Educational Strategy Team

Attendance Policy

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	Attendance Policy
Policy Holder	Mrs Lawrence
Attendance Improvement Co-ordinator	Mrs Lawrence
Senior Attendance Champion	Mrs Youseman
Headteacher	Mrs Youseman
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Why do we have this policy?

This policy exists to promote attendance and belonging in our schools

Excellent attendance enables pupils to l**earn more**, **do more**, and **be more**.

Learn more: More time in school supports every element of the learning process, helping to close gaps and extend thinking.

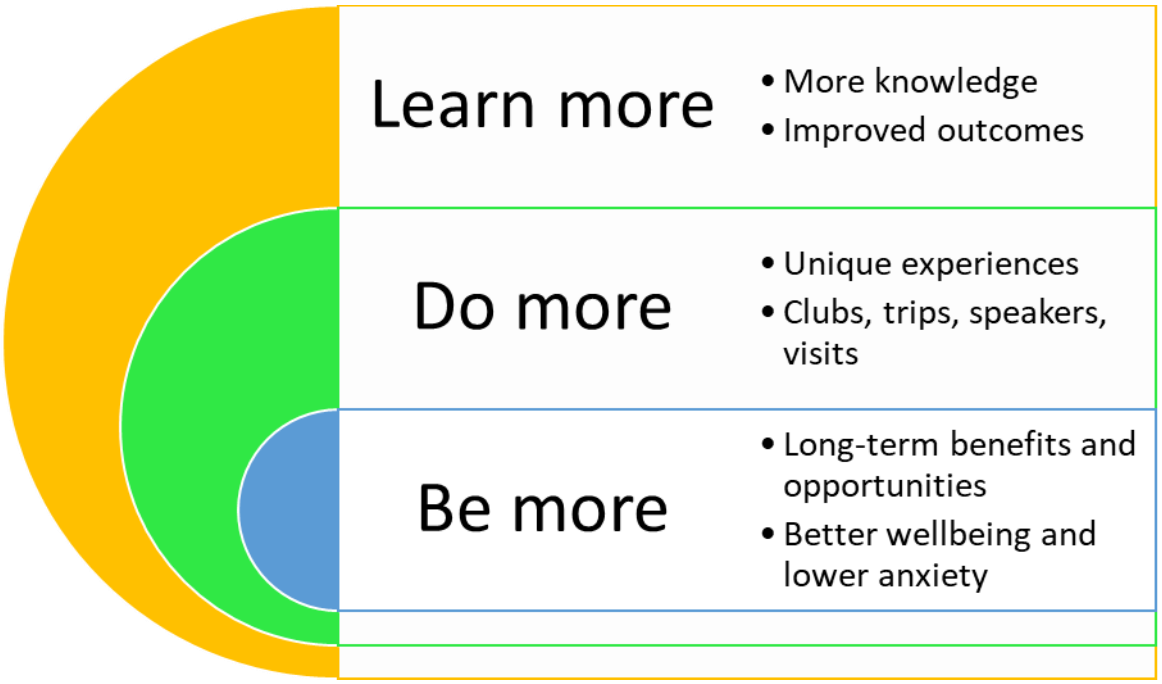
Do more: By being in school, pupils have greater access to the opportunities available within and beyond the curriculum. These include clubs, visits, guest speakers, rewards and special events.

