

GRIMSARGH ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY 2018-19

This document has been approved by the governing body, (remove - working closely with governors using the **Longridge Cluster Schools'** Whole School Attendance Policy.) **It will be reviewed regularly and modified when necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.**

Grimsargh St Michael's is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

School Mission Statement

The school's aim is to develop the children intellectually, socially, morally, spiritually, physically and culturally within a caring, supportive and stimulating environment, based on the values of the Christian faith, taking into consideration each child's needs, abilities and interests.

Grimsargh St Michael's C of E School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential.

The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to maintain or improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives Grimsargh St Michael's C of E School will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Why Regular Attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Grimsargh St Michael's expectation for your child's attendance is 96% in line with LCC guidelines. Any child dropping below this percentage will be contacted by our School Attendance Lead responsible for monitoring levels of attendance and punctuality, to discuss ways of working together to improve levels further.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- Report to you termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates (remove - and outings/events.)
- Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high school;
- (remove - Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.)
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- holidays that exceed the amount agreed by the Headteacher

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly **on a weekly basis**, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold (**90% attendance**) will be given priority consideration, and **school staff will keep in regular contact with parents to monitor this**.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan (**remove -** and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes, parenting contracts and participation in group activities around raising attendance.) All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority School Attendance Team.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone or you can call into school and report to reception

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our in-school Attendance Lead if absences persist;

- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality :

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the Headteacher;
- Parenting contracts;
- Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/or referral to outside agencies(including the Local Authority School Attendance Team)
- Penalty notices

The Local Authority School Attendance Team:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). They will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist the case may be referred to the Court Officers, who can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. **Grimsargh St Michael's expectation for your child's punctuality is 96% and again you will be contacted by our School Attendance Lead responsible for monitoring attendance and punctuality if your child's lateness drops below 96%.** If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

School procedures

The school day starts at **9.00am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Children may enter school between 8.50am and 9.00am.

Registers are marked by **9.10 9.05am** and your child will receive a late mark **which will be monitored for a 96% target as discussed above** if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and

it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

As stated, if your child's (remove – has a persistent late record) late record drops to 96% you will be (remove - asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the pastoral support team) contacted by Mrs Walsh our School Attendance Lead to work with school to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Signing Out

The school office is responsible for overseeing the procedure for releasing children where parents/carers have requested and been granted leave during the school day.

The child(ren) can only be released to a parent or authorised carer/family member. When an authorised adult is picking up a child within school time the school office is responsible for ensuring that they complete and sign the school signing out book (see above for details of requirements). The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register.

Leave of Absence

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, head teachers no longer have the discretion to authorise leave in term time to allow pupils to go on holiday.

Leave of absence **WILL NOT** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

If a request for absence in exceptional circumstances is made the following factors may be taken into account when considering an application for leave:

- Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil's education?
- Will he/she miss any national tests or examinations?
- Is his/her attendance a cause for concern?
- Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?
- Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?

If work commitments are stated as an exceptional reason for requesting leave, parents will be asked to provide employer details and any additional evidence which shows why leave cannot be taken during the school holidays

Parents/Carers who need to request leave during term time should complete an application form, available from the school office as soon as possible prior to the first proposed date of absence. The Headteacher will consider the request and advise in writing within 5 days whether the absence will be authorised or not. Where concerns exist the Headteacher will request a meeting with parents before any period of leave is authorised.

The school takes unauthorised absence seriously and, particularly in the case of repeated unauthorised absences, will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate.

We may request that the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence. This includes leave which is taken without a prior request being made; and leave taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of this advice.

We may also request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason. Parents also risk losing their child's school place if they do not return from leave, as agreed, and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

The school office is responsible for recording leave requests in the electronic register and will retain copies of correspondence regarding requested leave of absence for three years. They will also be responsible for highlighting to the Headteacher if absence continues after the notified period. In this instance our **School Attendance Lead**, will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate and a fixed penalty notice may be considered.

Religious and Ceremonial Absence:

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. a day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival e.g. Eid, but no more than three days in one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance. Leave for weddings, funerals and visiting of immediate relatives during illness will be treated likewise.

Penalty Notices:

The governing body has determined that penalty notices shall be used for a minimum evidential requirement of ten school sessions (five days) lost to unauthorised absence by any pupil in the current term or fourteen sessions (seven days) lost to unauthorised absence over two consecutive terms, will be required to trigger the process.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence
- Avoid leave in term time and apply in advance using form
- Attendance at meetings in school
- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Co-operate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher:

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision
- Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the request

School Attendance Lead:

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents **at or below 96% attendance or 96% lateness figures**
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, using Parenting Contracts where appropriate

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Governors

- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **96%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

(Remove - Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletter and we ask for your full support.)

Summary:

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.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Date of Policy: April 2018

Annual Review(ed): September 2018

