



Attendance Policy Griffin Primary School

Document Control

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October 2022	Approved by TEFAT	Trustees
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Elliot Foundation Academies Trust Values

1. Put children first

- a. We trust and value your professionalism
- b. We share the responsibility for the learning and welfare of all of our children
- c. Our purpose is to improve the lives of children

2. Be safe

- a. Don't assume that someone else will do it
- b. Look after yourself, your colleagues and all children
- c. We are all responsible for each other's safety and well being
- d. Discuss any concerns with an appropriate member of staff

3. Be kind & respect all

- a. People are allowed to be different as are you
- b. Kindness creates the positive environment we all need to flourish
- c. This kindness should extend to ourselves as well as to others

4. Be open

- a. If you can see a better way, suggest it
- b. If someone else suggests a better way to you, consider it
- c. We exist to nurture innovators and support those who take informed risks in the interests of children

5. Forgive

- a. We all make mistakes
- b. Admit them, learn from them and move on

6. Make a difference

- a. Making the world a better place starts with you
- b. Model the behaviour that you would like to see from others

Related Policies and Documents

[TEFAT Attendance Policy](#)

[TEFAT Safeguarding Policy](#) and [\[local safeguarding arrangements\]](#)

[TEFAT Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy](#)

[Guidance for Parents on School Attendance](#)

[Fines for parents for taking children out of school: What you need to know](#)

The Education Act 1996

The Education Act 2002

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

The Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

[DfE Working together to improve school attendance August 2024](#)

[DfE Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance August 2024](#)

[DfE Children Missing Education \(CME\) guidance August 2024](#)

1. Introduction

Promoting good school attendance and reducing absence is vital to: ensure children's day-to-day welfare and safeguarding; ensure that every pupil has access to full-time education; ensure that pupils make good progress academically and personally and to ensure that pupils leave us with the best possible opportunities for their future.

This policy aims to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly; consequently they will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.

The policy outlines the **responsibilities for the school and parents** in ensuring that pupils' attendance at Griffin Primary School is the best it can be. It also describes the strategies used by the schools, alongside The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust and Wandsworth/Lambeth Local Authority to support and improve attendance.

2. The importance of culture and curriculum

High standards of pastoral care, excellent teaching and learning and an **exciting and broad curriculum** motivate children to want to attend school. They also build confidence and trust with parents who may feel nervous or anxious about leaving their children at school.

At Griffin Primary School, we recognise that school must be a place where children feel valued, safe, welcome, accepted and supported in order for them to want to attend. This culture is established and maintained through regular staff training, inductions for new staff and pupils, high expectations regarding conduct, and school systems such as behaviour recognition and rewards. This culture is supported by effective and regular communication

between staff teams, as well as between teachers and parents. Pupil voice is used to measure our success in maintaining such an ethos.



The curriculum offered by the school helps children to maximise their academic success as well as developing their sense of self and their responsibilities to the wider community. We strive to broaden children's opportunities and experiences by introducing them to new and exciting topics through the taught curriculum, theatrical productions, off site visits, sporting competitions, public performances and opportunities to work alongside community leaders.

3. Attendance systems and procedures

3.1. Attendance Registers

Accurate and timely registers enable the school to safeguard children as well as to recognise and act upon any concerning attendance patterns. Staff follow the school Register Protocol which is reviewed and shared at least annually.

Registers are taken at the start of every morning and afternoon session, specific registration times are [9am and 1:30pm].

Children arriving after registers are marked at 9am are recorded as 'Late'.

At 9:15am, the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a 'U' mark which shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

Daily contact is made with off-site providers when used (e.g. alternative provision) to ensure the register is accurate.

3.2. Recording and responding to absence

During pupil inductions, parents are asked to contact school on the first day of a child's absence to explain the reason by 9am.

If no reason is given, or further information is required, a phone call is made to parents.

Where contact cannot be made by phone call, the school will send a text and/or email to ask parents to make contact. If contact is still not made, school may carry out a home visit.

