



Greneway School

School Attendance Policy

Policy review:		
Reviewed by:	Curriculum & Achievement Committee	3 rd March 2016
Ratified by:	Full Governors	22 nd June 2016
Next Review:		March 2017
Statutory Document:	Y	
Update on Website:	Y	
Additional Comments:	This policy will be reviewed annually, unless the DfE advise schools of updates during the academic year.	

1. Introduction

“The evidence shows that children with poor attendance are unlikely to succeed academically and they are more likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) when they leave school. There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement. 73 per cent of pupils who have over 95 per cent attendance achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A to C.”*

Charlie Taylor, Improving attendance at school, 2012

At The Greneway Middle School we are committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance and punctuality. Underpinning this commitment, is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. The school encourages full attendance by working to make it a happy, caring, positive and stimulating environment in which pupils can flourish. We seek to work closely with parents/carers, Royston School Academy Trust (RSAT) schools, the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) and the Local Education Authority to apply current regulations and monitoring procedures in line with current requirements.

Under Section 199 of the Education Act, parents/carers of a child of compulsory school age are under a **legal duty** to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to discharge this duty may result in the Local Education Authority prosecuting the parents. Local Education Authorities are responsible in law for ensuring that parents meet the obligations imposed on them to secure suitable full-time education for their children of compulsory school age, whether by regular attendance at school or otherwise. This duty is normally exercised through the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who works with families and schools to resolve any attendance issues. They do this by:

- helping schools to monitor and analyse attendance data;
- helping schools to identify problems that are affecting the child’s attendance at school and agreeing plans for improving attendance with parents.

The overall aim of The Greneway Middle School is to maximise attendance rates and to be sensitive towards circumstances which lead to non-attendance. We will support parents and carers in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and will respond promptly to any issue which may lead to non-attendance.

2. Responsibilities – Parents and Carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents should:-

- Ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and ready to learn.
- Instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- Impress upon their children the need to observe the school’s code of conduct.

- Take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings.
- Work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- Ensure that they are aware of the 'attendance policy' of their children's school.
- Notify their child's school of absence.
- Avoid arranging routine medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- Avoid booking holidays during term time.

3. Responsibilities – The Greneway Middle School

The Greneway Middle School is responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance. We are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity. We are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

We will:

- Work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole.
- Support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance. For example, letters will be sent home to pupils whose attendance has dropped below 92%. We also keep parents and carers regularly up to date with DfE data about the implications of having time out of school.
- Respond sensitively to the needs of individual parents and this will be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. We recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications and recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school.
- Produce school attendance policies which are consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents/carers, pupils and staff across the Royston Schools Academy Trust (RSAT).

Procedures for increasing attendance rate

- Attendance data is monitored by the office staff and brought to the attention of the head teacher where action is required.
- Attendance data is available for discussion during parents evening – whether to celebrate good attendance or to bring to the attention of the parent poor attendance.
- Attendance for the year is recorded on child's end of year written report to parents/carers.
- **95%- 92%** attendance is discussed with child's parents/carers by the class teacher and ways to improve attendance to be shared with parents/carers and child.
- **92-90%** Attendance letters are sent home by the head teacher to alert parents/carers of poor attendance by the child and meetings arranged if necessary to support the child and parents/carers to improve attendance.
- **Below 90%** County attendance officer (AIO) or other suitable professionals involved, drawing up an action plan to improve a child's attendance.

4. Responsibilities – Attendance and Pupil Support Service

The Attendance and Pupil Support Service fulfils the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities. As a Federated Academy, we liaise regularly as three schools with half termly meetings to focus on attendance.

Our allocated Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) works in close partnership with the three schools and attends these meetings with the aim of:

- Scrutinising the attendance records.
- Identifying pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- Agreeing on appropriate action to take place where there is a problem.
- Giving feedback to the headteacher on information linked with previous follow up work.
- Working together with the schools to ensure good practice in relation to attendance matters.

Whilst the AIO would usually work alongside children with non authorised absences they may also work on pupils with authorised absences. Appendix A highlights the policy for Attendance Improvement Officers working with children whose absence has been authorised.

5. Procedures

Registers will be marked in the morning and the afternoon prior to lessons taking place. Attendance registers are legal documents which may be required as evidence in court cases. Absence and punctuality are marked in accordance with the national absence and attendance codes (Appendix B). Registers will be held securely and any amendments should show who made the amendment and why. Appendix C highlights 'Attendance codes, descriptions and meanings'.

In addition to morning and afternoon registers, 'Lesson Monitor' software is used throughout the school day to note attendance and punctuality.

Punctuality

- When a child arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked as 'late' but counted as present.
- When a child arrives to the form base after the register has closed and provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'late (after registration closed)' for that session. For example, pupils arriving late due to school transport problems will be marked as absent if not present at registration. On arrival at school, pupils should report to the office and will be marked present.
- When a pupil arrives late and fails to provide a suitable explanation, he/she should be marked as 'unauthorised absence' for that session. The form teacher and Year Leader of Learning should be informed as soon as possible by the school office.
- If a pupil arrives after registration, they report to the office and if they provide a satisfactory explanation they will be marked present and sign in to the 'Late Book'. Text messages will be sent via the office to alert parents that pupils have arrived late.
- Where a pupil cannot give a suitable explanation for their lateness they will be asked to make up the lost time and parents will be informed.

Absence

- In the case of unplanned absence parents/carers should telephone the school office on the first morning of absence, and subsequent mornings, to inform the school of the reason for the pupil's absence. This should be followed up with a signed letter on returning to school. On the first day of absence, and subsequent mornings, if no call is received by 0930, the office will call the parents/carers to check on the reason for absence.
- Staff will follow-up any absences that have not had a note of explanation. If a pupil fails to produce an absence letter within 5 days of return to school following an absence, a letter requesting reason(s) for absence will be sent home via the child. If written or satisfactory confirmation of a reason for absence is still not forthcoming staff will contact the parent/carer again to request written confirmation of the reason for absence.
- Where absence is anticipated (e.g. appointment, visit) parents should submit a letter advising of absence in advance.
- If a child needs to leave school during the day, a written note must be given to the form teacher on the morning of the event and the child must be collected and signed out by a responsible adult. Pupils leaving school during the day should always sign out in the 'Pupil Signing-Out Book' in the office and sign back in on their return.
- Where a pupil is frequently absent, whether authorised or unauthorised, the school will work closely with the child, parents and outside agencies and put strategies in place to improve attendance or ensure appropriate alternative provision. For example, attendance data is reviewed regularly and letters are sent to parents/carers where pupil attendance is a cause for concern (Appendix D).

6. Under what circumstances is an absence authorised?

Absence will be authorised

- When a child is absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by the headteacher and chair of governors').
- When a child is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- If the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.
- If the transport organised by the Local Authority to and from school is unavailable and the child lives too far away to walk.
- If there is a family bereavement.
- If the child is a member of a travelling family temporarily leaving the area and given a reasonable indication of a return.
- If the child is attending an interview at another school.
- If the child is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving off-site tuition (approved by headteacher).
- If the child is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion. In authorising such absence the headteacher would look at past attendances and will only authorise if attendance is greater than 95% attendance.
- If the family has been granted leave of absence by the school for a family holiday (in '**exceptional** circumstances').

7. Requests for absence from school

All parents or carers must fill in an application form (Appendix E) requesting leave of absence. The headteacher, in consultation with the chair of governors, decides whether or not to grant permission. Permission cannot be given if it is applied for after the leave has taken place. Absence in such circumstances would be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Parents/carers must request the relevant 'Leave of Absence' form available either from the school website or school office. This form should be completed by a parent/guardian and returned to the school office for consideration. Parents/carers should not expect leave to be granted as a right. If the request for Leave of Absence is authorised by the school, a letter will be returned to the parent/guardian indicating leave of absence is approved. Any request for leave must be made in advance (a minimum of three weeks' notice must be given).

Family Holiday in Term Time

Family holidays during term time are to be avoided. The school will only authorise the holiday if we consider the reasons to be 'exceptional circumstances.' If holiday is taken without consultation or school authorisation, the absence will be 'unauthorised'.

Examples of "Exceptional circumstances" are:

- For Service personnel and other employees prevented from taking holidays outside of term time, if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.
- When the family needs to spend more time together to support each other after a crisis.

Holidays which are taken for certain reasons will not be authorised. For example:

- Availability of cheap holidays.
- Availability of desired accommodation.
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods.
- Overlap with beginning or end of term.

8. Under what circumstances would absence be unauthorised?

Absence will not be authorised

- If a written note or letter about the absence is not forthcoming from the parents/carers.
- If the school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- If the child is away from school on a family holiday for a period longer than that negotiated with the headteacher.
- If the child is on a family holiday without permission from the school or if parents/carers have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday and instead seek retrospective approval on their return.

