

Giffards Primary School

Pupil Attendance Policy

School lead for this policy:	Headteacher
Committee with oversight for this policy	Pupil matters FGB
Policy last reviewed	July 2023 - This policy has been updated and in line with The Department for Education (DfE) 'Working Together to improve school attendance, May 2022' guidance & The Thurrock Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, September 2022
Date for next review	July 2024 - or before if legislation changes
Signed –chair of Governors	<i>Mr D Stubbings</i>
Signed - Headteacher	Mrs N Haslam-Davis

Rational and Background

Giffards Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age 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 (Section 7, Education Act 1996).

Where parents register their child at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. **This means their 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 of Education (DfE) has produced guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities: “[Working together to improve school attendance](#)”, May 2022. Our Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of that guidance.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children’s welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

It has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers and the Local Authority. It will be shared widely with Parents/Carers and available on our school website and from the admin office upon request. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school’s commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Introduction

This document is a statement of aims, principles and strategies for Attendance. Government guidelines on attendance and punctuality have been taken into consideration in its foundation

“Working Together to improve school attendance, May 2022’ states ‘Improving attendance is everyone’s business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex both within and beyond the school gates and often specific to individual pupils and families.”

Giffards Primary is a successful school that aims to provide the best available learning opportunities for children living in the local community. Without the help and support of parents, some children will find it difficult to adjust to the structured environment that schools have to be in order to achieve their objectives. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their time at school, it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive at school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Giffards Primary will work with children, families, the local authority and other partners to identify barriers to good attendance and offer support as appropriate. In cases where this offer of support fails to improve a child's attendance statutory action may become necessary.

This policy sets out the information we think will help you to explain to your child what is important to their future success and how, with your support, attending school regularly will help them to achieve their full potential.

Attendance lead at Giffards Primary School:

Mrs V Teager– Assistant Head Teacher
Telephone – 01375 672138
Email – senco@giffardsprimary.thurrock.sch.uk

Other staff with responsibility for attendance;

Mrs N Haslam Davis – Head Teacher
Mrs T Holdsworth – Learning Mentor
Mrs M Lethby – Administration Assistant

Governor with responsibility for attendance;

Mr D Stubbings – Chair of Governors

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

The effect of absence on progress					
<i>A whole year has 365 days; a school year has 190 days. That leaves 175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping and other appointments.</i>					
No absence	9 days absence	12 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence	38 days absence
190 days of education	181 days of education	178 days of education	171 days of education	161 days of education	152 days of education
100%	96%	94%	90%	85%	80%
Very Good Best chance of success. Gets your child off to a flying start.		Worrying Less chance of success. Makes it harder for your child to make progress.		Serious Concern Your child will find it very difficult to make progress.	

Learning

Any absence that a child has from school affects them as their learning becomes disrupted and social interactions can also be affected. Regular absences will have a serious effect on their academic progress and can affect a child's confidence and emotional well-being within school.

Ensuring your child attends school regularly is your legal responsibility and allowing absence from school without good reason is an offence and may result in a prosecution.

A few days a week/month can quickly build up –

365 days in a year	<u>Attendance</u> 190 school days in total/ 38 weeks	<u>Absence</u>
100% attendance	190 days	0
96% attendance	181 days	1 week and 4 days absence
90% attendance	171 days	4 weeks absence
85% attendance	161 days	6 weeks absence
80% attendance	152 days	Absence equal to the first school term Sept-Oct
75% attendance and below	143 days	9+ weeks absence

Attendance & Safeguarding

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the Curriculum and anti-bullying.

Your child may be at risk of harm if they are frequently absent therefore failing to attend school regularly will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that ‘the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs, he/she may have either by regularly attendance at school or otherwise’

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Absence Procedures:

It is vital that the school is told as early as possible if a child is not going to be attending school. The school has a 24hr answer phone service and an absence link on our website to help parents. If the school is not contacted, it will have to try to contact you. It is important that you regularly notify the school of your latest contact telephone number or any change of address. If the parent/carer doesn’t contact the school and the school cannot contact the parent/carer or other contacts, the school will have to make a home visit and may have to report the child as a ‘missing person’ to the Police or Social Services. This is for safeguarding reasons. Failure to give the school an acceptable reason for an absence will result in an unauthorised absence mark, therefore please give details rather than just ‘unwell’ if you leave a message on our answerphone or via the website.

