

GRINDON INFANT SCHOOL



Attendance Policy

Grindon Infant School Attendance Policy

Aims

Grindon Infant School aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all children are able to take full advantage of the learning experiences available to them. Improving attendance is everyone's business. Some children find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, Grindon Infant School will work with children and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and work together to put the right support in place.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Link Governor for attendance is the Chair of the Governing Board and she monitors the work of the Head Teacher and School Business manager regarding attendance.

The Head Teacher /Designated Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mrs A Charlton and can be contacted via telephone (0191 3401931) or via email (grindon.infant@schools.sunderland.gov.uk)

The Attendance Officer

The school Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Head Teacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Head Teacher (authorised by the Head Teacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Inform parents promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance
- Inform parents via letters generated by A Star Attendance Solutions Software

The Attendance Officer is Mrs G Charlton and can be contacted via telephone (0191 3401931) or via email (grindon.infant@schools.sunderland.gov.uk)

Class Teachers

Class Teachers will:

- Record attendance on a twice daily basis using SIMs
- Use the correct codes on SIMS
- Submit this information to the School Office at 9am daily.

School Office Staff

School Office Staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Contact parents on the first day of absence if parents do not contact School (telephone then text)
- Gently challenge parents of absentees and support their prompt return to School
- Only authorise an absence on the system once a satisfactory reason is provided by the Parent/Carer
- Offer parents whose first language is not English or who have Literacy problems appropriate support from School in matters of communication.
- Sign in children who are late and brought by parents to the School Office.
- Not leave blank boxes on the register.

Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends School regularly, punctually, appropriately dressed and ready to learn.

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.
- Call the school (0191 3401931) to report their child's absence before 8:50am on the day of the absence and on each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return. Please note a child's absence is considered unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is given.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. Parents must provide medical/dental cards to the School Office, if appointments in school hours are unavoidable.
- Ensure their child is only out of School for the duration of the emergency appointment and not the whole session.

Children

Children are expected to:

- Attend school every day that they are well enough
- Arrive at School on time, any arrival after the start of the school day will result in a late mark added for the session, parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school as well as being on time.

Recording Attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all children onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every child is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a child is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a child is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Children must arrive in school by 8:50am on each school day. Nursery children by 8:30am.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:00am and will be kept open until 9:30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:15pm.

Unplanned absence

The child's Parent/Carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:50am or as soon as practically possible by calling the School Office. There is an attendance line if parents wish to leave a message before School opening hours. Parents are also able to email the school email address (grindon.infant@schools.sunderland.gov.uk) to inform us of any absences.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, we may ask the child's Parent/Carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If we are not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and Parents/Carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's Parent/Carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents need to contact the School Office via telephone or email and request the leave of absence. Parents are requested to show proof of the appointment to the Office Staff either in person or via email; proof could be an appointment letter, card or text message.

Parents/Carers should make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible; children should only be taken out of school if it is an emergency appointment or one which can't be changed e.g. a hospital or orthodontist appointment. Where this is not possible, the child should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Lateness and Punctuality

A child who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code - L
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code - U

Punctuality is very important to ensure children take part in all of the learning opportunities offered to them throughout the whole day. It also prepares them for later life when they will need to be punctual for work. School analyse data and support parents to remove barriers to ensure they can arrive on time.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, we will:

- Call the child's Parent/Carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the children's emergency contacts, we will send a text

message asking Parents/Carers to contact School. If there is still no response we will contact Attendance 100 and ask them to carry out a welfare check.

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the Parent/Carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer or the Police.

Children Missing Out On Education

Every term School complete a template for 'Children Who are Missing Out On Education' which is returned to the Together for Children, Inclusion and Access Officer. Children defined as 'Missing Out On Education' would include the following, those who:

- have been permanently excluded - children who have been permanently excluded but are currently still on roll with their main school. Children should not be taken off roll until the independent review period has lapsed or taken place.
- have behavioural difficulties and have personalised learning plans and, by arrangement, they do not attend their usual school full time- This would include children who attend alternative providers – either full time or part time. Children marked as 'B' or 'D' for 15 days or more in any one term on school registers.
- have mental health needs and access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), either as an in-patient or through services provided in the community, for example – a child who is currently unable to access full time school and may be receiving some form of home tuition. A young person who is currently being treated as an in-patient
- have medical needs other than mental health needs, this includes children who are receiving tuition through the home and hospital. service, who have chronic medical conditions and may find attending full time difficult or who have physical difficulties which school feels they cannot meet at present.
- attend school on a part time basis and have personalised learning plans as part of attempts to reintegrate them into full-time education, this would include school refusers as above or vulnerable children who for whatever reason are unable to access ordinary lessons and usual start and finish times.

This is not a definitive list – there will be other children who fall within this category.

Reporting to Parents/Carers

We regularly inform Parents/Carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. Parents/Carers receive:

- Letters from A Star Attendance Solutions; there are four stages:

Stage 1 - Pupils who have an attendance of 93% and below. A letter will be sent our reminding parents/carers of the importance of good attendance.

