Gateacre School

Secondary Attendance and Absence Policy

Approved by:	Local Governing Board
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Contents

Policy produced with reference to: [DfE Guidance Working Together to Improve Attendance](#)

1. Introduction

Gateacre School recognises the link between the attendance and attainment of students. The aim of this policy is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality for students within the school to support learning and achievement.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding. It is important to see our children every day and provide an educationally safe and secure environment.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that all students attend regularly and on time. Students should attend every day that the school is open. As a school we set a target for all students to aim for 100% attendance, with the expectation all students achieve at least 97%.

As a school we define regular attendance as 97% or above.

As a school we recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our polices on admissions, safeguarding and behaviour and inclusion as well as teaching and learning.

This policy demonstrates our commitment to meeting the requirements laid out in the Department for Education statutory guidance "[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)" (Statutory Guidance from August 19, 2024)

2. Aims

- Provide a framEWOrk to support building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school.
- Raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students
- Reduce the number of students who are persistently absent (90% or below) or severely absent (50% or below)
- Ensure every student has access to a full-time education
- Have clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for all students
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data is in place
- Ensure there is a proactive whole school approach that embeds consistency of practice
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children's Services, School Health and other partner agencies.

3. Legal FramEWOrk

This policy is based on the Department for Education statutory guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance"
The guidance is based on the following legislation
- The Education Act 1996
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006

- School Attendance Student (Student registration) Regulations 2023

4. Roles and Responsibilities Overview

4.1 Governance:

The governing board is responsible for:
- Making sure leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Ensuring that the school has high aspirations
- Regularly analysing attendance data and reviewing the school's performance
- Ensuring all staff receive adequate training on their role in supporting student attendance
- Holding the Principal to account for the implementation of the attendance policy

4.2 The Principal / Vice Principal

The Principal is responsible for:
- Implementation of this policy
- Reporting school level performance data to governors
- Ensuring effective communication between school and the local authority
- Ensuring effective communication with ***parent / carers** for all students where there are barriers to attendance

* Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, the definition of a parent / carer under education law defines "parent / carer" as:
(a) All natural (biological) parent / carers, whether they are married or not;
(b) Any person who, although not a natural parent / carer, has parent / careral responsibility for a child or young person;
(c) Any person who, although not a natural parent / carer, has care of a child or young person.

4.3 The role of the Designated Attendance Lead - **(Sean Hardeley – Assistant Principal)**

The designated attendance lead is responsible for:
- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Ensuing all staff are aware of their role in supporting pupil attendance and punctuality
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the school's process for managing attendance
- Implementing specific strategies to address poor attendance identified through the analysis of data.
- QA all processes and ensure all stakeholders are accountable to improving attendance

4.4 Senior Attendance Officer

The school attendance leader is responsible for:
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- 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 principal

- Ensuring the attendance team work effectively with parent / carers and students challenging and supporting families ensuring attendance and punctuality improves.
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the principal/ (authorised by the principal) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The senior Attendance Officer is Mrs McIntyre, she can be contacted via 0151 3631111 ext 116 / 106 or via email m.mcintryre@gateacre.org

4.5 Attendance Officers

The school Attendance Officers are responsible for:
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data of their year group(s) to ensure plans to improve attendance can be implemented effectively.
- Have strong relationships with all parent / carers and students they oversee, where they are able to support and challenge underperformance.
- Support key inclusion standards at Gateacre at the start and end of the day to ensure students attend school, are punctual and have the correct appearance and dress code.
- Work effectively with parent / carers and students challenging and supporting families ensuring attendance and punctuality improves.
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence once all actions they have completed have been exhausted.

4.6 Teaching staff

Teaching staff, with lead responsibility for a class, are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office through the school MIS system, in our case SIMs. If there are any issues with access to ICT, a paper record should be submitted to the attendance office during the attendance period (am/pm).

Teaching staff are responsible for promoting good attendance through quality first teaching which in turn will motivate students to learn, keeping student attendance high.

4.7 Form Tutors, Heads of Year / Assistant Heads of Year and SEND Staff

- Form Tutors are the students' most important members of staff in school. Form Tutors will consistently monitor and support students to improve their attendance and punctuality to school if issues arise, rewarding good attendance and punctuality, challenge below par attendance and punctuality as well as supporting to remove any barriers to attendance and punctuality.
- Head of Year and Assistant Heads of Year will use one to one meetings as well as school assemblies to promote, reward, support and challenge attendance and punctuality standards. Rewarding excellent or improving attendance and punctuality, supporting families to remove barriers to attendance, challenging improvements as well as setting consequences for poor punctuality to school.
- SEND staff will work closely with SEND families with low attendance, supporting the families to remove barriers and challenging them to improve both attendance and punctuality to school.

