



GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST

Queensmead Primary Academy

# Attendance policy

<b>Approved by:</b>	Liz Latham	<b>Date:</b> Oct 2023
<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	2022	
<b>Next review due by:</b>	2024	

## **Introduction**

**Queensmead Primary Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils. We believe it is extremely important for pupils to attend regularly and on time. This will give them the best opportunity to progress and succeed at school.**

**Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent / carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason may result in prosecution.**

## **At Queensmead we**

- provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the Academy feel secure and valued**
- expect students to arrive on time every day**
- will support parents in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time**
- believe leave of absence should not be taken during term-time. We will not authorise requests for leave of absence during term-time, except in exceptional/ unavoidable circumstances**

## **How to notify the Academy of an absence**

**If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or unavoidable circumstances, please contact the academy on the first of absence by: ringing the office as soon as possible on 0116 2858518 and choose the Absence line (option 1).**

**Please inform us of any planned absence in advance, this includes unavoidable medical appointments during the school day.**

**To inform us about a planned absence please notify the office – you may be asked to provide evidence of medical appointments. For other absences, a Leave of Absence form is obtainable from the office and must be completed at least 5 days in advance. Please note, no holiday requests will be authorised.**

## 1. Aim

Ensuring all pupils have high attendance is a key priority of the academy. Pupils are entitled to a full-time education and we know that pupils with high attendance do better at school than those with high absence rates. We also know that absence can be a sign of other risks in a young person's life.

The aim of this document is to set out how we create and maintain a positive culture that supports and values good attendance. It includes how we:

- › Promote good attendance and punctuality
- › Follow up absences
- › Communicate and work with families to reduce absence
- › Monitor absences and analyse patterns of absence
- › Work with local partners to support high attendance and reduce absence

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of GAT's Attendance Policy. The Trust policy details the relevant legislation and guidance documents. In particular, this policy carefully follows DfE guidance in this area.

Our work on attendance is linked closely to our approaches to safeguarding and behaviour.

## 3. How we promote a culture of high expectations in attendance and punctuality

Queensmead Primary Academy aims to work together with parents and carers to ensure that all children achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality. Regular attendance is important, not just because the law requires it but because it is the best way of ensuring that children make the most of the educational opportunities which are available to him or her. Good attendance is an essential and crucial prerequisite to effective learning.

We will always seek to work alongside parents to overcome any barriers to regular attendance. We will always be understanding of such issues as transport, family issues or other barriers which may impact attendance and work with families to support them to find solutions. This process will be bespoke and tailored to the specific needs of individual families.

We also recognise that pupils may need additional support to be reintegrated into learning. In response to this we build an individualised programme for pupils which may be for academic and/or additional pastoral support including a range of strategies.

## 4. Our expectations of attendance and punctuality

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.20am. The register for the second session will be taken between 12.50pm and 1.20pm dependent on the Year Group and will be kept open no longer than 30 minutes after.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at a school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, this means their child must attend every day the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the academy.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- › Make sure their child attends every day on time

- › Contact the Academy on 0116 2858518 to report their child's absence as early as possible on the first day of the absence and advise when they are expected to return. If the absence extends over a weekend, parents/ carers are expected to contact the Academy on the Monday morning
- › Provide the academy 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

Pupils are expected to:

- › Attend school every day on time

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the office by no later than 9.20am for the morning session.

The office Admin team will:

- › Take calls from parents/ carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the academy system
- › Transfer calls from parents to the Attendance Officer in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- › Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- › Providing regular attendance reports to staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Principal
- › 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
- › Working with local partners to implement bespoke strategies to improve attendance for those children with persistent absence or severe absence
- › Working with Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Lisa Sewell and can be contacted via 0116 2858518 (Option 1).

