

# NORTHUMBERLAND

COUNTY

COUNCIL



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# School Attendance Policy

# The Grove School

Grove School Registered Charity 512454



### **Summary of changes - September 2024:-**

The model policy has been revised to reflect changes in national guidance and legislation that came into force on 19 August 2024.

#### *Policy Consultation and Review*

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office.

We recognise the expertise our staff build by managing school attendance daily and we therefore invite staff to contribute to and shape this policy and associated attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed in full at least on an annual basis. This policy was last reviewed and agreed by the governing body October 2024 it is due for review October 2025.

Signature

Headteacher

Date

Signature

Chair of Governors

Date

The Department for Education (DFE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions.

Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance including the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing education or absent from school.

Excellent attendance promotes excellent learning. Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

The Grove School believe that regular school attendance is crucial to allowing children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

The Grove School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to early identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

The Grove School believe attendance is a shared responsibility, involving the whole school community and local community; Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a thread that runs through all aspects of school improvement, and is supported by our policies on [safeguarding, bully, behaviour and inclusive learning](#). This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Equality Act 2010.

The Grove School define our key levels of attendance as:

Attendance	Description
95%	Excellent
90%	Good
85%	Satisfactory
Below 85%	Unsatisfactory

## Principles

The Grove School believe the following important principles underpin our approach to managing attendance:

- Pupils and parents/carers understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality.
- All school staff, including governors, administrative and support staff understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality.
- Clear procedures for enabling pupils to come to school.

- Attendance issues are addressed in the curriculum.
- Parents/carers and pupils having the opportunity to raise concerns and share in addressing those concerns.
- Allocating resources e.g. time, people, space to support the policy.

Each of these principles is explained in full detail in the following guidance.

### **Rights, Roles and Responsibilities**

The Grove School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents/carers, pupils and the wider school community.

#### **The Governing Body will:**

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parent/carers.
- Have a named senior attendance for attendance (SAL).
- Annually review the schools Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters.
- Ensure that The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (and subsequent amending and related legislation,) is complied with together with statutory and non-statutory guidance such as Working together to improve school attendance, 2024 issued by the Department of Education.
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time.
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

*A positive learning climate is essential for promoting good attendance*

#### **The Leadership Team will:**

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers.
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually.

- Make staff aware of the Attendance Policy and are adequately trained to address attendance issues.
- Ensure that the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (and subsequent amending and related legislation,) is complied with together with statutory and non-statutory guidance such as Working together to improve school attendance, 2024 issued by the Department of Education.
- Have a named senior manager (SAL) to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resources.
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time.
- Collate and analyse attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Interpret the data to develop solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Involve Education Welfare and develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

**Parents/Carers will:**

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home.
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note if possible.
- Avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Dr, Dentist etc outside of school time.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulty.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before.
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family.
- Avoid taking their child on family holidays during term-time.

## **Legal Framework**

Under the requirement of the s7 Education Act 1996 ("the 1996 Act") it is the duty of a parent that every child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs or additional learning needs they may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5 Birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the 1996 Act, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary and appropriate, consider and use legal enforcement. This responsibility is undertaken by Education Welfare team.

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether each registered pupil is physically present in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school by using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

## **Categorising Absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation and or evidence for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents/carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will usually be categorised as set out below, however, this is not an exhaustive list and should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation and statutory guidance (for example - The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 / Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

## **Illness**

In most cases a telephone call or a note from the child's parent/carer will be acceptable. Where there are repeated absences due to reported illness parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

## **Medical/Dental Appointments**

Parents/carers are advised to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school. We understand that our children normally need a full day to attend appointments as these tend to be a great distance away.

## **Other Authorised Circumstances**

This relates to occasions where there is a cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances which will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the headteacher.

## **Excluded (No alternative provision made)**

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will plan for work to be sent home.

## **Religious Observance**

The Grove School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are asked to give advance notice to the school.