Once sufficient information has been gained, an absence code is determined by the appropriate member of staff in line with DfE guidance in [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (August 2024). This decision is based on the information provided by parents when a child's absence is reported and will influence whether an absence is authorised or not.

3.3. Home visits

Home visits are routinely carried out by school Designated Safeguarding Leads if no contact can be made by phone, further information is needed or to see how a child is. Home visits are not pre-arranged and can be made at any time, at the discretion of the school. Staff will always carry their school ID and will expect to see the child in question, if only briefly, in order to ascertain how they are.

3.4. Monitoring and improving irregular attendance

School leaders monitor cases where attendance is below 95% fortnightly. For children whose absence has increased, actions are taken which aim to prevent children becoming or remaining a 'Persistent Absentee' (<90%).

These actions may include but are not limited to:

- Weekly attendance tracker completed on a Friday, to monitor all pupils' attendance
- 95% - 93% attendance: text sent home to highlight the absence on a Tuesday after receiving the tracker on the previous Friday
- 92% - 91% attendance: Attendance Letter 1 sent home and a follow up meeting arranged
- 90% or less attendance: Attendance Letter 2 sent home and a formal meeting arranged with parents and carer:
 - TAC meeting to discuss support and actions and shared with all agencies. This may include external agency involvement (School Nurse, Education Welfare Practitioner, Medical, Early Help practitioners)
 - If attendance continues to fall, Attendance Lead to follow legal process Attendance Letter 3

Pupils who have been suspended or who are absent for long periods because of ill-health receive appropriate support to return to school, build confidence and bridge gaps in their learning. These plans are drawn up in collaboration with parents and the pupil (providing they are able to understand the process).

3.5. Attendance and safeguarding

Concerns about any extended or persistent absence are referred to the appropriate team or staff member. It is recognised that poor attendance may be a sign or symptom of a wider safeguarding issue that requires support (this includes but is not limited to domestic abuse, mental health difficulties, FGM, CCE, CSE or financial strain). Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, action will be taken in line with the Trust's Safeguarding Policy.

3.6. Children Missing from Education (CMfE) Referrals

Academies have safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. If a child is absent and contact cannot be made with parents directly (by phone or home visit), and their whereabouts cannot be confirmed by any of the additional named contacts held by school, then the Local Authority's CMfE team is notified immediately and police are asked to carry out a safe and well check at the home address. The CMfE team is also notified if a child is known to have moved out of the area so is no longer attending, or if a parent enquiring about a school place states that their child is not currently attending a school.

3.7. Recognising and rewarding good attendance

To help children and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance and monitor their own and their class's attendance, it is discussed and celebrated in the following ways:

- Weekly attendance certificates for the class with the highest attendance and, if appropriate, the most improved attendance.

- Termly individual certificates for attendance above 96% and for those with improved attendance. Where attendance is below 96% due to disability or SEND related reasons, attendance for these rewards will be reasonably adjusted to more accurately reflect an individual's attendance.
- An attendance display updated weekly to celebrate attendance for each class and as a whole school.

4. Term-time leave of absence requests

A leave of absence request form **MUST** be completed in all circumstances, as far in advance as possible, and a minimum of 5 school days before the requested absence starts. Forms must be requested from and returned to the school office. One form must be completed per child and incomplete forms will not be considered.

The Head of school will **only** authorise leave during term time in **exceptional circumstances, when absence during term time is absolutely unavoidable**. This decision is entirely at the Principal / Executive Principal's discretion, based on the information provided by parents in writing, at the time the request is made.

Where a period of absence is authorised in exceptional circumstances, the number of days will be determined by the Principal / Executive Principal. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that permission for leave is obtained *before* travel or accommodation are booked.

This is in line with DfE guidance which states that:

37. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

38. Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

[Working together to improve school attendance](#) (August 2024)

After submitting a request for term time leave to be authorised, parents will be informed of the Principal/Executive Principal's decision in writing within five school days.

