



Anthony Gell School

Attendance Policy

Approved by Governors: October 2019 Minute Number 1452/19

For Review by Governors: October 2021

The named member of staff with lead responsibility for this policy is: Rachel Pickford

Principle

Parents or carers of students of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education by attendance at school or otherwise. (*Education Act 1996*).

Under the provisions of the *Education Act 1996 (s434)* and the *Pupil Registration Regulations 1995* the school must keep an attendance register.

The school is registered with the Information Commissioner under the *Data Protection Act 1998*.

Aims

1. The school is committed to a positive policy of encouraging students to attend school regularly to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence and discourage unjustified absence
2. To act early to address patterns of absence;
3. To encourage students to be punctual to school and to lessons.
4. Recognise and celebrate excellent attendance

This will be achieved by:

1. Registration sessions using PARS in morning tutor time and afternoon with the class teacher of period 4
2. Pastoral Managers will check students' attendance after registration and identify unexplained student absence.
3. Parents of students will be contacted for unexplained absence by phone call, email, text or letter.
4. Regular student meetings will be held by Pastoral Manager, the attendance officer and Head of Pastoral Care to discuss absence patterns and strategies for improved attendance.
5. Letters will be issued to parents for students whose attendance falls below 96%.
6. School may start to issue Penalty Notices to families of students whose attendance falls below 90%.
7. School may start to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to families of students whose attendance fails to improve from under 90%.

8. Rewards are issued for students with 100% attendance and those with significantly improved attendance.
9. Assemblies to promote good attendance and highlight the impact of poor attendance. The use of display boards which highlight Year group attendance and House Group attendance.

The Law

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child has regular attendance at the school where they are registered.

The law defines a parent as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not.
- Any parent, who, even if not married, has responsibility as a parent
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

The Government considers a student to be persistently absent when they have missed 10% of their time in school at any time during that academic year, for whatever reason (those students with 90% attendance and below). This level of absence will be having a negative impact on learning and progress and will reduce the likelihood of them achieving their potential.

If a student reaches persistent absence level and parents/carers have not provided acceptable reasons for the absence, the school will take steps to resolve the matter. This may result in the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 states that "If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent/carer is guilty of an offence".

- Prosecution under section 444(1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted, may result in a fine of up to £1000.
- Prosecution under section 444(1a) Education Act 1996, where if convicted, may result in a fine of up to £2500 or up to 3 months imprisonment.

The definition of a parent/carer is any adult who lives in the home(s) where the student resides.

By law a student must currently remain in education until the last Friday in June in the school year in which he/she reaches the age of 16.

Responsibilities

The Governing Body will:

- approve the policy and any proposed changes;
- in liaison with the Head of Pastoral Care/Headteacher; set attendance targets as part of the development plan and target-setting process;
- receive regular attendance reports from the Headteacher;

- review the working of the policy in light of the Headteacher's report; and
- ensure that the policy is promoted and implemented throughout the school, and is known by the parents.

The Headteacher will:

- monitor progress and ensure that strategies are in place to promote and implement the policy throughout the school.
- determine (in collaboration with the Head of Pastoral Care) whether to authorise any proposed absences requested on the school's official form, or absences which have taken place for which no request was made;
- notify parents as appropriate that if a student of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly his/her parents commit an offence;
- initiate with appropriate staff strategies to improve attendance;
- present a termly report with statistics to the governing body.

The Head of Pastoral Care will:

- ensure attendance and punctuality targets are set for students of concern
- regularly analyse data
- chair school attendance panels and ensure targets are set and future intervention administered.
- plan and implement interventions: e.g. home visits
- request the issue of Penalty Notices
- request the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices
- work with the Pastoral Managers and Attendance officer and wider multi-agency professionals help students who have problems with attendance;
- make periodic checks of the registers to monitor student absence;
- make regular checks on absence notes and the reasons for absence;
- ensure that unaccounted-for absences are followed up by getting in touch with parents/carers (if there is reasonable concern about a child's welfare, the Head of Pastoral Care who will decide what action to take including informing the Local Authority).
- deal with issues of inadequate registering;
- arrange appropriate training for staff;
- keep the Headteacher informed of the progress of the policy; and
- advise the Headteacher on any strategies that could be initiated or improved.

The Pastoral Managers /Attendance Officer/Director of Sixth Form will:

- send text messages daily for unexplained absences asking for parents to call school explain;
- oversee the attendance arrangements including weekly monitoring of Ns;
- ensure that all student absences are noted and absence notes received from parents and, if not, that the reason for absence is followed up;
- keep accurate records of responses from parents/carers.
- report concerns promptly to parents
- check that all registers are completed and advise staff accordingly should a register not be taken;
- liaise with Head of Pastoral Care to ensure problem cases and children in care are contacted by telephone if absent;
- ensure that all suspected truancy is followed up and dealt with;

- contact parents over student absences where appropriate;
- Attendance Officer will regularly update data and patterns of absences to be analysed with the Head of Pastoral Care and Director of Sixth Form

Tutors will:

- ensure that students are registered accurately;
- ensure that students bring absence notes or that phone calls have been received,
- inform Pastoral Managers/Sixth Form Learning Mentor who will follow up cases of unaccounted for absence or unacceptable notes by consulting with the Attendance Officer and the Head of Pastoral Care/Director of Sixth Form;
- keep the Pastoral Managers/Sixth Form Learning Mentor informed of any signs of suspected truancy; and
- inform the Pastoral Managers/Sixth Form Learning Mentor of any possible underlying problems which might account for absences.