Stage 2 - Pupils continue to have attendance of 93% or below and have made no improvement. A letter will be sent home with a parent survey requesting more information to be provided regarding the absences. It is also possible at this stage for parents to arrange to speak to School about any concerns they may have of their child's School attendance and ask for additional support.

Stage 3 - Pupils continue to show little, or no improvement and attendance has not reached 93% or above. A letter will be sent home advising that the pupil is now on a 4-week monitoring period. During this period, 100% attendance is required unless medical evidence can be provided.

Stage 4 - Pupils who have not passed the 4-week monitoring period will now be considered for a referral to the Local Authority.

- MarvellousMe messages for good attendance or improved attendance.
- Teachers share attendance certificates at Parents' Evenings in the Autumn and Spring terms and congratulate parents or share the negative impact the attendance is having upon their child's education.
- Details of yearly attendance in their child's end of year report.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Approval for term-time absence

School will comply with the DfE regulations that state from 1st September 2013 "Leave of absence must be requested from and agreed by the Head Teacher ahead of any absence. Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances" Therefore School require parents to complete a Leave of Absence form at least 4 weeks before the anticipated absence. The Head Teacher will only grant the leave of absence if there are exceptional circumstances. A leave of absence is granted at the Head Teacher's discretion, including the length of time the child is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the School Office or the School website. The Head Teacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Term-time absences will not be authorised during the month of May for Year 2 children as this is when they carry out their Standardised Assessment Tests (SATs) or for Year 1 children during the week of the Phonics Screening Check, usually in June.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as one off events which are unavoidable, some examples are given below.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments but only if emergency appointments or from services which can't be rearranged e.g. hospital or orthodontist appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the children's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Attendance at a religious service for an immediate family member
- Traveller children travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the School, but it is not known whether the child is attending educational provision
- Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark on a tour of duty abroad
- A family crisis or illness which prevents attendance.

Legal sanctions

Failure to ensure a child's regular attendance at School is a criminal offence and if, with support from the School your child's attendance fails to improve, the Local Authority will consider one of two courses of action:

1. Penalty fine of £60 (if paid within 21 days), rising to £120 (if paid after 21 days but before 28 days have elapsed). Failing to pay the fine will result in prosecution and being summoned to appear at the Magistrates Court.
2. Start a criminal investigation which could lead to you being prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court.

A Penalty Notice can be issued if:

- a child has poor attendance (eight sessions (half days) or more of unauthorised absence in the last six weeks)
- 10 sessions/5 days or more of absence due to an unauthorised leave of absence during term time
- A child who has been excluded from school is seen in a public place in the first five days of an exclusion.

It is the responsibility of each parent to ensure regular school attendance and failure to do so will result in each parent being charged with the offence. If convicted, both parents will be punished by the courts, resulting in a fine of up to £2,500 for each parent and / or up to three months custodial sentence.

Strategies for promoting attendance

At Grindon Infant School we have many strategies to promote good or improved attendance:

A weekly assembly where a trophy is awarded to the Class with the highest attendance, this class also receive a 'treat' on the afternoon.

Class attendance is displayed in classrooms showing their attendance last week and this and praise is given for improvements made.

At the end of each term certificates are awarded for full attendance and those with 99%, 98%, 97%, and 96%

At the end of the year small motivational prizes are presented to the children for good attendance and improved attendance

Children are sent MarvellousMe badges as incentives for good or improved attendance

Individual charts are created for children who struggle with punctuality

Grindon Infant School will offer an environment in which children feel safe and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that children feel their presence in school is important, and they will be missed when they are absent or late.

A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all children and individual needs will be catered for.

Teachers will create an exciting curriculum to ensure children are motivated to attend School

Meetings will be held with parents of children identified at Stage Two of the A Star Attendance Solutions procedures to offer support and remove any barriers and hopefully prevent progression to Stage 3.

Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, parents' evenings etc.) of the importance of good attendance.

Children who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time, will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be integrated back into school upon their return.

The Head Teacher will make a termly report to Governors on attendance matters.

School will adopt and implement the Local Authority non-attendance procedures in consultation with the School Attendance Officer.

Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data fortnightly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual child level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify children or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these children and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to Class Teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with children and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

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

The School will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of children who the School (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at School
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

Children with medical conditions or Special Educational Needs or Disabilities

Reasonable adjustments will be made for those children who School are made aware of who have medical conditions or disabilities which may affect their attendance. The staff will work closely with the children and Parents/Carers to support them.

Attendance strategies for children who have Special Educational Needs will have the same focus, challenge and stretching targets and expectations as for all other children. Staff will develop and implement ways of addressing particular challenges that arise.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every year by Mrs Charlton, Head Teacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Governing Board.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious

		observance
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Author's Name	Grindon Infant School
Review Date	December 2024

Date Ratified by Governing Body	December 2023
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SIGNATURES:

Head Teacher	
Chair of Governors	