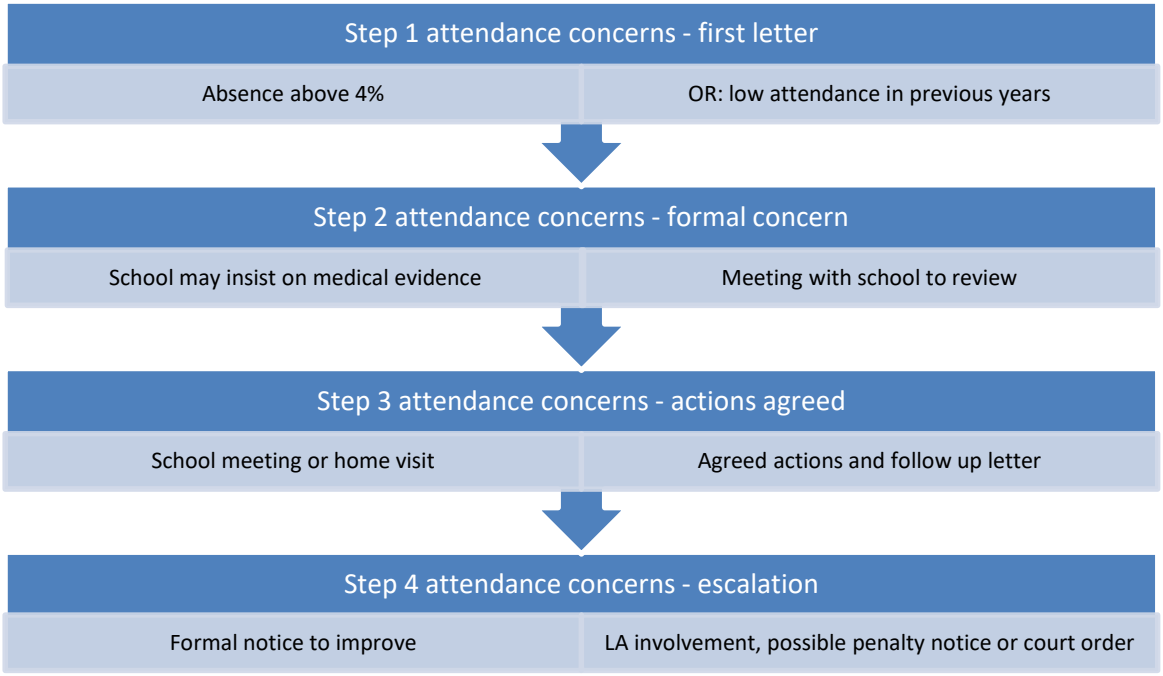
Be more: Attendance supports pupils to fulfil their personal and academic potential. It also helps to build and strengthen friendships and wider relationships, build self-esteem, and to provide unique memories and experiences that shape the course of their lives. Ultimately, attendance offers pupils the best possible opportunities to transform their life chances.

Improving school attendance is a central driver of improved outcomes, as well as a critical part of schools' safeguarding practice. Better attendance also helps to enhance the processes of metacognition that lie at the heart of our approach to teaching and learning. Pupils who attend frequently are able to more rapidly embed the routines and practices that strengthen the process of learning. It also helps them to self-regulate more adeptly, as more time in school reinforces the metacognitive processes around focus and developing resilience in learning.

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Who does this policy apply to?

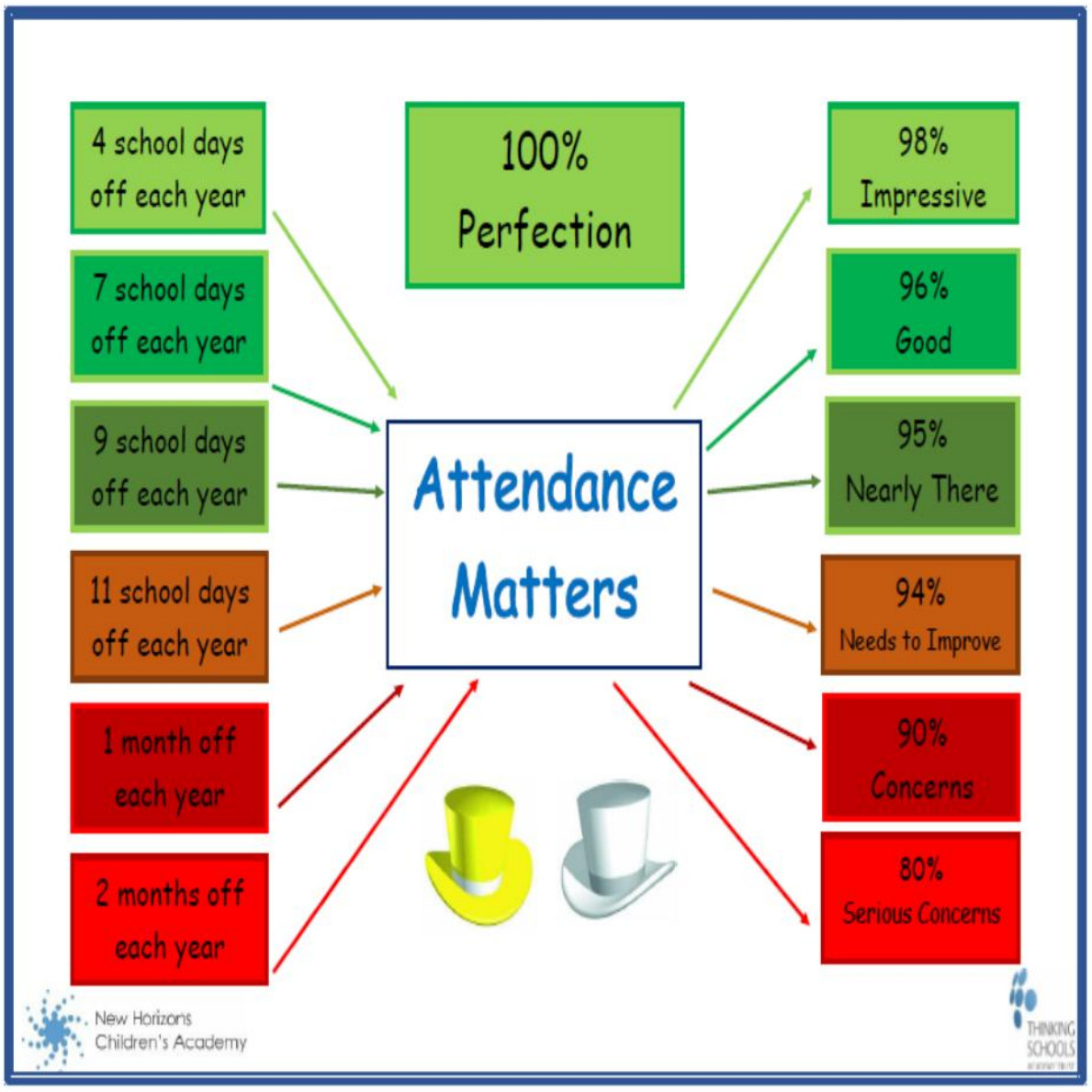
Attendance is part of our culture. It is everyone's business within our schools. We all need to work together to give pupils that sense of belonging in our schools.

This policy applies to all individuals and entities who engage with or are impacted by the Thinking Schools Academy Trust operations. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Parents and pupils
- Employees, contractors, and volunteers working for or on behalf of the organisation.
- Business partners, vendors, and suppliers interacting with the organisation.
- Any other stakeholders or parties whose actions may directly or indirectly influence or be influenced by this policy.

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BE MORE, LEARN MORE, DO MORE

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust is committed to transforming life chances and are clear that regular and consistent attendance at school is the starting point to enable us to do this.
Whilst it is the responsibility of parents to ensure that pupils receive a suitable, full-time education, we recognise that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. That is why creating a feeling of belonging for every pupil matters so much. We do this through the lens of 'learn more, do more, be more'. We are committed to supporting all pupils to be able to attend school full time and we strive to remove any barriers preventing them from attending. This policy represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable, and achieved by many children. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake.to promote the best possible attendance for every pupil. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality at school are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance.

Learn more:

In primary schools, pupils between Year 3 and Year 6 who attend every day are more than twice as likely to meet the 'secondary ready' standard in Year 6 compared to those who miss 10% of school (18 days per year). Risks of absence from school

In secondary schools, pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 who attend 8 extra days per year compared to the national average perform almost half a GCSE grade better across every subject. Those who only miss 2 days or fewer gain almost 6 grades compared to the national average. the-impact-of-absence-on-progress

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At The Gordon Children's Academy, we support pupils to **LEARN MORE** by:

- Having high expectations for every child, through recognising and nurturing talents that allow them to be the best version of themselves.
- Ensuring that learning is irresistible and creates curiosity based on first hand experiences
- Providing high quality teaching alongside an environment that motivates and excites pupils to develop as critical and analytical thinkers
- Promoting a culture of belonging through building strong relationships between staff pupils and families.

Do more

We know that doing more is a key part of helping students to feel a sense of belonging in school. Studies have shown that taking part in more activities creates a positive cycle that in turn helps to strengthen pupil attendance.

At The Gordon Children's Academy, we support pupils to **DO MORE** by:

- Providing early intervention and support for pupils and families
- Providing a wide range of extra-curricular clubs termly for all pupils
- Celebrating improved attendance through assemblies
- Welcoming visitors from the community and beyond
- Celebrating inclusiveness through school wide events

Achieving more and taking part in more extracurricular activities delivers a very significant improvement for future employment.

At The Gordon Children's Academy, we support pupils to BE **MORE** by:

- Promoting our local community through visiting the local library and other significant places
- Fostering a metacognitive approach through using the Thinking Tools to help pupils understand how they learn best
- Creating inclusive spaces where children can learn to communicate and collaborate with each other.
- Teaching empathy and respect through the curriculum and giving pupils responsibilities that empower them to become compassionate, self-assured individuals who appreciate their own worth and the value of others

Better attendance is also strongly associated with lower anxiety and better wellbeing - lifelessons and anxiety and CentreforMH_NotInSchool

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Our most important priority with attendance is to promote a culture which values, supports and recognises great attendance in school.