Classroom Teachers will:

- record attendance of students using PARS at the beginning of their lessons; and
- inform the appropriate person of concerns they may have of student attendance

Students are required to:

- attend regularly unless they are ill or have an authorised absence ('Attending regularly' means registering before the attendance register is closed for the session);
- bring an explanatory note on the day of return to school or ask their parents to telephone school;

Parents are required to:

- inform the school of their child's absence on the first day of non-attendance;
- discuss with the tutor any planned absences well in advance (eg a family holiday);
- make any request for leave of absence on the school's official leave of absence form.

Parent/Carer communication of cause for concern

Interventions and Legal Sanctions

We strive for all students to achieve exceptional attendance and punctuality during their time at school. To ensure that all students have the best opportunity to attend daily, learn, grow and achieve we follow an early identification and intervention strategy to alert parents/carers and students to any concerns with attendance or punctuality.

Parent/Carer communication of cause for concern

The school follows a clear systematic process of support for students whose attendance falls below expected levels (96%). We will consider intervention with parents/carers if a student's attendance is less than 96% terms 1-6. The process includes:

Step 1 – Pastoral managers hold meetings with students whose attendance falls below 96%. If student is absent on a third day, a home visit will be considered and arranged. If there is no one in a letter to say that they have visited will be posted through the letterbox.

Step 2 letter – student’s attendance is below 95%, this letter highlights the importance and impact absence can have.

Step 3 letter – warning parents/carers that their child’s attendance is a concern (below 93%), and could lead to negative implications on progress and achievement. This will also request medical evidence for any further absences to be authorised. Warns family of the risk of receiving a fixed penalty notice.

Step 4 Parental meetings – Pastoral Managers and school attendance officer invite families in for a meeting if attendance continues to fall.

Step 5 Attendance panel – Attendance drops below 90%. Students and their parents/carers invited to a meeting to discuss attendance and agree strategies in order to improve attendance. If failure to attend the panel meeting parents should expect a home visit.

Contact with Social Services – If a student with a Child Protection Plan is absent from school for any reason, the named social worker should be contacted immediately.

School Attendance Panels – Students and their parents/carers will be invited to a panel if attendance has fallen to 90% or below. An attendance target which will be monitored over a fixed period of time will be set, failure to meet this target could lead to a fixed penalty notice. The Attendance Panel will formally make it clear any legal sanctions, which could result from student non-attendance at school.

Step 6 Penalty notice warning letters – Parents/carers receive a warning of the school’s intention to request a fixed penalty notice is issued for poor attendance. The threshold for legal consideration is when a student has received at least 5 unauthorised sessions over a 5 week period. Attendance monitoring period starts.

Stage 7 - Penalty Notices – As preventative measure of imposing prosecution, authorised local authority staff, police officers and Headteachers can request that the local authority issue penalty notices to parents/carers of children who are not attending school regularly. The penalty is £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days. If the fine is not paid then the parent/carer will be prosecuted.

Stage 8 - Prosecution - The local authority may prosecute parents/carers whose children do not attend school regularly. This could result in a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or, in extreme cases, a prison sentence of up to three months. If the court thinks it will help to stop your child missing school, it may also impose a Parenting Order.

Parenting Order - A Parenting Order is a court order which requires parents/carers to attend parenting education or support classes. Parents/Carers will also have to do whatever the court says is necessary to improve their child’s behaviour and attendance at school.

Support Available for Students and Families

A range of support is available in and outside of school to support students and their families to achieve excellent attendance. They include:

- Pastoral Managers with a dedicated focus on behaviour and attendance
- Rainbows – a bereavement support group, run by trained staff volunteers involving students who have suffered loss or bereavement
- Adjusted curriculum /Inclusion Room (G16)– in addition to the normal personalised curriculum offered to all students (e.g. option choices including college and extended work experience), some students may be offered an adjusted timetable featuring lessons in behaviour learning support to help them integrate into lessons after a long period of absence or exclusion
- CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) – referral to CAMHS has to be through school health or the family’s own GP
- Early Help referral to our Family of Schools Worker
- Home tuition – when supported by CAMHS, Derbyshire Home Tuition Service will provide an entitlement to education at home or at an off-school site location. Home tuition is only available for a limited period of time and a transition plan will be drawn up with the view to returning the child to school.

Taking the Register

Students of compulsory school age must have their attendance registered twice per day. It is the practice of this school to register ALL students (including those over compulsory school age).