For safeguarding reasons, parents are required to provide at least two emergency contact numbers to the school, so we are able to communicate with someone if we need to.

If your child is absent from school, you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and inform us of the reason for the absence.
- Provide us with appointment card/appointment letter if taking your child out of school for a medical appointment; your child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
- Provide the school with medical evidence of any absence lasting more than 5 consecutive days (i.e. medical note, medical appointment card, medicine bottle – named and dated)
- Provide the school with medical evidence for all future illness if your child’s attendance falls under 96%. **Please note that it is that the burden of proof with regards to providing medical evidence sits with parents and therefore if medical evidence is not provided when requested the absence will be unauthorised**

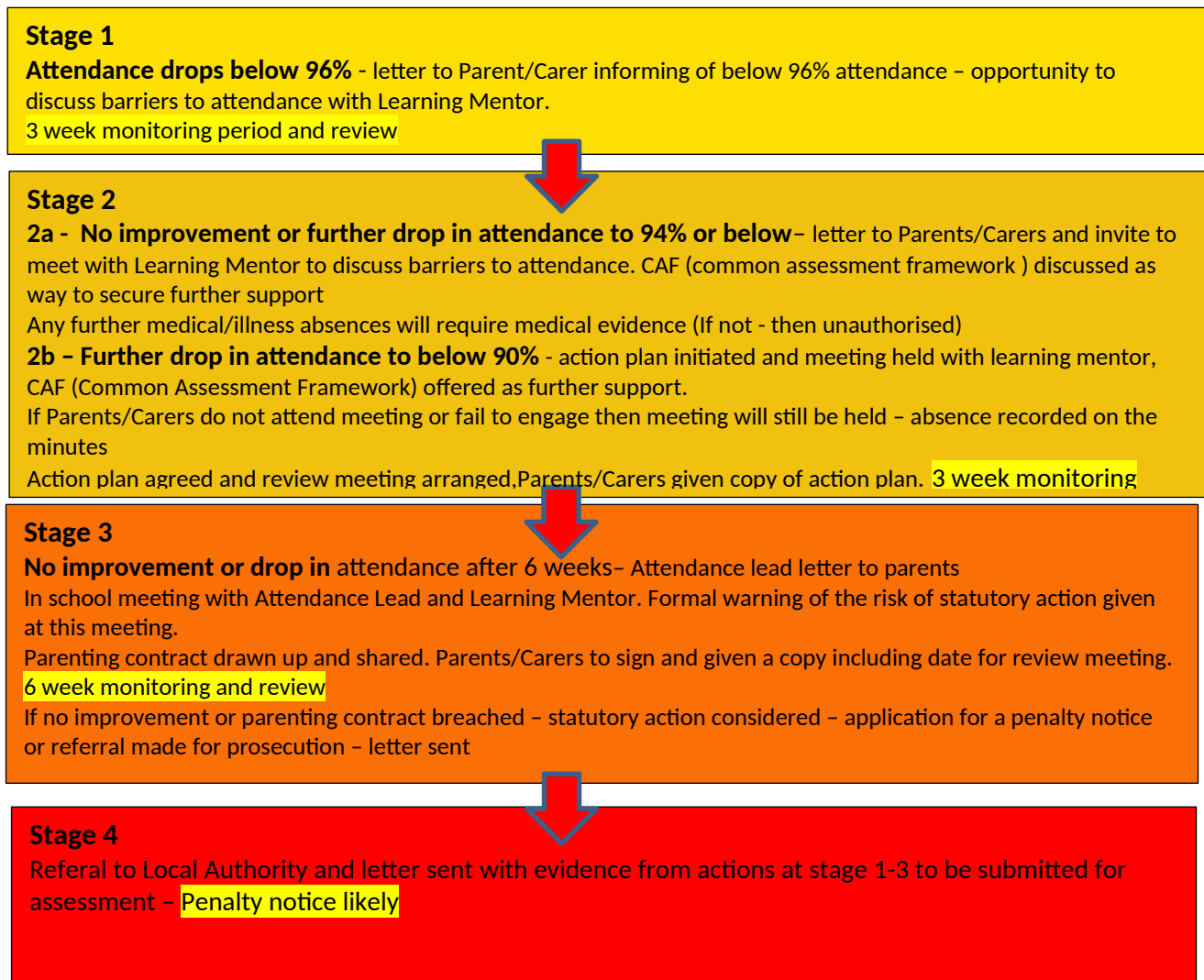
If we do not receive information from a parent/ carer regarding absence – it will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

If your child is absent from school, we will:

- Send a Groupcall text then Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Attempt to contact any other persons listed as a contact if we are unable to contact a parent/carer.