The Principal is responsible for:

- › Leading attendance across the Academy
- › Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- › Having an oversight of data analysis
- › Evaluating and monitoring processes
- › Implementation of this policy at the academy
- › Monitoring academy-level absence data and reporting it to the trust
- › Monitoring the impact of processes and attendance strategies
- › Monitoring the impact of work with local partners to improve attendance in identified cases
- › Working with local partners when formal procedures such as parental contracts, supervision orders and penalty notices are required

The Principal is Liz Latham and can be contacted via 0116 2858518

## 5. Recording attendance

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils 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 pupil is:

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

We will use the DfE codes to detail the attendance and absences.

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

### Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by as soon as practically possible by emailing or calling the school office.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the academy may ask the pupil'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 the academy is 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 academy in advance of the appointment. Evidence may be asked to be provided.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence. A Leave of Absence form is obtainable from the office and must be completed at least 5 days in advance. Please note, no holiday requests will be authorised.

Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the academy can authorise.

### Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

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

As part of this process, lateness across the Academy will be monitored. Pupils who are regularly marked as late are identified. Parents will be contacted by the Attendance Officer or Principal who will work with families in partnership to support with barriers to punctual attendance. A range of strategies may be implemented to support families in these cases, tailored to the specific needs of the family.

### Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend does not, or stops attending without reason, the academy will:

- › Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- › Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the academy cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the academy will leave a message where possible asking parents to contact the school. This may then be followed up with a further phone call, home visit or referral to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer).
- › 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 academy will consider involving an education welfare officer or similar

## Reporting to parents/ carers

The academy will regularly inform parents if there are concerns about their child's attendance and absence levels. This may be via phone calls, attendance letters and home visits. The EWO may be involved which may result in parents being invited into school for a Panel meeting.

Overall attendance is reported via Parents' Evenings, newsletters and the annual written report to parents

## 6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### Approval for term-time absence

The principal will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The academy 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 7 days before the absence, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, accessible via the office. Evidence may be required to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- › Illness and medical/dental appointments
- › Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the academy will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- › Traveller pupils 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 academy, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Family holidays should not be taken in term time as they damage progress and continuity of learning. We will not authorise any holidays. Leave of absence may be granted in very exceptional circumstances

### Legal sanctions

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or not appropriate (such as an unauthorised holiday in term time), the local authority can take forward legal intervention to formalise support and / or enforce attendance. This includes fines or a penalty notice including court action. The arrangements for these procedures are found <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/school-and-colleges/attendance-behaviour-and-welfare/attendance-and-truancy/#:~:text=Please%20be%20aware%20that%20parents,together%20with%20a%20Parenting%20Order>

## 7. How we monitor attendance

The Principal will monitor attendance trends on a regular basis in consultation with the Attendance Officer, learning mentor and EWO; and will ensure that the Academy Trust are made aware of any attendance matters. Weekly reports are run from SIMS with all pupils and groups of pupils being monitored. Any pupils who fall below 96% are closely monitored for patterns. These are then followed up with children and/or parents.

Pupils who fall below 90% are classed as Persistent Absentees (PA pupils). These pupils are rigorously tracked and a range of support measures are offered in order to overcome barriers for attendance.

### Monitoring attendance

The Academy will:

- › Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the academy and at an individual pupil 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 by the trust and DfE and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The academy will compare attendance data to the trust and national average.

### Analysing attendance

The Academy will:

- › Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils 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 academy will:

- › Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other academy leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils 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 pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The academy will:

- › Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- › Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the academy (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, at risk of or persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- › Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance such as family support, Early Help and health professional referrals

### Positive reinforcement

We have a range of rewards and celebrations around attendance to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. These include:

- Rewarding good attendance in assemblies for the class with the highest attendance and the most improved class attendance each week with an attendance trophy.
- Celebrate attendance percentages on the website and newsletters and on the class attendance display in the foyer.
- Clear attendance information will be included in the academy brochure and regular reminders included in the academy newsletter/website.
- End of term certificates and badges for all children who have had 100% attendance during the term. Any child with 100% attendance for the term will be entered into the school prize draw.
- End of Year certificates/prizes for 100% attendance all year.
- A yearly attendance record for each child will be sent out with the statutory reports in July.

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the trust or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Principal. At every review, the policy will be approved by the academy's Education Director.