Where students arrive after the session has started or when they need to leave school for a part of the day, the following system is followed:

- Arrival after the close of registration – students should report to Pastoral reception where their time of arrival will be recorded. Students who arrive after the register closes at 9:10 am will be marked with an unauthorised absence code ‘U’ in line with DCC and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence for the whole session. This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the student to be late
- Where a student must leave school part-way through the day, students should obtain the Pastoral Managers or tutors permission and then report to Pastoral reception where their time of leaving and/or re-entering school is recorded.

When a student of compulsory school age is absent it must be marked as an 'authorised' or 'unauthorised' absence; and the nature of an approved educational activity (for a student of compulsory school age).

An 'approved educational activity' is defined as:

- one taking place off the school premises;
- approved by a person authorised by the governing body or the Headteacher;
- supervised by a person approved by the governing body or Headteacher;
- of an educational nature, including work experience, field trips and educational visits, interviews with prospective employers, or for a place in Higher or Further Education; and
- Link Courses where students attend an FE college for part of their time, or franchised students receiving part of their education off-site at another location while remaining on roll and under school supervision (e.g. sick children being taught at home), or attending approved sporting activity:

Absence

Monitoring Absence

- Parents should notify the school each day if a student is absent, and a note should be produced on the day of return.
- In the case of prolonged absence, parents are asked to make contact with the school either by note or telephone.
- All notes will be retained under the Pastoral Care System.
- Every week the attendance percentage of all students is examined by the Head of Pastoral Care/member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Standard letters are sent out every month for students whose attendance falls below 90%.
- Attendance panel meetings will be held every term for students below 90%.
- Students with attendance between 85-90% are seen individually.

Leave of Absence

Leave can be granted only by the Headteacher. Parents will be expected to use the school's official leave of absence request form.

Holiday Leave

Head teachers are not allowed to authorise any leave of absence, including holidays, except in exceptional circumstances. Two tests will be applied to any application.

These are:

Could this leave reasonably be taken at another time?

Will the leave unduly affect the child's education and progress?

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then the application will be refused. Should a parent/carer decide to take their child out of school when leave has been refused, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and this will be picked up by the Education Welfare Service.

Short -Term Leave

The School can legally grant short-term leave for family reasons. It is for the Headteacher to determine the reasonableness.

If a student becomes pregnant, leave will be given of no more than 18 weeks after which the absence would be unauthorised. The school will do all it can to support the student remaining in school as long as possible.

Dental and medical appointments are valid reasons for missing registration and constitute authorised absence; although the school asks that every effort is made to make such appointments outside of school hours whenever possible.

If the student leaves for an appointment after registering no absence needs to be recorded. The student is expected to sign out at Pastoral reception when leaving the site.

The School may, exceptionally, sanction limited absence for young carers until other arrangements can be made. The Headteacher will set a time limit for such absences in consultation with the Head of Pastoral Care. The Headteacher may also seek advice from the LA or appropriate agency before coming to a decision.

Religious Observance

The Headteacher will review each application reasonably.

The school expects advance notice, since religious festivals are likely to be fixed well ahead.

Distance from School

A student will not have failed to attend if weather conditions are such that it is unreasonable or dangerous for the students to travel to school. The Headteacher will determine when this is the case.

Children at Risk of Missing Education

The school's policy mirrors the national guidelines set out in 'The Children's Act and Section 4 Education & Inspection Act 2006'. The definition of a child missing from education is a child or young person of compulsory school age who is not on a school roll, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority and who is not receiving a suitable education otherwise, e.g. educated at home, privately or in alternative provision'. The school will inform the Local Authority of any student liable to miss education under the following circumstances:

- The student has been taken out of school by their parents and the school has been informed that the student is being educated outside of the school system e.g. home education;
- The student has ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified by a GP that the student is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
- Have been permanently excluded.

The school will:

- Inform the Local Authority officer responsible for children missing from education if we suspect a child fits the criteria outlined above.
- The Local Authority will update the Synergy database with a flag indicating Child Missing in Education.
- Ensuring accurate record-keeping of those students who leave roll, including the swift passage of records to new schools and authorities.

Appendix 1: DfE School Attendance: Absence and Attendance Codes October 2014

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations.

Present at School

Students must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a student were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm Present in school during registration.

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session.

A student arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a student is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision.

Students can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes for when students are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when students are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of students educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard students. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a student is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual students.

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of students at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the student was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a student is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school. Page 10 of 12

Code W: Work experience

Work experience is for students in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual students.

Authorised Absence from School

Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes when students are not present in school are as follows:

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a student to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded student from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a student can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness.

Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the student should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. Page 11 of 12

Code S: Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 students during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those students who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a student's absence. When the reason for the student's absence has been established the register should be amended.

This code should not be left on a student's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Administrative Codes

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a student is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the student's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the student from attending school.
- The student is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the student is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

Code Z: Student not on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of students joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put students on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the student will attend the school.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations