



George Dixon Primary School

Attendance Policy

This policy was updated and ratified by George Dixon Primary School:	January 2017
School staff were consulted on this document:	January 2017
This policy is due to be reviewed on:	January 2018

Chair of Board of Governors

Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Consideration

Care

Courtesy

Commitment

Co-operation

Current Context

‘Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.’

School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DFE Aug 2013

The Government expects schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents* are expected to perform their **legal duty** by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly and arrive to school on time”.

***Definition of Parents – DFE Advice on School Attendance**

A parent means:

All natural parents, whether they are married or not;

Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,

Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

It is also important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the child that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

Principles of the George Dixon Primary Attendance Policy

At George Dixon Primary School, we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping children achieve the best that they can be. Education is important. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. All research shows that children who attend well achieve well.

Descriptor	Attendance	Equals absent number of days	Learning hours lost
Excellent	100%	0	0
	99%	2	10
Good	98%	4	20
	97%	6	30
	96%	7.5	37.5
Satisfactory	95%	9.5	47.5
Cause for Concern	90%	19	95
	89%	21	105
	88%	23	115
	87%	25	125
Unsatisfactory	86%	27	135
Serious cause for concern	85%	28.5	142
	84%	30.5	152
	83%	32	160
	82%	34	170
	81%	36	180

The government has laid down guidelines, which they expect children at school to achieve in terms of attendance. They are set at **95%** attendance.

A child will fall below 95% if they miss as little as half a day over a 2-week period
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It is the expectation of the school that all children *will* achieve at least 95% attendance. There is a variety of reasons for children missing school. Some are unavoidable but we would ask that you support us in ensuring that your child's attendance meets both the school and the government's expectations. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties are best sorted out by the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue. The school undertakes a wide range of measures to support children where attendance at school is an issue. Where there may be an issue and we fail to see an improvement, it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the child receives the support required to bring about an improvement.

The school follows an ‘Attendance Superhero’ programme to monitor attendance:

EXCELLENT	<p>Your child’s attendance is above 99%. They are ‘A gold star superhero’ on attendance. As well as being an excellent attender, your child will almost certainly achieve well.</p>
GOOD	<p>Your child’s attendance is 96-98% They are either a bronze or a silver star superhero. Your child is likely to achieve their targets and they are meeting the school’s attendance target. Well done!</p>
SATISFACTORY	<p>Your child’s attendance is 95% Aim to do better! Your child is likely to achieve their targets but their outcomes will be improve further if their attendance improves.</p>
UNSATISFACTORY	<p>Your child’s attendance is 94-90%. Time to improve. You child is <u>below</u> the national government threshold of 95% <u>Your child will miss up to 18 days each school year</u> and this will make it difficult for them achieve their best.</p>
CONCERN	<p>Your child’s attendance is between 85-90%. NEED TO TAKE ACTION Parents / Carers may face a fixed penalty fine as your child’s attendance is below 90% and they are ‘Persistent Absentees’ <u>Your child is missing so much time from school that it will be difficult for them to make appropriate progress.</u></p>
SERIOUS CONCERN	<p>Your child’s attendance is below 85% You need to TAKE ACTION NOW, as you will face a fixed penalty fine or further legal prosecution if your child’s attendance does not improve! <u>Your child is missing so much time from school that it is causing great concern and making appropriate progress will become increasingly difficult!</u></p>

The school follows an ‘Attendance Superhero’ programme to monitor attendance:

	DESCRIPTION	SCHOOL ACTIONS
EXCELLENT	Your Child's Attendance is above 99% They are a 'Gold Star Attendance Superhero'. As well as being an excellent attender, your child will almost certainly achieve well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly: 100% Superhero pencil draw. Termly: Gold Certificate and text home. End of year; voucher draw.
GOOD	Your child's attendance is 96-98% They are either a bronze or a silver star superhero. Your child is likely to achieve their targets and they are meeting the school's attendance target. Well done!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 98% Termly Silver Certificate 97% Termly Bronze Certificate
SATISFACTORY	Your child's attendance is 95% Aim to do better! Your child is likely to achieve their targets but their outcomes will improve further if their attendance improves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Termly Attendance sheet sent home.
UNSATISFACTORY	Your child's attendance is 94-90%. Time to improve to They are <u>below</u> the national government threshold of 95% <u>Your child will miss up to 18 days each school year</u> and this will make it difficult for them achieve their best.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90 - 92% Warning letter sent home. Weekly tracking of attendance and greater evidence of child illness or absence collected.
CONCERN	Your child's attendance is between 85-90%. NEED TO TAKE ACTION Parents / Carers may face a fixed penalty fine as your child's attendance is below 90% and they are 'Persistent Absentees' <u>Your child is missing so much time from school that it will be difficult for them to make appropriate progress.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial unacceptable attendance warning letter sent home. Weekly tracking and greater evidence collected. Meetings arranged with parents and action plan put in place. Possible fixed penalty fine.
SERIOUS CONCERN	Your child's attendance is below 85% You need to TAKE ACTION NOW , as you will face a fixed penalty fine or further legal prosecution if your child's attendance does not improve! <u>Your child is missing so much time from school that it is causing great concern and making appropriate progress will become increasingly difficult!</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance Meeting letter. Action Plan put in place. Possible parent Contract Possible 'Spotlight'

National Context

The 1996 Education Act (section 444) states that parents (including non-related adult carers in the child's household) have a **legal responsibility** to ensure that those of compulsory school age are educated, either by **'regular'** attendance at school or 'otherwise'. The 2008 Education and Skills Act (section 155) specifies the same requirement regarding regular attendance at alternative provision.

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. For most children the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year. Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment. **(DFE guidance – March 2013)**

Daily Procedures: Registration

Under the 2006 Education Regulations, the school is **legally** required to register children twice daily. Registers are marked in the morning by 9.10am and in the afternoon at 1.10pm.

School gates open at 8:30 am and gates close at 9.00 when all children are expected to be in their classrooms for registration. **It is a legal requirement that a register is taken at the start of the day.** Not only does the process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a checklist in respect of health and safety issues – e.g. Fire Drill

End of day collection of children: If parents arrive after 3:30pm parents/guardians need to sign the children out and provide a reason. This is then monitored.

Absence from school

Regular attendance at school is the responsibility of parents and carers. Under the 1996 Education Act, parents commit an **offence** if the child does not attend school regularly. ***If your child cannot come to school because of illness, you should advise the school on the first day of absence by telephone.*** If no message is received we will assume that your child is absent without your permission. We will then make every effort to contact you initially by text followed by a phone call if the text message does not receive a timely response. It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned we may make a 'home visit' or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' visit.

Once contact (verbal and/or written) has been made with the parent the school will determine if the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised.

The school will only **authorise** a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. The school may request medical evidence if a parent rings the school to confirm the child is unwell: medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence. The Head Teacher may not authorise medical absence without this evidence.

The school **may** authorise absence under certain specific circumstances. However, the parent must contact the Head Teacher in advance to secure authorisation. This **may** include work related interviews and meetings with external agencies (i.e. - Forward Thinking). The Head Teacher **may** also authorise events where children are involved in any supervised sporting events or trials, theatre performances and participation in acts of religious worship.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. These are an **offence** by the parent. Such circumstances include:

- 1. A child not attending school to go shopping for school clothes***
- 2. A child not attending school as it is her birthday or the birthday of a family member***
- 3. A child not attending school as the family have gone to the airport to meet a visiting relative***
- 4. A child not attending school due to attending a hospital appointment for another family member***
- 5. A child not attending school due to the fact the family returned late in the previous evening from a family holiday***
- 6. A child attends a medical appointment in the morning but then fails to return to school for afternoon lessons.***

According to the DFE guidance, (March 2013) the following codes are to be used for **authorised** absences on the register:

Code I: ILLNESS

Schools can request medical evidence from parents / carers if they feel the authenticity of an illness is in doubt or the child has a record of unsatisfactory school attendance.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Parents / Carers are encouraged to arrange appointments out of school hours but the school will authorise if confirmation of the appointment is provided.

Code C: Other circumstances

This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, i.e. – family funeral.

Code D: Dual Registered

This code will be used if a child is registered at two schools.

Code P: Approved sporting activity

This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, i.e. sporting events.

Code R: Religious Observation

This code is used to cover major religious festivals during term-time. The school will only authorise one day absence for religious events.

Code V: Educational visits and trips

According to the DFE guidance (March 2013) the following codes are to be used for **unauthorised** absences on the register:

Code G: Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period - If a school does not authorise a leave of absence and the parents still take the child on holiday, 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 the 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 pupil's absence.

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 late to school after 9.30am

If a pupil arrives after 9.30am without any written or verbal confirmation from parents/carers to explain their lateness, the school will mark the pupil with the U code. This means that, although the pupil is in school, she is marked absent for the entire morning. This will be marked as an authorised absence and could result in prosecution for parents/carers if the pupil is persistently late.

Medical Appointments

We do appreciate that it is often difficult for parents / carers to obtain written confirmation of medical appointments. Parents / carers can obtain 'Medical Authorisation Cards' from school to take with them to the doctors to confirm their child has attended a medical appointment. (See below) Parents / carers must ensure the card is stamped, dated and signed by the practice to confirm their child has attended a medical appointment.



To whom it may concern

George Dixon Primary School is committed to working with families to improve pupil attendance and achievement by reducing absence. Please confirm by signature or practice stamp that:

(Insert pupil name)_____ has attended the surgery or practice today.

Is this condition likely to impact further on their school attendance? YES/NO

Signed _____ Date _____

Practice name/stamp:

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance so a decision can be made whether to authorise the absence or not.

Safeguarding

The school reserves the right to invite parents into school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns, i.e. – female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, forced marriage, radicalisation. This may be the case particularly if a parent/carer requests a leave of absence during term time.

In addition, if the school suspects that a child may be at potential risk because of their absence from school the Safeguarding team reserve the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate external agencies, i.e. – social care (MASH), police. The school will inform parents/carers if a referral is to be made. However, this may not be appropriate in every circumstance depending on the nature of the safeguarding concern and a referral may be made without informing the parent / carer.

Children Missing From Education

The school recognizes that when a child goes missing from school it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, i.e. – sexual abuse or exploitation. The school follows the Birmingham LSCB procedures “Identifying and maintaining contact with children missing or at risk of going missing from Education 2013”. Under section, 8h of the Education Regulations Act (2006) the school will make ‘reasonable’ enquiries into the location of pupils with 5 days continuous unauthorized absence or for those who fail to return from leave of absence granted during term time.

The school reserves the right, however, to contact relevant agencies to seek advice (Children's Social Care, Police Safe and Well-being referral) if any child is absent from school for more than five days without confirmation from parents. Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents to ensure the child is safe and well, including, text messages, phone calls and home visits. The school will contact relevant agencies after two days absence without confirmation from parents / carers if the child is subject to a 'Child in Need' plan or considered vulnerable in other ways.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, as outlined below;

- Pupils at risk of harm / neglect (school will follow standard Child Protection procedures for referrals to social care / police)
- Children of Gypsy, Roma or Traveller families (school will inform local authority when a GRT child leaves the school without identifying a new destination school.)
- Families of Armed Forces (school will contact MOD Children's Education Advisory Service for advice on making arrangements for continuity of education)
- Missing children / runaways (direct referral to Children's Services and Police)
- Children who cease to attend a school

When a pupil returns from a period of extended absence appropriate daily attendance checks will be carried out and their attendance, behaviour, emotional and physical well-being will be monitored closely by the safeguarding team in school. Parents/Carers will be invited into school with the pupil to meet with a member of SLT or designated Attendance team member, as part of the reintegration programme and relevant support will be offered to the pupil/family as necessary.

Leave of Absence in term time

Under the DFE 'Advice on School Attendance', parents can **no longer** expect schools to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday for up to 10 school days per year. The Head teacher will **not** grant leave of absence during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances**'.

The Head Teacher will also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. **From this perspective, leave of absence in term time is no longer a parental right and will only be authorised at the Head Teacher's discretion.** Under DFE guidelines, the school may consider taking legal action against a parent/s who takes leave of absence without the Head Teacher's permission and apply for a Penalty Notice Fine (£60-£120) to be issued by the Court Section or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority. The £60 Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full separately by both parents within 21 days and will rise to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. Failure to pay this penalty notice may result in prosecution.