- If we are still unable to contact any of the contacts listed, we will carry out a home visit. If there is nobody at home and we have a potential safeguarding concern we call the police. If after three days of absence we have not been able to make contact we will seek advice from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and may also report this to the police as a safeguarding concern.
- Send a letter of expectation if the absence reporting procedure is not being adhered to (Safeguarding concern)
- Apply the attendance escalation stages once your child meets the stage criteria. Attendance is monitored on a daily basis and the attendance team meet every 3 weeks to monitor every child's attendance. As a result, letters/ stage escalation will occur when needed and the threshold met (Please note – earlier intervention may be applied – depending on case by case knowledge)

Please note: any unauthorised absence due to a holiday/leave of absence may automatically put your child into the below 96% attendance/Persistent Absence category – the school is obliged to still follow absence procedures even if this is the case.



School Attendance Support Team (Thurrock Local Authority) (Stage 4)

Thurrock School Attendance Support Team (SAST) are a team of experienced and highly professional officers providing the highest quality service to families, schools and other agencies in respect of school attendance matters. SAST supports schools and academies in the promotion of positive attendance and provide a service where school attendance levels are a concern in line with the Education Act 1996.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996) for pupils and is essential if pupils are to maximise the opportunities available to them. It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their child attends regularly.

A child is of compulsory school age from the start of the term after their 5th birthday up until the last Friday of June in year 11.

An offence occurs:

- If a parent fails to ensure a child's attendance at a school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school; or
- An excluded child is found in a public place, without reasonable justification, during the first 5 school days of a formal exclusion from school.

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines "parent" as "all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child means that person with whom the child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with that child, is considered to be a parent in education law."

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and offers parents the opportunity to discharge their responsibility for the period of non-attendance by payment of a penalty rather than by prosecution through the Criminal Court. The use of a Penalty Notice should be considered at the earliest opportunity; if it is believed it will address the non-attendance before it becomes entrenched.

Penalty Notices

Giffards Primary School has adopted Thurrock Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence from School as part of its Attendance Policy

Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice may be issued;

- **Irregular Attendance:**

Penalty Notices can only be issued in respect of unauthorised absence, when the following criteria are met:

- At least 12 sessions of unauthorised absence are recorded against the pupil's name within 120

available sessions. (One session is a half day)

- Parents must first be sent a letter warning that a Penalty Notice could be issued and allowing them 30 school days to evidence a commitment to improving their child's attendance (See Appendix 2 of Thurrock Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence from School document).
- **Unauthorised Leave of Absence (including term time holidays)**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in 2013 so that references to family holiday, including reference to Headteachers/Chair of Governors allowing up to 10 school days for a term time holiday, and extended leave were removed. The amendments make clear that Headteachers /Chair of Governors may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers/Chair of Governors should determine the number of school days the child may be away from school if the leave is granted.

Please note that even in exceptional circumstances leave of absence will not normally be granted if:

- a child's attendance is below 96% for the current academic year
- the period of absence coincides with the start of term, or is near to or coincides with tests, SATs, exams or other significant events in the school calendar.

Penalty Notices can only be issued in respect of unauthorised absence and must meet the following criteria.

- If a Headteacher /Chair of Governors) does not authorise a request from a parent for term time leave of absence and the parent takes the leave
- **There must be at least 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised term time leave.**
- **Exclusions:**

Where a pupil of compulsory school age who has been excluded from school, either for a fixed period or permanently is found to be present in a public place during school hours in the first five days of the exclusion, without reasonable justification.

Penalty Notices are issued per parent per child

Once a person is issued with a Penalty Notice they must pay a penalty. This is set by regulation at £60 if paid within 21 calendar days (after the date of issue), rising to £120 if paid after 21 calendar days but within 28 calendar days.