In line with "Working together to improve attendance" we will work with all partners to:

- **EXPECT:** aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents, building a culture where all can and want to, being school, ready to learn
- **PROMOTE:** we are consistent in our messaging that every day matters for every pupil. All our staff play a part in promoting a culture of belonging and strong attendance.
- **MONITOR:** Rigorous use of attendance data to identify patterns of absence (at both individual and cohort level) so all parties can work together to resolve issues before they become entrenched.
- **Listen and Understand:** discuss with parents when patterns are identified, to be able to understand barriers to attendance agreeing how all partners can work together to resolve them.
- **Facilitate support:** Remove barriers in school and help families to access support needed to overcome the barriers outside of school. This may include Early Help or a 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, work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is in place to enable families to respond. This may include formal support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.
- **Enforce:** Where all avenues have been exhausted and absence continues to cause concern, statutory intervention may be required to enforce attendance: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupils right to education.

The school will, under the direction of the Head Teacher/Head of School:

Learn more, do more, be more:

- Fulfil expectations as set out in "Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance"
- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that pupils feel safe, know that their presence is valued thus encouraging pupils to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life, embedding a sense of belonging for all pupils.
- Ensure that the school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where pupils are keen and ready to learn so that the school is a place that pupils want to attend.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of attendance,

making attendance a high priority and communicate those expectations clearly and consistently (this may include sending letters and information to parent's email addresses)

- Ensure that staff (teaching and non-teaching) understand the importance of good attendance, what the barriers to good attendance can be and have an understanding of this policy and their role in it.
- Ensure that the link between safeguarding and poor attendance is understood by all staff and that DSLs/ Safeguarding leads work regularly and closely with AICs
- Work together with families listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and work together to remove them.
- Ensure that procedures for daily monitoring of attendance are understood by all and consistently actioned in line with legal expectations on schools and statutory duties
- Meet the legal requirements with the use of correct codes for absence, with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence. *(DFE guidance)* and have robust process in place to follow up absence and apply those processes rigorously. This will include absence phone calls home as part of the daily immediate actions
- Ensure that this policy is applied consistently and fairly but when appropriate giving consideration for individual circumstances, particularly with regard to the Equality Act 2010 and UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- Ensure there is a Senior Attendance Champion (Senior Leadership Team) responsible for the strategic approach to attendance to school, this is Mrs Youseman, Headteacher.
- Employ a key member of staff with responsibility for monitoring, improving and evaluating school attendance known as Attendance Improvement Coordinator (AIC). At The Gordon Children's Academy, this role is fulfilled by Mrs Lawrence, *she* can be contacted via the main school office. The AIC will work in partnership with families, ensure home visits are conducted as required and work in partnership with school leaders, the LA School Attendance Support team and other outside agency partners such as Social Care, Youth Offending Team for example
- Ensure the AIC has enough time and support to carry out the work that is required to fulfil the expectations of the role
- Ensure the AIC is informed of all decisions made by relevant staff that results in a pupil's absence from school (e.g sent home unwell, suspension, in Police custody).
- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance and use this analysis to put effective strategies in place. This will include looking at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Ensure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand. All new parents will be introduced to the Policy and information on attendance in the School Prospectus. It will also be accessible on the school website. Parents should be reminded of the policy intermittently as well as when the policy is updated.
- Sensitively and without discrimination, celebrate good attendance by *sending home postcards and giving the children certificates. The class with the highest attendance and*

punctuality each week is celebrated with the school mascot teddy. Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include displays, assemblies, etc

- Provide training for staff in all matters of attendance, this will include mandatory training refreshed at least every 2 years for the Senior Attendance Champion (SLT) and the AIC
- Ensure attendance information is available for Governors at least 3 times a year, sharing action plans for areas where improvement is needed.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe. This may include School Health, Early Help, Traveller Education, Social Services etc
- Have procedures in place to help children settle back to school after a long absence. It is important that on return from an absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils. The class teacher and school staff will welcome the children back in to school and discuss any concerns they may have and help to reassure and settle them back into school.
- Liaise with the LA and other relevant agencies promptly for those children whose health needs do not allow them to attend school *(See Supporting Children with Medical Conditions policy for further details.)* *https://www.gordonchildrensacademy.org.uk/site-gorden/assets/files/1364/gca_medical_policy26.pdf*
- Make every effort to meet the individual needs of the pupils with SEND

We respectfully ask parent/s and carers to:

- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address. Please make sure that the contact details you have given to the school are kept up to date, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you we have the correct details.
- Provide details of at least two contacts for emergency use.
- Notify the School when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first day of the absence.
- Telephone the School after the first day of absence to advise the school if the absence is continuing.
- Keep the School well informed, in cases of lengthy absence. Parents/carers will be encouraged to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a child's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether to authorise an absence or not, will always rest with the Head Teacher.
- Provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen. Whenever possible all appointments should be made outside of school hours.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Let the School know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down; if an urgent appointment has been made.
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child, aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Work Together with the school where there are concerns regarding the regular attendance

at school or punctuality to school this will include attending scheduled meetings which can be re arranged with prior notice in consultation with the school, in a timely manner so as not to incur further unnecessary absence from school.
- Provide written explanations of any absence and medical evidence for whole day appointments as well as medial evidence for persistent absence from school due to alleged illness.
- Not to arrange term time holidays and only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance using the schools' form.

For Students to achieve their full potential they should:
- Attend every day unless they are medically unfit to attend school or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time.

The TSAT Safeguarding central team to support transformation of pupil's life chances, will:
- Advise on legal requirements and responsibilities in all matters of attendance and ensure compliance in these areas through a collaborative working partnership with schools.
- Advise and support where appropriate, escalation and challenge when attendance is of significant concern
- Provide 6 Attendance forums per academic year building on the knowledge and skill on AIC's and 3 SLT Attendance Champion conferences/forums
- Advise SLT Attendance Champions on the school's strategic approach to improving attendance which may include attendance at AIC line management meetings.
- Audit all areas of attendance at least biannually providing challenge to support improvement
- Link together with Governor's to ensure there is appropriate overview of attendance
- Create, deliver and monitor mandatory attendance training for AIC and SLT Attendance champion. This will be refreshed at least every 2 years.
- Create whole school staff training in attendance for the SLT/AIC to deliver.

Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools

One of the most successful approaches to improving attendance is the sharing of effective practice between schools. As a Multi Academy Trust, we will therefore, provide regular opportunities to bring together staff from different schools to learn from each other's attendance expertise and share effective interventions. As a minimum this may include, sharing exemplar resources and documents such as communications to pupils and parents, regular networking or Q&A sessions, and topical best practice training or webinars.

Registration and punctuality procedures/expectations

The school gates open at 08.30am and close at 08.40am each morning. Legally the register must be taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day at 08.35am, and once during the afternoon session at 1.10pm. The registers will remain open for 10 minutes. Pupils arriving before the end of the Registration period will be coded L (Late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register. Pupils arriving after the registers

have closed will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole morning session.

Only the Headteacher/Principal can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absent). It is reasonable for members of staff to ask questions regarding a child's attendance and punctuality and when appropriate, request evidence to support the reason for absence from school, this helps to ensure we are all working together to enable pupils to **be more, learn more, do more.**

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action where there is continuous arrival to school after the registers have closed.

Primary schools – End of day procedure

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly, late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. If one is available, the school will place a child into the after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

Absence Procedures

First Day Absence Contact

Can we respectfully ask that Parents notify the school, by 8am that morning, if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. If the school does not receive notification, it will text/telephone on the first day of absence, to try to ascertain the reason. First day contact will be carried out as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school, but not arrived, as quickly as possible.

If the child is still too unwell to attend the following day, parents will need to telephone the school again before 8 am on the following and any further subsequent days of absence. To safeguard the pupil, we cannot assume that they are still unwell so please do continue to inform us so we know why they have not arrived at school.

If a child is absent for longer than 3 days due to ill health, medical evidence may need to be provided in order that the school can authorise the absence.

On return to school, we ask that parents put in writing the reason for absence in addition to the communication with school already had on the days of absence.

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Continuing Absence Procedures

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is therefore important that the school responds to persistently absent pupils and children missing education as it supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future.

If after 3 days of absence, your child has not been seen and contact has not been made with the school, we will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family. In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be made, either by the school or other local authority professional, to ascertain the safety and well- being of the child and in addition to the reason for absence from school. This is part of our duty and commitment to safeguarding the wellbeing of our pupils. safeguarding_policy_25_26_v2.pdf

Ten days' absence
We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without explanation for 10 consecutive days to the LA. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is *at risk of missing education (CME)*. The Attendance Advisory Service staff in Medway will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. The Gordon Children's Academy will also inform the TSAT Regional Safeguarding Lead.

Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have up-to-date contact numbers. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year as well to ensure contact details are as up to date as possible.