4.8 School Admin Support Staff

School Admin Support staff will:

- Take calls from parent / carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parent / carers to the Attendance team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

4.9 Parent / carers/Carers

Parent / carers/Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every timetabled session on time
- To ensure their child attends school daily and is fully accountable to their child attending school so that their attendance is good or better (in line with national averages or better) and are always punctual.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.30am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide a medical note for their child's absences if it is required by the attendance team.
- 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.
- Ensure the attendance and punctuality targets set on the partnership agreement are adhered to.

4.10 Students

- All pupils are expected to attend school daily on time (before 8.35).
- All pupils are expected to attend every timetabled session on time
- Sixth Form pupils or their parent / carers are expected to call the school to report their absence before 8.30 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence

See attached appendices for further details on roles and responsibilities to attendance.

5. Promoting regular attendance at our school:

This is everyone's responsibility, all members of staff, parent / carer/carers and students. To help us all focus on this, our school will ensure:

- There is a Designated Attendance Lead (DAL) for championing and improving attendance
- Effective strategies are in place to support all students to arrive on time for school
- An engaging curriculum is provided
- High quality teaching and learning is delivered throughout the school
- Students are provided with appropriate support from school and partner agencies to ensure regular attendance at school
- Students who experience difficulties in attending school are provided with effective support at the earliest opportunity and attendance is monitored rigorously
- Effective partnerships with parent / carers / carers are encouraged through regular contact and communication
- Parent / carers / carers are kept informed of student attendance and punctuality through the school's attendance procedures, termly progress reports, individual letters and meetings when required
- Good attendance and punctuality is rewarded through regular individual student incentives
- Attendance and punctuality are regularly discussed with children in assemblies

- Attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff should ensure that these are followed.

6. Safeguarding

A child not attending school, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding issue if this places the child at risk of harm. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence from school is required.

To safeguard all the children in our care, it is important that parent / carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide additional contact numbers in case of an emergency.

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

7 Expectations of Parent / carers / Carers

- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent / carer's legal responsibility (Section   444   of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law. Regular attendance at Gateacre is 97% attendance or more.
- Ensure your child arrives for school on time.
- Telephone school if your child is going to be late.
- Routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments should be made whenever possible outside of school hours. Confirmation of the appointment should be provided.
- Contact school by 8.30am on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend, giving an indication of the expected duration and return date to school.
- If a text message/phone call is made by the school due to your child's absence it is important that you respond to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- Contact the child's Head of Year / Assistant Head of Year if the reason for absence requires a more personal discussion.
- In case of emergency, school must have up to date contact numbers. Please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers (as a school we request a minimum of three emergency contact details be provided).
- Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing to the Principal and can only be authorised by the Principal. Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event may be acceptable for a short absence. Unacceptable reasons for missing school, include general holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts and birthdays etc.

7.2 If a student is absent, we will:

- Telephone and text parent / carers / carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them before 10am.
- If no response is received, a member of school staff may conduct a home visit. If there are safeguarding concerns, contact will be made with the family as soon as possible.

- If a student's absence continues, the parent / carer will be invited to meet the attendance and/or pastoral team and any barriers to the child attending school can be discussed and support put in place if necessary. This may include:
  - reintegration support packages
  - Early Help assessment or referral to appropriate support services
  - attendance contracts
  - attendance report cards
  - time limited reduced timetable (a few weeks)
- If the parent / carer does not attend the meeting or engage in any support the school has offered (themselves or via signposting to local agencies) and their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week rolling period, the parent / carers will be issued with a **Notice to Improve**, in accordance with the Liverpool City Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct and in agreement with the Education Welfare Service. During this **Notice to Improve** period Liverpool City Council will issue a **penalty notice** if an unauthorised absent is recorded.
- If unauthorised absences persist the Attendance Team will discuss actions with the local authority Attendance and Education Welfare Team. **This could lead to further fixed penalty notice fines, parent / carering orders, Education Supervision Order or parent / carer attending court attendance. From the courts case fine of up to £2,500 could be given, a community order or a jail sentence of up to 3 months. The court could also ask for a Parent / carering Order.**

8.1 Authorised Absence

Authorised absence - the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. It is the Principal, not parent / carers who make the decision to authorise absence from school.

8.2 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence - when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence following a parent / carer request.
This includes but is not exclusive to:
- parent / carers giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings.
- truancy before or during the school day.
- absences which have not been explained.
- students who arrive late after the close of registration.

This type of absence may lead to the use of penalty notices or other legal interventions from the Local Authority. Gateacre School, in agreement with the Education Welfare Service, may issue a Notice to Improve to parent / carers (in accordance with the National Framework for Penalty Notices and the Local Authority Code of Conduct) where their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week rolling period.

The Notice to Improve period will cover 20 school days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time, the school will refer the case to the Local Authority requesting a penalty notice be issued.

8.3 Persistent Absence

Students are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DfE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DfE expects schools to intervene early to prevent students becoming a persistent absentee (PA).

Whilst we understand that students can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they may be reluctant to attend. If a student is reluctant to attend or a parent / carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school at the earliest opportunity to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution.

Parent / carers are asked to contact the Form Tutor or Head another member of the pastoral / attendance team in the first instance.

8.4 Severe Absence

Students who miss 50% or more of school are classified as being severely absent by the Department for Education (DfE). This cohort of students are a priority group for Gateacre School and additional support may be required from the Local Authority and partner agencies to support their child and improve their attendance. It is essential that parent / carers work in partnership with school and its partners, to ensure their child receives the support they require to overcome any barriers that are preventing them from attending school.

9. Why regular attendance is important

Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect students' learning. Students who have regular time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well. Overtime this impacts on exam grades and therefore life chances into adulthood.

90% attendance is equivalent to a student missing one half day per week, which is approximately one month off each academic year.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

10. Education Welfare Service (EWS)

At times the Education Welfare Services will work with the school to support and challenge poor attendance and punctuality.

If a resolution or improvements in attendance and/or punctuality cannot be achieved and where unauthorised absence persists and the parent / carer has refused or not engaged with support that has been offered, the local authority will be required to consider the instigation of legal proceedings.

10.1 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)

The school will ask Liverpool City Council (LA) to use FPNs when parent / carers decide to take their child(ren) out of school in term time for a family break / holiday. The school will also use FPNs when unauthorised absences are high.

Penalty Notices:
- Liverpool City Council (LA) on receipt of a request from the school will issue a Penalty Notice to parent / carers for the unauthorised absence of their child.

Before issuing a penalty notice the LA will consider:
- if the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met, 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10-week period
- if issuing a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve the attendance of the student
- if appropriate support has been put in place
- consideration of the obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 that would make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate
- each parent / carer who is liable can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually be the parent / carer who allowed the absence
- the first penalty notice issued to a parent / carer in respect of a particular student will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced by half if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent / carer in respect of the same student in the rolling 3-year period is charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. There is no opportunity to pay a reduced amount.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent / carer 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 will be taken. **This will often include considering prosecution** but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

The Local Penalty Notice Code of Conduct is published on Liverpool City Council's website.

11 Leave of absence in Term Time

The Law does not give any entitlement to parent / carers to take their child on holiday during term time.

Parent / carers will receive a penalty notice for taking unauthorised leave in term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively.

Any application for leave in term time must be in only exceptional circumstances and the Principal must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. The Principal will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

12.0 Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day, they can miss work and late arriving students disrupt lessons. It can be embarrassing for the student arriving late and can encourage future absence.

12.1 How we manage lateness

The school day starts at 8.35 and registers are taken at 8.45 by the Period 1 teacher. Students not in school at 8.40 and arrive late will receive a late mark. The school is open from 8am, the school recommends that students arrive by 8.35am daily or earlier.

- If a student arrives late to school parent / carers will receive a text message / telephone call / Edulink message to inform them of their child's late arrival.

- Late arrival to school following the close of registers maybe classified as an unauthorised absence (U Code). If a student is persistently late after the official close of the register and there are no barriers preventing the child from arriving on time, the school may request the local authority issue a penalty notice.

- The official close of registration for the school is 9am.

If a parent / carer has any problem getting their child to attend school on time, they should contact the attendance team / Head of Year who will offer support so the family can resolve the problem.

We expect all students to be on time daily, if ever late this must be rare and for an exceptional reason.

13.0 People Responsible for Attendance at the School

All school staff, parent / carers and students need to work as a team to support the attendance and achievement of students. This continued support therefore is vital in making every student's journey through school a success.

14.0 Removal from Roll

From the 1st of September 2016 changes were introduced to the Student Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

As a school we are now required to: Inform the LA in *every* circumstance when deleting a student's name from the admission register. Inform the LA of the student's destination school and home address if the student is moving to a new school.
All schools must complete an Exit form and submit to the CME@liverpool.gov.uk inbox.

All schools must provide information to the LA when registering new students, including the student's address and previous school.

If a child is leaving our school parent / carers are asked to:

- Provide the Attendance Officer with comprehensive information about their plans, including, any date of a move, new address and telephone numbers, the child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to school in writing.

- If a student leaves and we do not have the above information, then a child may be considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to carry out investigations to try to locate the child, which may include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Appendices **– *working towards best practice***

Attendance and Punctuality Roles and Responsibilities Guidance

Timeframe	Responsible person	Actions Expected
DAILY	Students	- Arrive on school site by 8.35am

Role	Responsibilities
Form and Class Teacher	- Registers are completed on the SIMS system each day on time - Ensure attendance has a high profile in class - Support, challenge and reward attendance and punctuality regularly - Discuss absence with students returning to school
Pastoral / Attendance Team and Year Admin	- Ensuring staff have completed AM/PM registers - Ensuring input of accurate attendance coding in the register via SIMS - Identify students who are absent from school without reason (by 9.30am) - Log parent / carers voicemails, text messages and emails regarding student absences - Ensure all late arriving students are spoken to and challenge as well as their attendance entered on to SIMS - Communication with parent / carers who have failed to contact the school regarding their child's absence - First day absence contact with parent / carers, following up unexplained absences where no text message / phone call Edulink message has been returned - Pastoral staff / Form Tutors / class teachers / SLT contacted with specific attendance queries and necessary follow ups required - Supporting staff with registration queries, support the interventions of the class teachers. - Logging attendance of all students going out /in school for medical, dental or visits - Daily liaison with other settings for students educated off site to ensure AM and PM registers are provided within set time parameters and students who fail to attend with reasons unknown are followed up through the first day contact systems. - Daily Late process, log and send actions for relevant staff. - Daily Attendance identifying student groups as well as SA and PA report sent to the Pastoral Team and Attendance Leads for information and further actions. - Heads of Year and Pastoral Team ensure Form Tutors follow school systems to improve attendance and punctuality. - Support the punctuality protocol
Curriculum Leaders / Subject Teachers	- Curriculum leaders and subject teachers have informal discussions with identified students to follow up attendance issues and agree future action required. - Curriculum leaders discuss with class teachers when required identified students of concern regarding specific attendance queries and necessary follow ups required.
Attendance Team / EWO support	- Support and lead on the punctuality protocol - Safeguarding home visits as required. - Focused Casework interventions with SA/PA students and families. - Phone call contact with students/parent / carers - Home visits - Instigation of legal proceedings - Tracking of actions and interventions and feedback to pastoral staff.

Timeframe	Responsible person	Actions Expected
	Designated Attendance Lead	• Monitoring and tracking of staff not completing registers in line with safeguarding requirements. • Liaison with EWS, Pastoral staff and Curriculum Leaders regarding support work with identified students.

Timeframe	Responsible person	Actions Expected
WEEKLY	Form teacher / Class teachers	• Ensure all members of the class know the school target and their current attendance and punctuality rates • Reward, support and challenge attendance using the weekly tracker • Use the stage reporting system to support and challenge underperformance • Monitor/follow up identified student absence by contacting parent / carers where appropriate. • Update information on attendance displays when required
	Pastoral / Attendance Team and Year Admin	• Ensure all members of their year team are following the attendance and punctuality systems of the school, challenging and supporting if they are not. • Informing attendance staff and leaders of student patterns of absence. • Use daily and weekly attendance figures to initiate actions – support, challenge and reward so improvements are made. • Discuss attendance and punctuality issues with identified students and parent / carers • Student rewards for outstanding and improving attendance • Ensure attendance and punctuality is always highlighted in assembly • Support the QA of attendance challenge and support in form time
	Curriculum Leader / Subject Teachers	• Organise support for students to catch up on missed work due to prolonged absence
	Designated Attendance Lead	• Monitoring and tracking of staff not completing registers in line with safeguarding requirements. • Liaison with EWS, pastoral staff and curriculum leaders regarding support work with identified students • Determine priority actions for the following week

Timeframe	Responsible person	Actions Expected
HALF TERMLY	Designated Attendance Lead	• Whole staff cohort ensures attendance and punctuality is high profile and follow the school systems to ensure improvements are made and maintained. • Maintain a high profile of attendance as a significant contributor to student achievement • Use attendance data to identify and act to improve the attendance of vulnerable students • Ensure that all teaching staff focus on attendance in planning and pedagogy • Determine priority actions for the next half term
	Pastoral Staff	• Monitor and track attendance of whole cohort especially SA /PA students, setting and supporting action plans for improvement.

		• Liaise with Attendance Team to share information and agree joint actions re action plans and students causing concern.

TERMLY	**Designated Attendance Lead**	• The importance of attendance is underpinned by awareness of safeguarding issues for all students both in school and those attending off site provision • School attendance review alongside the EWS • Ensure attendance is given a high profile as a key driver of school improvement and provide support and guidance to SLT, for plans to raise attendance • Ensure that the attendance policy is implemented across the school and systems are operating effectively • Report to SLT on attendance matters • Ensure school prospectus, parent / carers' welcome booklet and school newsletters, promote attendance • Ensure attendance features at ALL parent / carers' evenings • Determine priority actions for the next term
	Principal	• Ensure that attendance maintains a high profile as a key driver of school improvement through close monitoring and scrutiny of attendance data in conjunction with SLT and Governors