## **Traveller Absence**

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils are among the lowest achieving groups of pupils at every key stage in education, although some GRT pupils achieve very well at school. We recognise that there are many complex and interwoven factors that may influence the educational attainment of GRT pupils. At our school, we have high expectations of all pupils, regardless of their background whilst recognising the lifestyle and cultural traditions of GRT communities. In line with The Education Act 1996, section 444(6) the school will authorise the absence of a pupil who is a mobile child and is unable to attend school because:

- The parent is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place, that the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as

regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits, and if the child has attained the age of six, that he has had at least 200 attendances during the period of 12 months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted.

This provision applies only when the family have no fixed abode and are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school regularly as that trade permits. In these circumstances, parents have a duty to ensure that their child/children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When a family is trading otherwise conducting their business in or around Northumberland, if a family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. The Grove School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school the child normally attends when he/she is not travelling. However, the pupil must attend The Grove School in the last 18 months. Parents can register their child/children at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at The Grove School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

To ensure that we can effectively support all our pupils, we ask that parents:

- Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen, and inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

### **Un-authorized absence**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's family member Birthday
- Shopping for uniform/shoes
- Having hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for training day (or other) purpose
- Illness where a child is considered well enough to attend school
- Leave of Absence taken without the authorisation of school

### **Deletions from the Register**

Any deletions from the register will be in accordance with regulation 9 of The School Attendance (Pupil Register) (England) Regulations 2024.

### **Using Attendance Data**

Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.



Indicators next to a pupil's name will show if their attendance has, stayed the same, improved or deteriorated this pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention.

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school/partnership strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

The Grove School will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the local authority as required.

All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **Support System**

School recognise that poor attendance is often a sign that there are more serious issues going on in a child's life. This may be linked to problems at home and or in school. Parents/carers should make the school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

The Grove School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils.
- Referrals to support agencies.
- PSHE.
- Family Learning.
- Behaviour Support.
- Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and pupils.
- Where parents/carers fail to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, The Grove School will refer to Education Welfare and the use of legal sanctions will be considered.

## Legal Sanctions

Where intervention by school and the Education Welfare Team fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, enforcement will be considered. A referral may be made to the Local Authority for enforcement action as appropriate. Parents do need to recognise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Enforcement action may include (but is not limited to):

- A. The issue of a **Penalty Notice**, (*see below for further information relating to Penalty Notices*) which would require payment of a sum of **£80** (if paid **within 21 days** from receipt of the notice), or **£160** (if paid **after 21 days and before 28 days** from the date of receipt).
- B. **Prosecution** in the Magistrates' Court for an **offence** under section 444 of the 1996 Act, for which the penalties on conviction are:
  - a. A fine for up to **£1000** for an offence under section 444(1) or
  - b. A fine up to **£2500** for an offence under section 444(1) **and/or a custodial sentence of up to 3 months**
- C. An application to the Magistrates' Court for a **Parenting Order** of up to **3 months** should the Local Authority be successful in a prosecution under section 444
- D. An application under section 36 of the Children Act 1989 for an **Education Supervision Order** to authorise the Council to take responsibility for advising, assisting and giving directions to you and the Child to secure that the Child is properly educated.

Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under section 444 of the 1996 Act.

## Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of authorised absence (G, O and /or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

- Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice which would require payment of a sum of **£80** (if paid **within 21 days** from receipt of the Notice), or **£160** (if paid **after 21 days and before 28 days** from the date of receipt).
- A **Second Penalty Notice** issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of **£160** per parent, per child.
- If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court.

As stated above if prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, the penalties on conviction are:

- A fine up to **£1000** for an offence under section 444(1) or
- A fine of up to **£2500** for an offence under section 444(1) **and/or a custodial sentence of up to 3 months.**

Penalty's Notices will be issued in accordance with Northumberland County Council's Code of Conduct.

**There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during term time to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours.** In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

Should a penalty notice be issued, it should be noted that this is a direct alternative to prosecution, non-payment of the penalty notice may lead to a prosecution under section 444 of the 1996 Act.

### **Statutory Framework**

This policy has been devised with assistance from the Education Welfare Team. Relevant legislation and statutory guidance have also been considered.