Monitoring of school attendance procedures

Regular monitoring of the registers and analysis of data, will be undertaken by the Attendance Improvement Coordinator (AIC), to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA) and Severe Absence (SA). This will also include contributing to the targeted support meetings with the LA.

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

Persistent Absence
A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, **for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both.**

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning.

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Severe Absence
Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school).

These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them– this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school. If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools and local authorities should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, conduct a full children's social care assessment.

The AIC will be responsible for working together with parents and families, putting in place actions for each pupil to support regular attendance at school. This will include working together with relevant school staff for example class teacher, form tutor, SENCO and where relevant signposting and/or referring parents and families to outside agencies and professionals for any support identified to help improve the pupil's attendance and work on the barriers preventing regular attendance at school.

5% absence = half a day off every two weeks

10% absence = a day off every two weeks

15% absence = one and a half days off every two weeks

20% absence = one whole day off every week

A secondary age child whose absence is 20% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school

When absence goes above 4% (attendance drops below 96%) the following steps will begin;

Step 1 – informal letter to parents advising of their child's current attendance percentage and making the connection to inform parents that we are here to guide and support if there are any concerns or issues that may be impacting on attendance at school.

Step 2 – In the event that there is further unauthorised absence from school, a letter will be sent to

advise parents that any further absence due to ill health will require medical evidence in order for the school to authorise absence. This letter will also again offer and encourage parents to work with the school to understand what support and guidance may be required to allow regular school attendance. If this is a requirement during term 6, this will roll over into the new Academic year and continue to be required in order to authorise absence from school.

Step 3 – Should there be any further unauthorised absence from school, parents/carers will be invited into school to meet with the AIC and any other relevant school staff to understand what the barriers to attendance are and how the school can support the child and family. This may also require the support of outside agencies and professionals to which the AIC can advise parents on and refer to on their behalf.

Step 4 – Where support offered if not successful or engaged with and there continues to be unauthorised absence from school, a Notice to Improve stage will begin. For schools where the LA require this to be actioned by the school, parents will be invited to attend a Notice to Improve meeting hosted by the Senior Attendance Champion and any relevant staff or other professionals which may include the TSAT Regional Safeguarding Lead. This will be a further opportunity to identify why there continues to be unauthorised absence from school, any further support required and a monitoring period set. If during this monitoring period there continues to be concerns over unauthorised absence, a referral to the LA will be made for consideration of a Penalty Notice/Court action.

For schools where the LA issue the Notice to Improve, the school will refer for this step to begin and the LA will communicate with the parents in respect of this.

Medical conditions affecting attendance

Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by Section 3 of the Children Schools and Families Act 2010) provides a duty on local authorities of maintained schools to arrange suitable education for those who would not receive such education unless such arrangements are made for them. This education must be full time, or such part time education as is in a child's best interests because of their health needs.

Mrs Lawrence, will work together with parents, local authority and other relevant professionals to ensure any child who is going to be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons either consecutively or accumulatively, will have access to relevant and appropriate education (sec 19). This includes Public Exam provision and the education of siblings where the family have had to travel and stay away from the home. Please see the Trust Policy Supporting Children with Medical Needs policy for further information available on the school website. gca_medical_policy26.pdf

Mental Health, Emotionally Based School Avoidance and Wellbeing

If the reason for the reluctance to attend school appears to be school based such as difficulty with

work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to resolve. It can be very difficult to manage this as a parent so please be reassured that we will work together with you as parents to provide the support that may be required, sometimes we will make tough decisions together but always in the best interest of the child.
Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. The impact of EBSA on children is far-reaching, it has been linked to seriously hampering children's psychological, social, and academic performance and subsequently performance in exams and employment opportunities.

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact our school's Designated Safeguarding Lead Mrs Legg for further information on the support available.

Parents should also contact their GP or the NHS Helpline by phoning telephone number 111 for advice if they are concerned. In case of emergency parents should dial 999.

School refusal/school phobia is a psychological condition that usually has been medically diagnosed. Other arrangements may be put in place for a child with genuine school phobia.

Reduced Timetables

All pupils of statutory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary reduced timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.
Working together to improve school attendance

A reduced timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support program or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a reduced timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised and code in the register as a C, which is an authorised absence.

The school will share the relevant reduced timetable paperwork with the Trust Safeguarding Team who will ensure that the reasons for the timetable are necessary and proportionate, as well as in the best interests of the pupil.

What happens when children do not attend school regularly or punctually?

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. Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the

last resort where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed or where support has been deemed inappropriate in the circumstances of the individual case.

Local authorities have the power to prosecute:

• Parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order issued by the local authority to require a parent to get their child registered at a named school (under section 443 of the Education Act 1996). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).

• Parents who fail to secure their child's regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences: section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the 's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence my result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.

• Parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision (under sections 444 and 444ZA). This may result in a fine up to level 3 (£1000), or if the parent is found to have known the child was not attending regularly and failed to ensure that they did so, a fine of up to level 4 (£2500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.

• Parents who persistently fail to comply with directions under an Education Supervision Order (under Schedule 3 to the Children Act 1989) or breach a Parenting Order or directions under the order (under section 375 of the Sentencing Act 2020). These may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).

Purpose of penalty notices

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of statutory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided. Penalty notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

Penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended and can only be issued by a headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police. They must also be issued in line with Local Codes of Conduct which are drawn up and maintained by each local authority.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or

permanent exclusion. The school must have notified the parents of the days the pupil must not be present in a public place. This type of penalty notice is not included in the National Framework and therefore not subject to the same considerations about support being provided or count towards the limit as part of the escalation process in the case of repeat offences for non-attendance.

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 registration closes all within 10 school 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).

Two penalty notice limit and escalation in cases of repeat offences

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 most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 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:

• 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.

Where the pupil's previous school was in the same local authority area this check will be simple. If the pupil has moved between local authorities in the previous 3 years and the previous local authority(ies) is known, they should be contacted to check whether a penalty notice has been issued to that parent for that pupil in the previous 3 years.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice

Leavers and children who cease to attend without prior notice (CME) procedures

Parents must inform the school in writing if they are planning to remove their child from The Gordon Children's Academy. This must include the details of the new school the child is planning to attend or that they are exercising their right to educate their child otherwise. All Education Otherwise information will be passed into Medway Council who are responsible for monitoring all children who are educated otherwise. If after ten day's continuous absence the school has been unable to

ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority, in order to perform further checks that are not available to school.

Non starters
Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as Children Missing from Education (CME). If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they have a duty to refer the pupils to the Local Authority for further checks.

Vulnerable Children

Children who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Improvement Coordinator. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home. Any outside professionals who are also working with the children and family will also be notified of the absence, for example the family social worker. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms, including crime (the proportion of children that had been cautioned or sentenced for any offence that had ever been persistently absent was 81% and for serious violence offence was 85%)

Traveller Absence

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.
To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In which case the child will be dual registered at that school and this school, which is their 'main' school.
Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

Religious Observance:

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious

observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart

Participating in a performance:

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher/Principal to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance license and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Headteachers/Principal's discretion as to whether to authorise this (remains satisfied that this will not have a negative impact on the pupil's education) and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

Participating in a supervised sporting activity:

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteachers/Principal's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher/Principal and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Understanding types of absence coding

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school as **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time and emergencies.

Examples of types of absence that are **not** considered reasonable, and which will **not** be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents.
- Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Sibling unwell
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Head Teacher/Principal
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (after the close of registration)
- Truancy
- Death of a pet

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A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa, if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school, there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Suspension from School:

With effect from the 1st September 2022, any pupil who has been suspended from school, and provision has been arranged, if the student does not attend the provision this shall be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may result in further action taken by the school, please see also penalty notice section. https://www.gordonchildrensacademy.org.uk/site-gorden/assets/files/1364/behaviour_policy_2024-26-1.pdf

Applications for leave of absence in term time (includes Holidays in term time)

The DFE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purposes of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are **'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'**. All pupils are therefore encouraged to attend school every day that school is open. The register is called twice daily, and pupils are expected to be present for each session, or half days. That leaves 175 days or more for family holidays, shopping trips and other needs.

As a school we prioritise teaching and learning, therefore, in accordance with the local and National guidelines, The Gordon Children's Academy does not authorise holidays during term time. Permission, however, may be granted only in exceptional circumstances, when the benefit of the absence far outweighs the benefit of school attendance. A request for such absence should be made in writing to the Headteacher/Principal, using the Leave of absence form. When requesting leave of absence during term time may you be reminded that 10 days of absence equates to 20 sessions missed schooling, which is equivalent to 5.2% of absence.

Please note: any child who has taken a term time holiday will be required to provide medical evidence for any further absences during the remainder of the academic year. Any absences due to ill health either directly before or after a school holiday will need to provide medical evidence in order for the school to authorise the absence.

In the case of all unauthorised leave of absences, incurring 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 days), an application for a Penalty Notice will be made to the local authority.

