The Griffin Federation
Learning Together for Excellence

Attendance Policy
Updated October 2024

Attendance Percentage	Description
95%-100%	Expected
91%-94%	At risk of persistent absence (ARPA)
80%-90%	Persistent absence (PA)
51%-79%	At risk of severe absence (ARS)
0%-50%	Severe absence
WHAT THIS MEANS **Half a day per week means your child is persistently absent. Over a year, this means they lose approximately 20 days / 4 weeks of learning!** **Lost learning can significantly reduce your child's future life chances**	
WHAT'S LOST? **20 Phonics lessons** **20 Reading Lessons** **20 English Lessons** **20 Maths Lessons**	
20 Playtimes **20 chances to see friends**	
Many chances to SUCCEED and SHINE	

1. INTRODUCTION

All 3 of our schools are caring schools, enabling pupils to reach their full potential. They are committed to providing a high quality and effective education for all pupils. The schools believe that all pupils benefit from the education they provide and therefore from regular school attendance. Pupils with the highest attainment at Key Stage 2 have higher rates of attendance than those with the lowest attainment. To this end the schools will do as much as they can to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems affecting attendance will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Where referred to, GDE = Gedney Drove End, HSM = Holbeach St Marks.

2. THE LAW ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

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.

Where parents decide to have their child registered 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.

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, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.

3. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

This policy is reviewed every two years or earlier if required. Please note this policy considers the following government documents:

- Working together to improve school attendance - February 2024, Applies from 19 August 2024 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance__applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance - February 2024, Applies from 19 August 2024 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance__applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

4. AIMS

- That all students achieve excellent attendance.
- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the legal responsibility of parents to ensure attendance at school.
- Many pupils and their parents/carers may need to be supported at some stage to meet their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents/carers may impact on attendance. The School will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.

- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

5. EXPECTATIONS

The Griffin Federation expects its pupils to:

- Come to school every day.
- Arrive on time. To be in class by 8:45am.
- Be prepared for the day.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

The Griffin Federation expects its parents / carers to:

- Ensure that their children attend school every day the school is open.
- Ensure that their children arrive on time. Gates open at 8.40am when children can come in and complete early morning activities. A child is considered late if they arrive after 8.45. A child arriving after 9.00am will be marked with a U code as absent from the morning session.
- To contact the School as soon as possible, or before 8.30am, whenever their child is absent giving details of the reason or the absence and the length of time the child will be away. A phone call needs to be made EVERY DAY of a child's absence. Parents should call school and leave a message.
  Gedney Drove End – 01406 550242
  Holbeach St Marks – 01406 701266
  Westmere – 01406 350205
- Notify school office of changes in contact details including mobile phone numbers, email addresses, home and work phone numbers. Ensure that there are multiple contacts, wherever possible, in case of an emergency.
- Contact the School if problems arise which may keep their children away from school, work with the school to identify barriers and positively engage with any support offered.

- Only request a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so 2 weeks in advance. Holidays are not deemed exceptional circumstances.

- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.

- Provide appointment cards, hospital letters or other evidence of GP/dentist appointments.

The Griffin Federation will:

- Ensure that a member of the Senior Leadership Team is identified as the Attendance Champion – this is Mrs Sally Massey.

- Ensure the school attendance policy, this document, is shared on the school website.

- Maintain an attendance register on which pupils are marked present, absent or late.

- Ensure that absences are left blank in the register by the teacher.

- Ensure that absences are checked daily by a member of the office staff. Those parents who have not provided a reason for absence will be contacted. At that point the registers will be updated.

- Analyse absence and attendance data to identify pupils and families who may need support to ensure poor attendance does not become a habit.

- Work with families to identify barriers to attendance and identify ways to remove barriers, signpost support and attend multi-agency meetings as needed.

- Review absence and attendance data of pupils joining the school, as a mid-year admission, to ensure early intervention can take place if attendance is already a concern.

- Work collaboratively with other schools, the local authority and other partner agencies to improve attendance within the local community.

Supporting Attendance through Rewards:

- Weekly whole class certificate, and weekly for the class with the highest attendance

- Weekly attendance hero awards. The child with the highest attendance in the class for that week becomes the attendance hero and receives a cape to wear to the day. If more than one child has the same attendance, a name will be drawn to determine the winner.
- A certificate for 100% class attendance as achieved termly.
- Certificates for pupils achieving 95% or more termly.
- A certificate for 100% attendance for individuals yearly.
- A child attending school every day will receive a currency reward (Westie, Gedney, Smartie) for each day.

6. ATTENDANCE SYSTEMS

Only the School, in the context of the law, can authorise absence. A note or explanation from parents does not guarantee authorisation. If a class teacher or member of the office staff does not accept the explanation offered for absence as a valid reason, then the matter must be referred to the Head of School / Attendance Champion.

- Emerging patterns of authorised absence should be reported to SLT (EHT, Attendance Champion, HoS).
- Reasons for absence should be entered in the register by the appropriate code.

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as unauthorised.

The following reasons may be considered as authorised absences:

- Illness; which does not include minor coughs, colds, headaches, stomach aches, toothache and period pains.
- Family bereavements.
- Medical and dental appointments.
- Days of religious observance.
- Fixed term exclusion.
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or reinstated.

Absences should **not** be authorised under the following circumstances:

- A birthday celebration.
- Shopping trips.
- Holidays in term time.
- Minding the house or looking after siblings.
- Oversleeping/tiredness

- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation.
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified or are for another person.
- No reason given.
- School have cause to believe that the information provided is not genuine or valid.

Granting leave of absence

Only the Headteacher has the authority to authorise an absence and will only be allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances as set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

Applications should be made at least two weeks in advance by completing an absence request form available from the school office, and the headteacher will be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave. It is at the headteacher's discretion to determine whether the absence will be authorised or not. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents will be considered.

Term-time holiday

Parents/carers should not take pupils on holiday during the school term. If a request is not granted and the parent/carer takes the child on holiday, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and this may be referred to Lincolnshire County Council and could result in a Penalty Notice under Section 444(b) of the Education Act 1996.
https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/council-business/fixed-penalty-notices-code-conduct/2

Penalty Notice

10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any 10-week period

Penalty Notice fines may be issued for any term-time absences that are unauthorised (for example, a 5-day termtime holiday) - whether these absences are taken consecutively or cumulatively over a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school day has 2 sessions: 1 morning and 1 afternoon session per day.

A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. The threshold can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 6 sessions of holiday plus 4 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).

What is a Penalty Notice?

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, from August 2024, 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. Any further offences will result in criminal prosecution.

The law will be clear that where a Penalty Notice threshold is met – in each individual case, the school must consider if a Penalty Notice is appropriate.

Penalty Notice fines are issued per parent, per child. This means that fines are issued to each parent, for each child who is absent. For example: if 2 siblings are absent for a term-time holiday this will result in each parent receiving 2 separate fines.

Who is a 'parent'?

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines "parent" as: all natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not; any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person; any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for a Term-Time Leave of Absence or irregular attendance, the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child (if paid within 28 days) reduced to: £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (in a 3-year rolling period)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for a Term-Time Leave of Absence or irregular attendance to the same parent for the same child the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child (if paid within 28 days). There is no reduction in the amount.

Third Offence or Any Further Offences (in a 3-year rolling period)

The third time an offence is committed for a Term-Time Leave of Absence or irregular attendance by the same parent for the same child (including those by other Local Authorities) a Penalty Notice will NOT be issued but will be referred to Lincolnshire Local Authority for prosecution which may result in fines of up to £2,500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in a Magistrate's Court can show on a parent's future DBS certificate.

Resolving Disagreements

Where there is a lack of agreement between the School and the Local Authority (LA) as to the appropriateness of issuing a penalty warning letter or a penalty notice, the matter will be referred to the County Legal Proceedings Panel whose decision shall be final.

Approved Educational Activity

Where pupils are away from school but are undertaking an approved educational activity, this should be marked in the usual way, but the children are counted as present. To avoid confusion in emergency situations, pupils who are off-site for field trips and educational visits both in this country and overseas should not be marked as present. Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Headteacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered. Further advice is available in DfES Circular No. 10/99.

Lateness

The school will actively discourage late arrival by asking parents whose children arrive late to complete and sign a late form and provide a reason for the lateness. Parents whose children are consistently late will be contacted by a member of staff and invited to an attendance meeting. A child entering school prior to 9:20am will have L entered into the register, indicating they are late for the start of learning. 9:20am onwards will be marked with a U which indicates that the child is on the school site but has an unauthorised absence recorded for that session.

Removal from the School Roll

Removal from the school roll under circumstances other than those detailed below is illegal.

- The pupil has been registered at another school
- The pupil is also registered at one or more other schools and the other schools have agreed the deletion
- The pupil has a school attendance order which has been changed to name another school
- The pupil had a school attendance order which has been revoked
- The parent of a pupil has notified the school in writing that the pupil will be leaving the school to be educated otherwise than at a school
- The pupil no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school
- The pupil has not returned following a leave of absence
- The pupil has been continually absent from school for 20 school days
- The pupil has died
- The pupil has been permanently excluded from the school

Ensuring pupil information is up to date

Our schools will ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies can be implemented effectively. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states 'Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'.

7. WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

8. PUPILS WHO FAIL TO ATTEND

When a pupil does not attend, the School needs to respond effectively:

- If a telephone call, note or email is not received from parents, the parents will be contacted EVERY DAY of absence by telephone.
- Where there is no response, the register is marked as unauthorised.
- Parents will be contacted every day the child is still not in school, until the day the child returns. Parents will be asked to explain the absence at every point of contact. A safe and well check will be carried out on day 2 should we not be able to make contact with parents / carers, or where we are concerned about the child's health, welfare or whereabouts.
- Attendance will be monitored by the school and if attendance does not improve within two weeks of receipt of a School Attendance letter, the parent/carer will be invited to attend a meeting in school. This meeting will include the appropriate staff, parent and pupil and will aim to identify and solve the problems that are preventing the pupil from attending school. An action plan to improve attendance will be drawn up at this meeting.
- The case will continue to be monitored and if there is no improvement, a penalty warning letter will be issued. Failure to improve attendance will result in a Penalty Notice from the local authority under Section 444(b) of the Education Act 1996. If it is felt that the pupil's attendance is not improving due to lack of support or engagement with either the parent/carer or the pupil, consideration will be taken as to submitting a file to the Local Authority to initiate proceedings before a Magistrates Court.
- Penalty notices, as previously described, can be issued to parents where the parents have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered.
- If a child is absent from school and no response is made to the attempts to contact the family, Children's Services and the Police may be contacted and could be asked to make a

'Safe and Well' check on the family. If no contact is made within 5 days, the school will contact Children Missing Education at Lincolnshire County Council. If no contact is made within 20 days from the date of the first absence, the school is entitled to withdraw that pupil's place from the school roll. If any pupil is absent for a period of 10 days (particularly where we have had no contact from parents/carers), the absence will be unauthorised and notified to Lincolnshire County Council's Pupils Not Attending Regularly Service.

Reintegration

The return to school for a pupil after long-term absence requires special planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme as detailed in the DfE document "Social Inclusion: Pupil Support Guidance (Circular 10/99)". Designated staff should be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme.

All staff need to be aware that this is a difficult process that will require careful handling and that any problems should be notified to the responsible staff member as soon as possible.

Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual needs and may involve phased, parttime re-entry with support in class as appropriate. Support from the SENDCo may be required.

The success of the Pastoral Support Programme will require the involvement of appropriate school staff, other agencies, the young person and parents. Programmes should be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary. Staff will be notified of the return of the long-term absentees.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES

Attendance is everyone's business. In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education.

In addition, there are specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff:

Headteacher:

- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy.
- To regularly report progress on attendance to governors, pupils and parents.
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence.

Attendance Champion:

- To oversee the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- To oversee the work of administrative, and other attendance, staff.
- To produce the attendance profile for the whole school.
- To report to the Headteacher on attendance issues.

Teachers:

- To report attendance issues and discussions with parents regarding attendance to the administration staff.
- To discuss with pupils the importance and impact of attending school every day.
- To provide catch-up work and ongoing support for the pupil to be educated at home in the case of long term authorised absence and known medical conditions that impact on regular attendance. (The school will not support holidays taken during term time by providing homework.)

Governors:

- Take an active role in attendance improvement through supporting school to prioritise attendance and create a whole school culture of high expectations around attendance.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory details
- Governor with attendance responsibility to attend meetings with parents and Attendance Champion.

Local Authority:

- Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.
- Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance support Team who can support with queries and advice.
- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.
- Hold a regular (termly) conversations with school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or are at risk of becoming so.
- Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services.

- Take an active part in multi-agency efforts to improve attendance.

Office Staff:

- Maintain registers with updated absence information.
- Make calls to parents where no contact has been made regarding absence.
- Ensure pupil signing-in/out form is recorded for when pupils arrive after registers have closed and/or for when pupils leave before the end of the school day.
- Update SLT about day-to-day issues around attendance.

Family Support Worker:

- Support parents / carers to improve a pupil's attendance.
- Work with pupils to improve their attendance.
- Make home visits
- Carry out Early Help Assessments
- Be the lead professional for Team Around the Child (TAC) interventions
- Attend meetings with parents and the Attendance Champion

10. **LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES**

Other agencies may be used where appropriate in individual cases:

- Early Help Workers
- Pupil Reintegration Team
- Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS)
- Educational Psychologists
- Special Educational Needs Service
- Social Care
- Local police/PCSO