Leave of Absence Requests:

Parents must apply for leave of absence in advance of taking it, failure to do so will result in the absence being marked as an unauthorised holiday code 'G'. All applications need to be made at least 4 weeks before the period of absence and before personal and travel arrangements are made. (Request for Leave form – please see Appendix 1)

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday taken, the Absence Procedure will be followed as necessary. If a leave of absence is taken, staff will not set extra work for children to do during their absence or on their

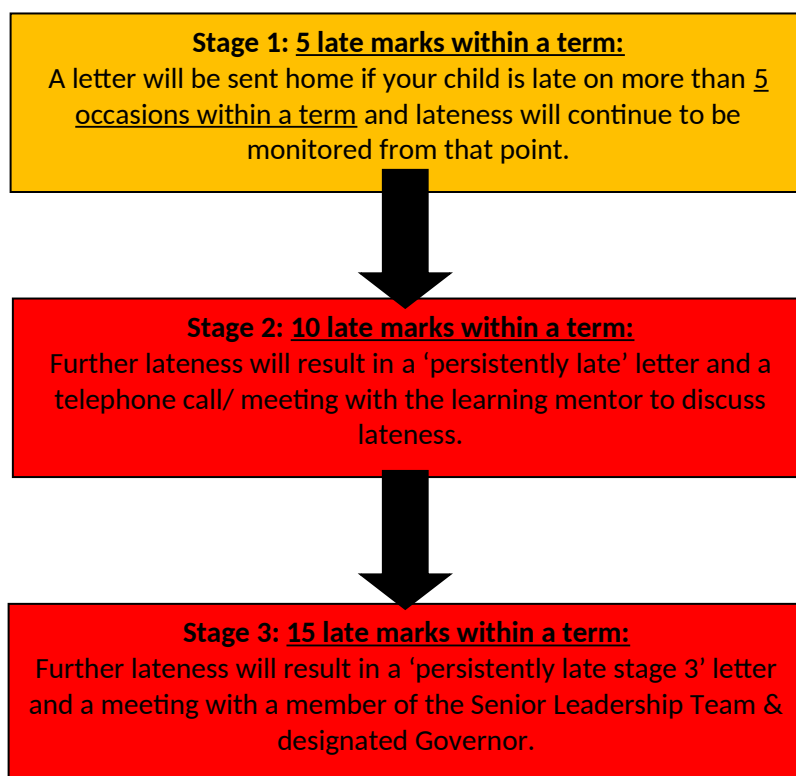
return

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day it can have a detrimental effect on their progress as they find it hard to settle and they will inevitably miss vital introductions to lessons. It also disturbs the class routines, which has a negative effect on other children's learning.

The school gates open at **8:40am** and children must be in class for registration by **8:55am**. If a child arrives at school after 8:55am they will need to come via the school office for their details to be recorded on the class electronic register. If a child is up to 30 mins late they are marked in the electronic register as 'late' (L), pupils arriving more than 30 minutes after the close of registration will be regarded as absent from the morning session and will be given an unauthorised absence mark (U). This will have an impact on a child's Attendance record.

Obviously there are times when a child may be late into school due to heavy traffic or an appointment, this type of lateness is marked accordingly, although the school does need to be notified prior to the lateness. If an appointment is later in the morning or afternoon the school will expect the parent/carer to send their child into school to obtain their 'present' mark and then collect them nearer to the appointment time. Ideally, where possible, appointments should be made for a child outside of the school day. We will make calls to parents to discuss reasons for lateness.



If you are having problems getting your child to school on time you can approach us at any time to support you and help resolve the problem. This could prevent the lateness escalation policy being applied – this will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Understanding types of absence:

An electronic register is taken in the school every morning and afternoon (each classed as a 'session') and every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED when inputted onto the system. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required by the school. You can see a breakdown of the Register codes either on your child's school report which is sent yearly or on a Pupil Attendance Report (PAR) which is attached to an attendance letter sent out at the end of each half term for pupils with attendance under 96%.

We will analyse attendance data to ensure we identify any patterns in absence and we use this information to inform our support and actions.

AUTHORISED absences are sessions away from the school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies or other unavoidable situations. Obviously children do need to be kept off school if they are too ill to attend, however, if they are simply 'not feeling right' or are just tired then this will not be authorised. It is also important that a child returns to school as soon as possible after feeling unwell, for example, it is not acceptable not to send a child back to school on Friday simply because they have been unwell Monday-Thursday

- It is imperative that parents are honest with the school about all absences, asking pupils to tell an untruth is not acceptable and is damaging to the pupil, giving them the wrong moral message, as well as to the relationship between school and home.
- The school retains the right to convert an authorised absence to unauthorised should it become clear that a parent has not been truthful about an absence e.g. where a parent has said a child is sick and it later becomes clear a holiday/ long weekend was taken.

