

## **Grand Avenue Primary and Nursery School**

### **A Policy for Pupil Attendance: Punctuality and Absence**

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## **Why does Attendance matter?**

The Education Act 1996 requires 'parents and carers to ensure their child receives efficient fulltime education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by attendance at school or otherwise'. At Grand Avenue we believe that the achievement and maintenance of high levels of attendance is the shared responsibility of parents, guardians/carers, the school and the Local Authority.

## **Introduction**

Good attendance is a priority at Grand Avenue and we aim to set out a framework to support and motivate pupils, encouraging maximum attendance. We aim for effective positive links with parents/carers.

We believe that children learn best if their attendance is high (at least consistently above 97%) and will continue to learn best if absences are kept to a minimum and do not disrupt the continuity of learning. We also believe that children's attendance can be improved if there is an effective partnership between school and parents/carers.

Our Home/School agreement makes reference to the need for good attendance and punctuality. Our attendance records are held centrally on a SIMS system which shows % of sessions attended by each child. This data can be analysed and used to identify patterns of absence or punctuality.

We acknowledge that a poor attendance/lateness record or pattern can give a cause for concern and involve the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Education Welfare Officer in such cases.

## **Aims**

The aims of the policy are to:

- Give clear definitions of authorised and unauthorised absences
- Ensure clear understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Set out record keeping procedures
- Set out criteria for considering requests for authorised absences
- Ensure parents understand their legal responsibility regarding attendance.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised Absence**

This is defined as an absence with permission from the Headteacher. This means that a satisfactory explanation for the absence of a pupil has been provided by the parent/carer (eg illness)

### **Unauthorised Absence**

This is defined as an absence without permission from the Headteacher. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. If the school is unable to establish the whereabouts of the child or if the child has moved to such a distance as to make it impractical to attend, a pupil may be taken off the school roll after a period of unexplained or unauthorised absence after 20 days.

### **Persistent Absentee**

This is defined as a pupil who has been absent for more than 10% of school sessions in an academic year

### **Poor punctuality/non-attendance**

A difference between poor punctuality and non-attendance is recognised. The register is closed 30mins after the beginning of the session. Pupils arriving in school after this time would be deemed absent for that session.

### **Absence regarding exclusion**

Pupils who have been permanently excluded from school will not be taken off the school role until the conclusion of any review or appeal process

### **Lateness**

Pupils are deemed late if not in class at set times. Persistent lateness is noted by Grand Avenue School as more than 4 times a term.

### **Role of the Headteacher**

The headteacher ensures that all parents/carers are aware of attendance procedures and the expectations of the school.

The headteacher also ensures two registers are maintained ; admissions and attendance.

### **Admissions register**

This is known as the school roll and includes all pupils registered to attend. The admissions secretary has responsibility for updating and maintaining this document, keeping the Headteacher informed of changes.

### **Attendance register**

The Attendance register is taken twice a day; using Sims, once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. This is undertaken by the teacher responsible for the class during the session. It is acknowledged here that an attendance register is a legal document and must be completed accurately and on time.

### **School procedures**

The Headteacher, in conjunction with the Deputy Headteacher and office staff monitor the attendance registers daily. Yearly attendance figures are sent to the DfEs . Attendance figures are sent to the LA every half term. The Headteacher will report attendance figures to the Governing Body twice a year.

In cases of persistent lateness for morning registration (ie more than 4 times per term) the Deputy head will contact the parents in the first instance, usually by phone or in person. In the case of older children a meeting is held with the Deputy head to determine the cause of the lateness and to offer advice and support. A record is kept of meetings and phone calls on the school Edaware system. Should the punctuality not improve a letter is sent to parents asking for support and, if deemed necessary a meeting with parents and Deputy head is arranged.

In cases where the school is concerned about attendance rates, ( ie less than 90% per term) the Deputy head will either send a letter home explaining the situation and asking for

support in increasing the child's attendance rate, or contact the parents by telephone to inform the parents of the rate of absence and discuss the concerns.

In cases of persistent absence the Deputyhead will invite parents/carers into school to meet and discuss the reasons for absence and possible solutions. Should the attendance not improve the school will ask for medical evidence regarding any absences due to illness. A record is kept of families who need to provide medical evidence for absence due to illness to be authorised. If no evidence is forthcoming the absence is recorded as unauthorised.

The Deputyhead will alert the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) of any ongoing concerns regarding attendance, at the same time informing parents/carers that this action has been taken. Information sent to the EWO will include attendance rates for previous 6 weeks and action taken by the school to support the family in addressing the situation. A meeting with the EWO and parents is arranged to discuss ways to support the family.

The Deputy head with responsibility for attendance will meet with the EWO every half term to discuss concerns regarding absence rates. Actions agreed will be recorded using the school Edaware system.

### **The Role of the Governing Body**

The Governing Body will ensure that the school prospectus shows the percentage rate of unauthorised absence and the percentage of pupils with unauthorised absence for each year group. The Governing Body will monitor and evaluate attendance figures twice a year.

### **Role of the Class Teacher**

The class teacher will accurately undertake the attendance register twice a day using an electronic register system. Should the electronic system fail a paper copy will be completed. The attendance register will be completed by the teacher and sent to the school office at the beginning of each session. Any letters received explaining absences are dated and signed and sent to the office.