9. The Use of Legal Action

Through close liaison with the Attendance Improvement officer (AIO), the school will work with the Local Authority should legal action be necessary to address attendance issues, for example in relation to Penalty Notices for Parents of Truants.

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 adds two new sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduce penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures. The key consideration in deciding whether to issue a penalty notice for truancy will be whether it can be effective in helping to get the pupil who is truanting back into school.

At The Greneway Middle School we work with parents to address attendance problems. If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half a day= 1 session) unauthorised absence within a two term period (including unauthorised holidays), the school will communicate concerns to parents in writing. If attendance does not improve the Headteacher may ask the LA to issue a Penalty Notice. The penalty is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. If the penalty is not paid the LA may prosecute the parents for their child's irregular attendance.

10. Improving Standards of Attendance and Punctuality

Greneway School will continue to work with Royston School Academy Trust/ AIO/Governors/parent/carers/staff and pupils to reflect on standards of attendance and punctuality and take action to address issues of concern and celebrate good attendance.

APPENDIX A – Policy for Attendance Improvement Officers working with children whose absence has been authorised

- If the AIO becomes concerned (through checking the attendance register) that a pupil has accumulated significant amounts of authorised absence this will be discussed with the relevant member of school staff.
- If it is agreed that there is a concern about the pupil's attendance the school should share this concern with the parents.
- If concerns about the pupil's attendance remain, the AIO will consider accepting the referral in accordance with the Attendance and Pupil Support Service referral procedures.
- If the AIO, after making contact with the parents, is of the opinion that the absence is in fact unjustified he/she will advise the school to discontinue authorising the absence.
- The AIO will give priority to those cases when the absence has been unauthorised.

(Note: if a pupil's absence has been authorised by the school the LA cannot cite that absence as evidence of non attendance under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.)

Appendix B - Attendance Registers

- a) Attendance registers are legal documents, which may be required as evidence in court cases. They are marked in accordance with the DFE guidance and include the new codes.
- b) Entries on SIMs Pupil Registration Forms must be carried out by teachers at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.
- c) Registers must differentiate between normal attendance, late whilst the register is still open, and absence. If the form teacher knows in advance of a child's absence they must inform the Secretary by attaching the letter or note to explain the reason. This is essential to prevent the Secretary ringing the parents unnecessarily.
- d) SIMs Pupil Registration should open at 0835 and 1400 and close at 0900 and 1415. They should not be kept open outside these times.
- e) An Absence code will be placed in the register at the start of each week for the form teacher if details have been confirmed.
- f) We will notify the LA of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason. In Hertfordshire, this requirement is achieved through the regular consultation visits of an Attendance Improvement Officer. The frequency of consultation visits will ensure that registers are examined not less than once every four weeks for Greneway.
- g) A pupil's name may not be deleted from the attendance register unless it has also been deleted from the admissions register.
- h) A pupil of compulsory school age will have his/her name deleted from the admissions register when:
 - The pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a School Attendance Order and another school is substituted by the LA for that named in the Order or the Order is revoked.
 - The pupil has been registered at another school.
 - The school has received written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school.
 - The pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer lives within a reasonable distance from the school.
 - In the case of a pupil granted leave of absence exceeding 10 days for the purpose of a holiday, the pupil has failed to attend the school within the 10 school days immediately following the last day of absence which was granted and the school is not satisfied that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause.
 - The pupil is certified by the School Medical Officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
 - The pupil has been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 4 weeks and both the school and the LA have failed, after reasonable enquiry to locate him/her.
 - The pupil has died.
 - The pupil attends a special school and the LA gives consent for his/her name to be removed.
- i) If the allocated Attendance Improvement Officer is concerned that a school's Registers have not been kept in accordance with the requirements of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 he she will:
 - Notify the headteacher of the concern and suggest that the matter is addressed.
 - If no appropriate action is taken by the school, and the attendance improvement officer remains concerned, the area attendance improvement officer will address the concern with the headteacher.

- If the matter still remains unresolved, the Attendance Improvement Officer will write to the headteacher formally noting the concern. A copy of this letter will be sent to the head of the Education Welfare Service/Director of Education.

APPENDIX C - ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. present at another school or PRU)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience (not work based training)	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to all pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Further information on the correct use of these symbols can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/schoolattendancedata/a0010008/pupil-registration-regulations-and-guidance>

APPENDIX D - Attendance Review

Example letter from Form Teacher

Dear Parent/Carer

As you may be aware all schools and academies now have to follow government guidance regarding attendance and with that in mind our records show that _____'s attendance for this academic year is currently ____%. This level of attendance is below the school's minimum target attendance of 95% and to put this into perspective, 90% attendance is equivalent to missing half a school year in the five years of compulsory secondary education.

On-going poor attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success and could also affect future applications for jobs or college places. Many pupils have difficulty maintaining friendships if they have long or numerous periods of absence.

We wish to help _____ to improve his/her attendance. If you would like to discuss _____'s attendance please contact me on 01763 243650 and I will be happy to talk with you and if required arrange a meeting.

We would appreciate your support to make sure _____'s attendance improves. The school will continue to monitor the situation and will be in touch again if it does not improve.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely, Form Teacher

Example letter from Year Leader

Dear Parent/Carer

I refer to my letter of (Date) regarding (Pupil name) attendance. As you may be aware all schools and academies now have to follow Government guidance regarding attendance and with that in mind since the start of the School year (Pupil's name) attendance overall is % which is concerning as it means (Pupil's name) is significantly below the School's minimum target of 95%. We understand that some absence due to illness may be unavoidable. However it is important the School are aware of any on-going health problems so we can put the correct support in place.

To put your child's absence into perspective, 90% attendance is equivalent to missing half a school year in the five years of compulsory secondary school education. We are sure that you are aware that every school day counts and missing any time from school results in lost learning. We want to support (Pupil's name) and make certain that he does not get behind with work or miss out on any opportunities school offers.

Due to the large amount of absence (Pupil's name) has had, I must inform you that we will now require a doctor's note or appointment card for any future periods of absence.

It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure their child is in school. On-going unauthorised absence could lead to a Penalty Notice being issued, which is a fine of £60 if paid within the first 28 days and £120 if paid within 42 days. If the fine is not paid within 42 days parents could be prosecuted for their child's poor attendance.

We will continue to monitor (Pupil's name) attendance. If you wish to discuss his attendance with us please contact me on 01763 243650, I will be happy to talk with you or arrange a meeting if required.

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Yours sincerely, Year Leader

APPENDIX E – APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE



THE GRENEWAY SCHOOL
Garden Walk Royston Herts SG8 7JF

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE OR ANNUAL HOLIDAY DURING TERM TIME

All applications for leave of absence must be made *no later* than 3 weeks before commencement of the holiday period.

We very much want to work in partnership with you to ensure your children receive the best education possible. At Greneway, we are committed to promoting excellent levels of attendance and punctuality. We firmly believe that only if children attend school regularly and punctually will they be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive a suitable full time education. As a parent/carer you have a legal responsibility to make sure this happens. Once your child is registered, you will be fully aware that you are legally responsible for making sure they attend regularly.

Please use the attached form to request leave of absence, for example, to attend an interview at another school, to attend an approved off-site tuition, to attend an exceptional special occasion or to be granted leave of absence for an exceptional circumstance. The DfE make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Parents or Carers should not expect such leave to be granted as a right.

If a holiday is taken without consultation, the absence will be 'unauthorised'. Parents/carers who consider that they meet the criteria for 'exceptional circumstances' must complete this 'Leave of Absence' form and send in a letter to the Headteacher stating why this absence should be considered as 'exceptional circumstances'.

Examples of 'exceptional circumstances' are:

- For Service personnel and other employees prevented from taking holidays outside of term time, if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.
- When the family needs to spend more time together to support each other after a crisis.

Holidays which are taken for certain reasons will not be authorised. For example:

- Availability of cheap holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
- Overlap with beginning or end of term

Please complete the form overleaf, together with a letter to the Headteacher stating why this absence should be considered as 'exceptional circumstances'.

I request that (name of child)Form
be granted leave of absence from The Greneway School
from to 2015/2016 (actual number of school days :.....)
in order to (briefly state reason)

This form must be accompanied by a letter to the Headteacher stating why this absence should be considered as 'exceptional circumstances'.

Have you already taken or requested leave of absence from school this academic year:

YES / NO If yes, how many days

Name: (Please print)

Relationship to child:

Address

The Greneway School endeavours to work with you and your child/ren to ensure that good attendance is maintained and we will contact you should we have concerns regarding your child/ren's attendance record.

Please be aware that should your child/ren's unauthorised absences reach 15 sessions (7.5 school days) or more in the current and/or combined with the previous term the Local Authority will be informed and you **could** be issued with a Penalty Notice.

Signed: Date
(Parental/Legal Guardians)

Signed: Date
(Parental/Legal Guardians)

By signing this form you confirm that you have read and understand the meaning and implications of unauthorised absences.