If parents wish to take their child out of school during term time we advise parents to send a letter into school outlining the reasons for and dates of the leave of absence. Parents will then be invited into school to attend a meeting with the Head Teacher or designated Attendance Lead to discuss the request and complete the necessary paperwork. During the meeting, a date will be agreed by which the child must return to school after the leave of absence.

If the school does authorise a 'Leave of Absence' a Penalty Notice Fine (£60-£120) may be issued to parents if the child does not return to school by this agreed date. In addition, if the child does not return within 14 days of the agreed return date the school has the right to remove the child from the school register without parental consent. **This would mean the child would lose their place at school.** It is also important for parents to note that the child may also be removed from the school register if the parent decides to remove the child from the country for an extended period (more than six weeks).

It is important for parents / carers to note that the school will not authorise ANY leave of absence unless the school feels the circumstances are unavoidable.

Additionally, as previously outlined in the policy, the school reserves the right to either contact the parents / carers directly or make an immediate referral to social care or the police if the school feels a child is potentially at risk being taken out of school during term time. This is particularly relevant to concerns the school may have about sexual exploitation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and radicalisation.

The school also reserve the right to request parents/carers provide medical evidence if there is suspicion a children is away and leave has not been formally requested by parents. This is due to the high number of unauthorised term time holidays nationally at certain points of the year, ie – around school holidays.

The school will seek advice from the local authority if a pupil fails to return from an extended family holiday during term time and the school and local authority have made reasonable enquiries but cannot locate the pupil.

This applies to leaves of absence that are both authorised and unauthorised by the school. As a result, the school may remove the pupil from roll under such circumstances. However, we will keep the pupil on roll if the family remain in contact with the school even though the pupil has not returned to school by the agreed date.

Persistent Absenteeism

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. **Children with attendance below 90% fall into the 'Persistent Absentee' category.** This is particularly relevant if any of the child's absences are unauthorised.

According to the DFE guidance (March 2013); 'If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority'. In addition 'Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996)'

When a child's attendance falls below 90% (at any stage of the year), their attendance will be tracked on a weekly basis and a warning letter will be sent home. The school may also consider implementing an Attendance Action Plan to secure an improvement in attendance, or a **Parenting Contract** if the child continues to be absent from school without authorisation. A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between the school and parent, and will contain improvement targets with set timescales and an overview of the support provided by the school to support the child and her family. Parental failure to comply with the contract may be used as evidence if the Local Authority decides to prosecute parents.

The school will follow the guidelines outlined by the '**Spotlight Attendance Action**' campaign if a child has **20 sessions (10 days)** or more unauthorised absence in a **12-month period**. In this eventuality both parents, even if one of the parents does not live with the child, will be invited into school to attend a 'School Attendance Review Meeting' and formally sign a Local Authority Attendance Action Plan. The child's attendance will be monitored for a four-week period. If the child attends school, every day during this period parents will receive a letter congratulating the child on this improvement. If the child is absent from school during this monitoring period parents will be expected to provide **medical evidence** (i.e. – medical appointment cards, copy of prescription, letters concerning hospital appointments, letters from professional organisations (CAMHS), print screen of medical notes, doctor's medical certificate). If there continues to be no improvement in attendance and absences remain unauthorised, the school will complete the Spotlight prosecution paperwork and begin to undertake the necessary legal action against the parents. This will initially result in a **Penalty Notice Fine**. This will be issued to both parents even if one of the parents does not live with the child. Each parent will be issued with a £60 fine and will have 21 days to make payment. This will rise to £120 if the initial fine is paid between 22 and 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. **There is no right of appeal by parents against the penalty notice.** Failure to pay the Penalty Notice Fine will result in further legal action being taken by the courts, with the maximum fine currently £2,500 or three months in prison.

Under the 1989 Children Act, the Local Authority has the power to issue an **Education Supervision Order** (ESO) and place a child under their supervision on the grounds that the child is not being 'properly educated' and is in danger of 'significant harm'. The Local Authority can issue an order if the child is persistently absent from school. The Local Authority appointed 'Supervisor' can give 'directions' to the parents on how the child should be educated and work with the parent to ensure the child attends school regularly. The Local Authority may use an ESO as an interim measure before moving directly to prosecution.

Under the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act, if a child continues to have attendance issues after a parent has been convicted, the courts can also issue a **Parenting Order**. This legally requires the parents to participate in a programme of parenting support and counselling. If the unauthorised absence continues, a new case will be brought against the parent/s but previous parental failure to engage with the school and local authority can be cited.

If a Penalty Notice Fine is issued by the court, the school will be required to continue to monitor the child's attendance and begin the Spotlight process again if the child has a further 20 sessions (10 days) unauthorised absence from the date the fine was issued by the court. This may result in further legal action taken against the parent if the child continues to have periods of unauthorised absence from school.

Punctuality

The 1996 Education Act requires that every child should attend school and be on time. It is better to be late than not to be in school at all, **BUT** when children arrive late it makes it difficult for everyone. The teacher has to stop and wait for the latecomer to settle down, the rest of the class is disrupted and the latecomer misses the, often vital, first part of the lesson and will receive a consequence.

Children who arrive after registration must sign in. Up to 9.30, this can be done at the school entrance.

It is important to note that any child who arrives to school after 9.30 will be marked with a letter 'U' in the register. This means that, despite being in school, they will technically be marked absent from school for the morning sessions. It will be recorded on the register as an unauthorised absence and will be used as 1 of the 20 unauthorised sessions that could result in a £60-120 Fixed Penalty Notice issued to both parents.

If you are aware your child will be arriving late, please send her with a note explaining the circumstances or contact the school by telephone, i.e. - unplanned appointment at the doctors.

We do appreciate that many of our children rely on public transport, which may make them late for school. However, it the parents/carers responsibility to make alternative arrangements to get their child to school if they are aware of on-going issues with public transport and road networks that many result in their child being repeatedly late for school. The school site is open from 8.30am each day.

Communication with parents

Letters sent to parents at the end of each term in relation to attendance. This allows parents to be informed of both their child's attendance and punctuality. Parents are also informed about their child's attendance in the annual full report, at parent's evenings and Progress Review meetings.

Rewards and Incentives

Children are rewarded for excellent attendance in many different ways. Attendance Roll Calls are displayed around school and updated on a half-termly basis. ‘Superhero Attendance’ is celebrated in assemblies, where classes are awarded for attendance above 97%. There is a weekly draw for children above 98% attendance. Children with the most improved attendance rates are also rewarded as a further incentive. Children also receive class Dojo points for attendance and punctuality.

Improving attendance – WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

1. Try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time. Obviously this is not always possible but in such cases, try to minimise the disruption to the day by getting an early morning appointment so that your child can attend afterwards OR a late afternoon appointment so that she can complete most of her timetable before leaving.
2. Encourage your child to take responsibility for being on time for school. Make sure that she has a realistic bedtime and will not be too tired to get up in the morning for school.
3. Leave of absence during term time is not a parental right. If there are special or exceptional circumstances please contact the Head Teacher and decision will be made if the absence can be authorised or not. .
4. Encourage your child to come to school even if she is feeling slightly unwell. Many aches and pains are forgotten when they are with friends and the school will contact you if it becomes necessary.
5. Talk positively about going to school – “What was good about school today?”
6. Monitor and restrict your child’s internet and social media use to ensure they are not experiencing any difficulties that may prevent them from wanting to attend school.
7. Take any worries seriously but do not show that you are unduly concerned. Believe that they will be sorted out.

Improving attendance – WHAT SCHOOL DOES:

1. Mark the registers in accordance with the law twice a day.
2. Informs any parents / carers who have not contacted the school, of the absence of their child on a particular day.
3. Maintains records and monitors attendance of children on a regular basis.
4. Authorises absences in accordance with the government guidelines. Please note that **only** the school can authorise absence.
5. Contacts parents / carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and / or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
6. Provides access to staff with whom attendance related issues can be discussed.

7. Works with external agencies to maintain good attendance and to support the child / family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality to school.
8. Provides re – integration support for children returning from absence.
9. Maintains a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
10. Works with relevant external agencies if a children’ attendance becomes a concern, i.e. – Social Care, Forward Thinking, Pupil Support Service, Police.
11. Uses the Spotlight campaign as a means of working with parents to resolve issues affecting attendance.

The school has a legal responsibility to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly. Our staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Your continued support in this matter is essential. Please work with us.