Notes:

- From February 2004, new measures introduced in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 have made it possible that certain cases of unauthorised absence from school amounting to 10 sessions (5 days) can be dealt with by way of a Penalty Notice. These Penalty Notices require the recipient to pay a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Penalty notices will be issued to each parent/ carer that resides with the child.

- Non-payment of these fines will result in application to Criminal Court.
  Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate, due to a "failure to safeguard a child's education"
- If a Parent/Carer requests for a term holiday is refused, but the holiday taken, it will be classified as unauthorised absence and may be subject to a penalty notice being served to each parent/ carer that resides with the child by LA attendance team
- A formal application must be made in writing using the Leave of Absence form, IN ADVANCE and returned to the Attendance Improvement Coordinator.
- Permission sought after a holiday has been taken will not be granted.
- If the parent/ carer removes a student from their education for the purpose of a suspected holiday without advising the school this will be referred to the Medway LA Attendance team. On the third day of absence a letter will be sent requesting that the parent/ carer contacts the school within 2 days to confirm the reason for absence. No response will assume to be a holiday absence and penalty notice(s) may be issued.

There is no automatic right to term time leave of absence, and your request is likely to be declined except in the most exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered on its own merit, and the attendance record(s) of the child/ren concerned will be taken into account when making a decision.

Home Educated/Education Otherwise

On receipt of written notification to educate otherwise, parents will be invited into the school to discuss the reason for this decision and to seek a way forward that may enable the child to remain at the school if parents are in agreement. If the child does not remain at the school and is educated otherwise, the school must inform the pupils local authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register.

Amendments to the Admissions Register and Attendance Register

Every amendment made to the admissions 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.

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least six years. Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of six years after the date on which the entry was made. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies:
School_attendance_parental_responsibility_measures

APPENDIX 1 - USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

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LEARN MORE, DO MORE, BE MORE

This is a successful school, and you and your child play a part in making it so. We aim to encourage all members of the school community to reach out for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.

- Is my child too ill for school?
- everything you need to know about school attendance
- school attendance and absence

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you as the adult to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. It will be better for them in the long run to go to school rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and make them even more reluctant. Your job as the parent is to encourage them to attend.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?
Contact the Attendance Improvement Coordinator immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with schoolwork, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional that we will be able to signpost or even refer you to for support.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?
Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. If child brings home a school diary each evening, please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

EARLY HELP
Early identification of needs and support required can prevent concerns escalating. Early help plans should have focused outcomes for children and families and should be actively planned with them. Plans should deliver evidence-based interventions using single agency or common assessment frameworks, and clear thresholds for specific agency intervention e.g., Social Care, housing, mental health services. Early Help plans should be regularly reviewed.

We see how early help can transform a child in school, not just what they are able to achieve academically, but how their personal, social and emotional development can thrive with the right support. We are committed to early help because it is the right thing to do for our children to give them the best start in life.

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For infant and primary schools:
For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both

Any absence affects the child's learning, and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up. Research has shown that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

There is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue. To facilitate effective working across the LA, a pupil's social worker and /or youth offending team worker will be informed of unexplained absences from school.

Understanding absence percentages: You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's absence is 5%. This may make it easier to understand:

Absence during school year	Days lost in a year	Which is approximately	Approximate number of lessons missed
5%	9.5 Days	2 Weeks	50 Lessons
10%	19 Days	4 Weeks	100 Lessons

Even the brightest and most enthusiastic learner will find it hard to keep up with their work with these levels of absence. That is why we encourage the highest attendance possible.

Effects of Late Arrival at School:
When a child arrives late to school, they miss important events like;

- assembly,
- teacher instructions and introductions.

Children **can** often also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others.

Minutes late per day	Equates to days of teaching lost in one year	Which means this number of lessons missed
5 mins	3 Days	15 Lessons
10 mins	6 Days	30 Lessons
15 mins	9 Days	45 Lessons

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Reporting your child's absence
If your child is absent, please ensure you:
Contact the school as early as possible, but before 8.30am, on the first day of absence, either by telephone or in person, and send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence

Responsibilities of Headteachers & Regional Directors

Headteachers are responsible for:

- Managing the effectiveness of the policy for the posts within their structures
- Establishing effective communication and collaboration within their school and region
- Working with their teams to establish local principles for effective delivery of the policy.
- Effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the policy within their school
- Ensuring all staff are clear on expectations of this policy and the school's principles.

Regional Directors/Deputy Regional Directors are responsible for:

- Overseeing the effectiveness of the school's attendance strategy as part of the regional review process