Periods of unauthorised leave are escalated to the relevant local authority - Lambeth or Wandsworth - and fixed penalty notices applied for, following the National Framework for issuing penalty notices. Information on the role of the Local Authority can be found at:

<https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/schools-and-admissions/schools/school-absence-and-attendance/>

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-attendance-and-exclusions/school-attendance>

5. Formal and legal interventions

Griffin Primary School will always seek to resolve any attendance concerns by working to support the family with improving a child's attendance. Where this is not successful, or when those with parental responsibility for the child do not engage with this support, then the academy will work with the Local Authority's School Attendance Support Service to address poor attendance.

The first step would be to set up a formal attendance contract between parents and the school.

5.1. Attendance contract

- A formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or Local Authority to address irregular attendance at school.
- Are not legally binding but allow a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate.
- Are not a punitive tool, they are intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution.
- Parents cannot be compelled to enter a contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.
- Aim for the parent(s), and the pupil where they are old enough, the school and the Local Authority to work in partnership.
- Attendance contracts contain:
 - Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
 - A statement from the school and/or Local Authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
 - A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.
 - The period it will be in place for (most are for between 3 and 12 months but can be longer if needed).

If an attendance contract is not effective at improving a child's attendance, or is deemed not appropriate, the Local Authority has the option to progress as far as needed through the following, hierarchical legal interventions;

- **Education Supervision Orders (ESO)** - non compliance can lead to prosecution and a fine of up to £1000
- **Attendance prosecutions** - if found guilty, depending on the circumstances parents can be sentenced to a community order, a parenting order, a fine of up to £2500 or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- **Parenting orders** - breaches can lead to a fine of up to £1000

Where safeguarding concerns exist, the school's designated safeguarding lead and children's social care services may decide that either a s.17 (Children in Need) or s.47 (Child Protection) plan is a more appropriate form of support.

5.2. Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided.

Penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and should only be used where it is deemed likely to change parental behaviour and support to secure regular attendance has been provided and has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice for absence is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice.

Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country.

The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

When a school becomes aware that the threshold has been met, they are expected to make considerations in line with DfE statutory guidance to decide whether to issue a penalty notice in each individual case.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. Therefore, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate.

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first.

In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

In addition:

- can only be issued by a head teacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a Local Authority officer or the police
- can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences

- can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school
- there is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice
- Wandsworth and Lambeth Penalty Notice Code of Conduct can be found **here**:

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-attendance-and-exclusion/s/school-attendance/fixe-penalty-notices>

https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/media/050kbzhq/school_absence_penalty_notices_code_of_conduct.pdf

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1. Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Informing the academy on the first day of non-attendance by telephoning the school office.
- Ensuring that medical appointments are booked outside school time wherever possible.
- Speaking to a Designated Safeguarding Lead to seek support for any issues that may be preventing their child from wanting to attend school.
- Understanding and accepting that absences for family holidays or visits and special occasions will not normally be permitted. Approval will only be granted in truly exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Principal.
- Working alongside the school to address and improve any patterns of poor attendance.
- Complying with the DfE statutory guidance on school attendance

6.2. Pupils, when developmentally ready to take some responsibility for their learning, are expected to:

- Attend school every day.
- Arrive on time, ready to learn.
- Tell a trusted adult if there is a problem that might lead to absence.

6.3. All staff are responsible for promoting good attendance. Those with specific responsibilities include:

- The member of SLT appointed as **Attendance Lead / Attendance Champion** is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance taken by the school.
- A school DSL checks absences after each register period, organises first day calling and conducts home visits and supports parents with improving their child's attendance. They also monitor attendance data for individuals and groups and work with the Attendance Lead to decide on and implement actions in response to patterns shown in data.
- **Class teachers and LSAs** discuss attendance daily and refer concerns to the ASP.
- The **Principal** or **Executive Principal** decides whether term time leave applications are approved or not (see 'Term time leave of absence requests', above).

- The **School Leadership Team** work with children who face attendance barriers and families who need support.



Our school is supported to improving pupil attendance by the following partners:

- Wandsworth Council, Education Welfare Office (EWO)
- Lambeth Council
- **The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust** Regional Director, DSL for the Trust and Legal, SEND and Governance Director