



Attendance Policy

Document Control

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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 [2023 Appendix A: Local Safeguarding Arrangements](#)

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

[School attendance parental responsibility measures](#)

The Education Act 1996

The Education Act 2002

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

[DfE Working together to improve school attendance Sept 2022](#)

[DfE Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance Sept 2022](#)

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 curricula offered by the schools help 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 close are recorded as 'Late'. 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. If no reason is given, or further information is required, a phone call is made to parents. 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](#) (September 2022). 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 the Designated Safeguarding Lead 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

The Designated Safeguarding Lead monitors 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: Attendance Lead to send 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 by Attendance Lead and a follow up meeting arranged
- 90% or less attendance: Attendance Letter 2 sent home by Attendance Lead 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:

At the end of every week:

- Class with top attendance to be celebrated in Friday's school assembly.
- 'Top table' at lunch, on the following Monday, for this class.
- To share class attendance:
 - The main corridor Attendance Display will be updated
 - The website attendance information will be updated
 - Class %s will be celebrated to parents/carers in fortnightly newsletters

At the end of half term:

- Text sent to families of all children with attendance of 96%+
- All students with 100% attendance receive a certificate.
- Pupils with attendance of 96% or above to have additional reward, e.g. extra play time
- We will also celebrate families who have worked really hard to improve.

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 Principal 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'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. 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:

215. Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

216. An application for leave of absence should (and from certain schools must) not be granted unless it is made in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with and the school is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstance of the case which justify the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

[Working together to improve school attendance](#) (DfE, September 2022)

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

Periods of unauthorised leave are escalated to the relevant Council - Wandsworth or Lambeth - and fixed penalty notices applied for.

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 parenting contract between parents and the school.

5.1. Parenting contracts

- 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.
- Parenting 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 a parenting 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. Fixed Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered. Penalty notices are used when parenting contracts are not appropriate, such as when a parent(s) takes a child out of school for term time leave that has not been authorised.

- fines of £60 (if paid within 21 days)/£120 (if paid after 21 days but before 28 days) imposed on parents
- 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 fixed penalty notice
- Wandsworth and Lambeth Councils Fixed Penalty Notice Code of Conduct can be found here:
 - <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-attendance-and-exclusions/school-attendance>
 - <https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/schools-and-admissions/schools/school-attendance-and-truancy/>

For full details of the school attendance parental responsibility measures available to schools and Local Authorities see [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) (DfE, January 2015) or Section 6 of [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (DfE September 2022)

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.
- Speak to the Outreach Services Manager/DSL 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 parental responsibility measures](#) (January 2015).

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:

- A senior member of staff appointed as **Attendance Lead** is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance taken by the school.
- The DSL/Outreach Services Manager checks absence after each register period, carries out first day calling and home visits and supports parents with improving their child's attendance. The ASP also monitors attendance data for individuals and groups and works with the attendance lead to decide on and implement actions in response to patterns shown in data.
- **Class teachers and LSAs** discuss attendance daily, refer concerns to the ASP and award weekly 100% stickers.
- The **Principal** decides whether term time leave applications are approved or not (see 'Term time leave of absence requests', above).
- The **Wellbeing Team and SENDCos** work with children who face attendance barriers and families who need support.

Our schools 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