policy

“Regular attendance at school is crucial in raising standards of education and in ensuring every child can meet their full potential. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The Government expects:

- *Schools and Local Authorities to*
 - *Reduce absence including persistent absence*
 - *Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled*
 - *Act early to address any patterns of absence*

- *Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend early and ensure that all pupils are punctual to their lessons and attend school regularly”*

Department for Education – Advice on School Attendance July 2017 (www.education.gov.uk)

The Head Teachers and Governing Bodies of local schools take very seriously their responsibilities for pupils’ attendance. Together they have agreed the following Attendance Policy. The main body of the policy has been formally agreed by the Head Teachers and Governing Bodies of the following schools:

- Amblecote Primary School
- Gig Mill Primary
- Greenfield Primary School
- Ham Dingle Primary School
- Hob Green Primary School
- Oldswinford Primary School
- Pedmore C of E Primary School
- Rufford Primary School
- St. James’s C of E Primary School
- The Ridge Primary

1. What the Law says about School Attendance:

All children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full-time education. Section 444 (1a) of the Education Act 1996 says: *“If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, without reasonable justification, then his/her parent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted”.*

Children are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in any single academic year (September-July).

The school expects all children to attend every day that the school is open and on time for registration. Absence that falls below 90% is categorised by the Government as persistent absence.

Attendance and the School's Safeguarding Responsibilities

The school has a statutory safeguarding responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils who are absent from school. Therefore parents and carers must inform the school if their child is absent and give the reason for the absence. It is imperative that parents/carers keep the school informed of any changes to their contact details, including changes to mobile phone numbers. Parents / carers must provide the details of at least two people who can be contacted in an emergency.

2. Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

Parents / Carers must ensure that their child is able to attend school for the whole academic year by ensuring their child attends school unless there is a reason for the absence which has been approved by the school.

a) Illness

If a parent or carer considers their child has an illness which may warrant them remaining at home, then they must consider first of all whether they feel that their child would still be able to take part in the majority, if not all, of the school's activities. In this case, they should still send their child to school. Should the child become unwell during the day and/or if the school feels that they are no longer able to participate in school activities, the school will contact parents to collect their child.

If parents feel that their child cannot take part in the school's activities and would be better remaining at home then they must contact the school as soon as possible on the first and any subsequent days of absence before 9:30 am. Failure to do so constitutes a breach of this policy. The person ringing will be asked to identify themselves and clearly give the reason for the absence. This information will be recorded.

b) Medical Appointments

Medical appointments must be made out of school time wherever possible. If a child has a medical appointment then parents/carers must contact the school prior to the appointment to ask for approved arrangements for the child to be collected/returned to school as close to the appointment time as possible. A copy of the appointment time/letter may be requested.

c) Lateness

If parents/carers know their child will be late for school they must contact the school as soon as possible to tell them that the child will arrive late and provide the reason for the lateness. This information will be recorded. Parents/carers must make every effort to get the child to school as soon as possible.

d) Difficulty Getting a Child to School

If parents/carers are having difficulty getting their child to attend school they must notify the school immediately (school office, class teacher, Headteacher) about the concerns. The school will make every effort to meet with parents and attempt to rectify the problem.

e) Collecting Children

Children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day. If a parent/carer knows that they will be late collecting their child from school, the school must be informed. If not collected by 3.30pm, the child will go to the School Office to wait whilst staff attempt to contact the parent or carer.

If a child is not collected on time, and parents/carers cannot be contacted the matter may be referred to Children's Services.

3. Responsibilities of the School and Pupils

The School must:

- Keep regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance registers. These are completed at the beginning of each morning session and at the beginning of the afternoon session.
- Ensure that parents/carers are aware of the times for the beginning of each session, school term dates and other INSET days when a pupil is not expected to attend school
- Notify the parents of any immediate school closure e.g. due to bad weather
- Respond to requests for attendance data from the Education Investigation Service, Local Authority, Department for Education, OFSTED
- Present attendance data regularly to the Governing Body and parents
- Notify parents as early as possible where their child's attendance is a cause for concern
- Notify the Education Investigation Service of individual children whose attendance is a cause for concern
- Work alongside parents to improve attendance

The Pupil must:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately dressed and prepared for the school day

4. Absence

a) Leave of Absence

Leave of absence can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are those which are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short".

Any request for 'leave' must be put in writing stating exceptional circumstances. This must be received by the Head Teacher no later than **15 school days** before the proposed leave is due to take place. In making an application for leave, the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides must make the case that their child will need to be treated differently from the norm. Each request must meet specific 'exceptional circumstances' which would not be expected to be repeated within an academic year, or to occur regularly throughout a child's school life.

b) Leave of Absence for Holiday

Leave taken without a formal request being made to the Head Teacher will remain unauthorised even if the parent enters a request on returning from the leave.

c) Lateness

The school opens at 8.40am so that the school day begins with the children ready to work in the classroom at 8.50 am and the afternoon session begins at 12.45 pm for reception and key stage 1 and 1.10 pm for children in key stage 2. A child who arrives after this time but before the registers closes will be marked 'late' and must sign in at the office. Registers close 30 minutes after the start of the morning session and 5 minutes after the start of the afternoon session. Children arriving after the close of the registers are coded as 'unauthorised late'.

Lateness has an impact on a child's learning. If a child is persistently late (five times within the academic year) parents/carers will be expected to meet with the head teacher to discuss punctuality.

d) Absence Due to Illness

Children who are genuinely poorly are not expected to attend school and an authorised code will be used. However, where the child's repeated absence due to illness is becoming a concern or reaches 7 days in any school year the school may request evidence to inform a decision to authorise any further absence. The Head Teacher may ask the parent to provide information to demonstrate that the child is too unwell to return/attend school e.g. prescriptions, appointment cards/letters.

The Head Teacher may decide to remove the right to the authorised absence due to illness and record any absence as 'unauthorised'. The Head Teacher will notify the parent of this decision in writing. In order to avoid this, it is essential that parents inform the school of any health concerns that may be affecting their child's ability to attend school regularly.

School Closures

The academic year is 190 days. Schools are also required to have an additional 5 days that are used for staff training; often called INSET (In Service Training) Days. These days are not part of the 190 days which is every child's free entitlement and schools endeavour to schedule these to minimise inconvenience to parents and carers.

The Head Teacher will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, e.g. election days or severe weather, the school may have to close. The Head Teacher must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person who uses the school site, pupils, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors. If at any point, to use the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Head Teacher must close part or all of the school.

If a decision is made to close part or all of the school, the Head Teacher will endeavour to inform parents of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place. If the Head Teacher decides to close part or all of the school, then the register for those pupils affected is closed for the day and coded as an enforced school closure. This does not affect a child's attendance record.

Parents should always assume that the school will remain open during term time unless they hear otherwise.

5. Penalty Notices

1) Parents/Carers can be issued with Penalty Notices if a pupil who has been excluded contravenes the details set out in the Exclusion Letter as to their whereabouts during the first 6 days of exclusion.

2) Parents may be issued with a penalty fine or prosecuted over unauthorised absence sessions. This can include an unauthorised leave of absence or any other sessions of unauthorised absence.

6. Education Investigation Service (EIS)

The Education Investigation Service (EIS) is responsible for ensuring that parents meet their legal obligations in respect of their child's education and in doing so they may issue penalty fines, or take legal proceedings to ensure that you do so.

The Head Teacher and Governing Body of each school have a responsibility to inform the EIS when a child's attendance becomes a matter of concern and to support the EIS in the actions that they may take.

Investigation Service:

Education Investigation Service

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Dudley

West Midlands

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Date of next Working Group review: Sept 2022