UNAUTHORISED absences are sessions away from the school which the school deems unreasonable.

Unauthorised absences include:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily/without good reason
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark. Children who arrive 30 minutes after registration closes will be given a U mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time.

As a school we reference Guidance on infection control in schools and other childcare settings from Public Health England to manage absences and determine authorisation.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is classed a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason, both authorised and unauthorised absences. Please refer to the escalation policy on page 6.

At the end of the academic year anything over 19 days of absence will result in your child being labelled as a persistent absentee. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully in terms of both attendance and academic progress and PA cases will be referred to the School Attendance Support Team.

Unauthorised Leave of Absence (term time holiday)

Unless it is agreed that the leave is for ‘exceptional circumstances’ all leave will be unauthorised and will show as such in the register. Medical Evidence will be required if a child is off sick prior to a holiday or immediately after a holiday. If your child continues to incur unauthorised absences, an application will be made for a Penalty Notice to be issued. If the absence is not authorised and the holiday taken, the case may be referred to the School Attendance Support Team who may issue a Penalty Notice (See below).

Any holidays taken will incur absence marks and parents may still receive letters stating their child is below the recommended attendance level (if the leave of absence is 10 or more this will definitely be the case – see diagram on page 4). This can cause parents upset but it is important parents are kept updated on their child’s attendance and how absence due to holidays contributes to poor attendance. For more information, please refer to the DFE Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday taken, the Absence Procedure will be followed as necessary. If a leave of absence is taken, **staff will not set extra work for children to do during their absence or on their return.**

What incentives do we have for attendance?

Class of the Week

Each week in Celebration Assembly we award ‘Class of the Week’ to the highest attending class in each Key Stage. These classes are awarded a class certificate and are able to have extra playtime at the end of break/lunch.



Termly Rewards

The Class with the best attendance at the end of the term in each key stage will receive a class certificate and participate in a fun activity afternoon.

Children with **96%** or more attendance at the end of each term will receive a certificate.

Children with **100%** attendance at the end of each term will receive a certificate and an attendance achievement badge.

1 term of 100% attendance = bronze attendance achievement badge

2 terms of 100% attendance within the same academic year = silver attendance achievement badge

3 terms of 100% attendance within the same academic year = gold attendance achievement badge

End of Year Rewards

Children with **96%** or more attendance at the end of the academic year will receive a certificate. and an attendance achievement pencil.

Children with **100%** at the end of the academic year will receive a certificate and gold attendance achievement badge.

They will also have the opportunity to win a special prize in the attendance raffle which will be drawn in Celebration Assembly in each Key Stage.

Children with 100 % attendance in more than one year will receive a certificate and a book voucher.



Individual pupil incentive schemes are used for pupils with low attendance, this is done sensitively to

encourage and reward pupils for achieving their personal attendance target.

Engaging/informing Parents

The school will use standard letters for information. Standard letters will be sent out when:

- Stage 1 - Attendance has fallen to 96% or below – Letter sent to parent/s by admin
- Stage 2 - Attendance has not improved since Stage 1, letter sent from Learning Mentor (LM) via Groupcall meeting offered/held with LM (barriers to attendance and target setting)
- Stage 3 - Attendance has still not improved, Stage 3 letter sent & Stage 3 meeting held with Senior Leader and LM. Penalty warning given and parenting contract drawn up
- Stage 4 - Attendance has not improved, Stage 4 letter – Penalty Notice Warning likely

All letters referring to a fall in attendance are sent via our communication system and can be replied to electronically.

Exclusion from School

A pupil of compulsory school age who has been excluded from school, either for a fixed period or permanently is not allowed to be present in a public place during school hours in the first five days of the exclusion, without reasonable justification. The parent must have been notified in writing by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

Those responsible for attendance matters in this school:

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the following staff has specific attendance related responsibilities:

- **Class Teacher** – To complete electronic registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily; to be alert to early signs of issues which may result in non-attendance; to inform the admin. officer of any attendance concerns. The class teacher may also make phone calls/ arrange meetings in order for attendance to be challenged at a very early stage. The class teacher will also discuss attendance at Parent/Carer evening which takes place twice throughout the academic year (November & March). The class teacher will pass on any evidence to admin that the pupil may be taking an unauthorised absence – such as where another pupil says – ‘he/she is on holiday’ or the pupil themselves says I am going on holiday and must log such information to InTouch. In these cases it is highly likely that if any leave has been authorised it will become unauthorised.
- **Receptionist/Admin Officer** - To ensure children who are late or absent are added to the electronic register including recording reasons and first day absence calls are made when parents/carers have not notified the school of an absence; to alert the Admin Officer if unable to make contact, a home visit may be necessary.
- **Admin Officer** – To oversee the registration process and liaise with class teachers over attendance concerns; to alert parents/carers over attendance concerns and/or for frequent lateness and to closely monitor all identified children; to consult and liaise with School Attendance Support Team and refer PA children to them; to promote good attendance within the school with assemblies, achievement certificates and rewards. Particular focus will be on monitoring the attendance of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium as it has been identified that this group of children have lower attendance than non-Pupil Premium children and this negatively affects their academic progress and results can therefore be lower.

- **Learning Mentor** – To identify children with high and or consistent absence/lateness, to liaise with parents/carers and to set and monitor an Action Plan to improve attendance.
- **Headteacher/SLT and Governors** - To ensure all attendance procedures are carried out in accordance with the Attendance Policy and to work with the senior lead for attendance to raise the profile of attendance within the school and deal with the attendance issues that arise. To also authorise Stage 4 of the escalation process (Local Authority Penalty Notice).

Re-integration programmes

Where children have been absent from school for some time, they may need to return on a gradual basis. Individual cases will need to be discussed with the relevant members of staff and agreement reached as to the pace and time scale of any return.

Policy Summary

Whilst we do understand that children are ill from time to time, individual pupil's academic attainment /progress does suffer if they miss school on a regular basis. The school has a responsibility to discourage parents from removing their children from education for any reason as absences may have a negative impact on a pupil's educational attainment and progress.

A pupil who takes 10 days absence a year will actually be spending more time at home than at school in that year and will only attain 94.7% attendance. 10 days absence means a child misses 50 hours of education.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance; equally parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school.

All staff within the school are committed to working with both parents and pupils to ensure that attendance within the school is as high as it can be so that the pupils receive the best education that they can which will improve their life opportunities.

Appendices to Giffards Primary

Attendance Policy

Add in all letters to be sent out as per escalation timeline



REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

This form must be completed by the parent or carer and forwarded to the Governing Body **at least 4 weeks prior** to the period of absence.

Name of Child:

Class:

Period for which leave of absence is sought:

From:/...../..... To:/...../.....

Name of other siblings (if any) for whom leave of absence is being requested:

Name:

.....

.....

The Governors at Giffards Primary would like to stress:

1. There is no 'right' to leave of absence during term time.
2. Schools & academies have a duty in law to keep pupil absence to a minimum.
3. Nationally, Government policy is to encourage schools and academies to minimise the amount of teaching and learning time lost as a result of term time holidays and schools and academies are expected to adopt a much more challenging response to such requests.
4. For all of the above reasons, requests from parents and carers for children to be allowed to take holidays during term time at Giffards Primary will normally be refused and, if taken will be deemed to be an unauthorised absence and may result in further action being taken.

At Giffards Primary we understand the challenges of booking family holidays out of school term however we will not grant holidays in term time unless under exceptional circumstance/s.

Even in exceptional circumstances leave of absence will not normally be granted if:

- a child's attendance is below 96% for the current academic year
- the period of absence coincides with the start of term, or is near to or coincides with tests, SATs, exams or other significant events in the school calendar.

Please give the specific reasons for the requested leave of absence. This section **must be completed** in order for the request to be considered. If left incomplete all absences will have to be unauthorised -we are unable to authorise any absence without evidence of why you believe it is exceptional (please give further details on a separate sheet if necessary)

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...

I have read and understood the school’s policy on leave of absence during term time contained on this form and have also read the ‘Pupil Attendance Policy’ which can be found on the schools website, or a copy can be gained from the main school reception.

Date: Signature:

Parent/Carer Name

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:	
Number of school days requested
Current academic years attendance
No. of days authorised, if any
Authorised by

To: ame of child:

Your application for leave of absence from to has been:

- a) Approved by the governors
- b) Refused for the following reason(s):

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Signed:
(Chair of Governors/Governor)