The class teacher will alert the Deputy head to any patterns noted in a pupil's absence.

### **Role of Office Staff**

Office staff will set up an electronic attendance register for each class, completing names, dates and indicating holiday periods. Office staff will ensure that the attendance register for each class is completed at the correct times and returned to the office.

Office staff will keep a record of telephone calls or emails made to school explaining absences, check when explanations for absence are received in writing, adding the correct absence code.

Office staff will file all written letters regarding absence in each child's individual file.

Office staff also contact parents/carers, by telephone, of any pupil absent without reason, on the morning of the absence. If no explanation is forthcoming by 11am, despite efforts made to contact parents/carers, then local Police are notified that a child is unaccounted for.

If no satisfactory reason has been given for absence, even after the child has returned to school, the Office staff will alert senior teachers.

Office staff will maintain data with regards to lateness and absence, informing the Deputyhead of any concerns or patterns

### **Role of the Parents/Carers**

Parents/carers will ensure that their child(ren) of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually. Unless one of the following can be demonstrated the parent/carer is guilty of an offence which is punishable by law, this may include penalty fines.

- That the pupil was absent with leave authorised by the Head teacher
- That the pupil was too ill to attend school
- That there was an unavoidable cause
- That the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance, by the religious body to which the parents and pupil belongs
- That the transport to and from school, agreed by the LA, had not been arranged.

Parents/carers to ensure that their child(ren) arrive at school in time for registration and are collected promptly at the end of the school day.

<b>Year group</b>	<b>School open from</b>	<b>register</b>	<b>collection</b>
Reception	8.45am	8.55am	3.05pm
Year 1	8.30am	8.55am	3.05pm
Year 2	8.30am	8.55am	3.05pm
Year 3	8.30am	8.45am	3.10pm
Year 4	8.30am	8.45am	3.20pm
Year 5	8.30am	8.45am	3.15pm
Year 6	8.30am	8.45am	3.15pm

Children arriving after these registration times need to report to the office and be signed in. Parents are required to inform the school on every day of any absence; this may be done by using the school attendance phone line or by email ( 0208 399 5344 or [office@grandavenue.kingston.sch.uk](mailto:office@grandavenue.kingston.sch.uk) )

Parents are required to request leave from school in writing, in as far in advance as possible, completing the required form and giving a reason for the request.

Parents are reminded to avoid dental and medical appointments during the school day.

Parents are asked to work alongside the school and Educational welfare Officer regarding concerns with attendance and punctuality.

For queries regarding attendance and punctuality parents are asked to contact the Deputy head by telephone or via email . (0208 399 5344 or [office@grandavenue.kingston.sch.uk](mailto:office@grandavenue.kingston.sch.uk) )

### **Role of the Educational Welfare Officer**

The EWO will visit the school each half term to monitor the attendance policy and the marking of the registers. The EWO will also monitor punctuality rates and may take action for any unauthorised lates marked as 'U' code.

The EWO will investigate each referred case of non-attendance/lateness, collating information on dates/times/reasons. The EWO will also meet with the Deputy head to

discuss the action already taken by the school in supporting the family. The EWO will work in partnership with the school and the family to address the concerns. This may include home visits, letters to parents/carers and referral to other support agencies.

In cases where an Educational Supervision Order is to be sought through court, the EWO and the school will agree and put into action an Education Plan for the child aimed at the child returning to school as soon as possible.

Royal Borough Kingston, through the EWO, may prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly.

### **Applications for Absences during Term Time**

Applications for absences during term time to be made in writing to the Headteacher (on a 'Request of Absence during Term Time' application form). The application form must be handed to the office with as much notice as possible and this must be at least four weeks before the proposed absence. The forms are available from the office or school website.

The Headteacher will respond to each request on an individual basis, all requests for absence over two days will be replied to in writing. If a one day request is made the reply may be by telephone call or email.

The law says that parents/carers do not have a legal right to take their child out of school for holidays in term time.

The management and governors of the school can allow parents/carers to take their child out of school providing there are **special and exceptional** circumstances. In such exceptional circumstances leave may be granted for a maximum of five days and only if the child has above 90% attendance at the time of application.

Should a child be involved in a non-sport or film/theatre performance and absence during the school day or from school is required then a meeting with the Headteacher will be held to discuss the absence. The Headteacher is under no obligation to authorise such absences.

Absence will be authorised when it is due to religious observance. These days must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the family belong.

When deciding whether to authorise an absence request the following conditions will be taken into consideration on an individual basis.

- Are there special and exceptional circumstances for this request
- Previous requests for holiday during term time over the past three years
- The child's attendance rate over the past year
- The timing of the request in terms of curriculum need eg SAT's

- The rate of pupil progress
- The age and maturity of the child
- Extenuating circumstances

If an absence is authorised and the child has not returned by the agreed date then continued absence from that date is recorded as unauthorised. Pupils taken out of school for an extended overseas visit cannot be guaranteed a place at school when they return.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the student does not attend school then the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the EWO for legal action.

N.B. requests for absence from school for family holidays are not considered special or exceptional and will not be authorised.

### **Procedures for attending appointments during the school day**

Parents must inform the school, in writing, of the need for a child to leave school during the day to attend a medical appointment. The letter needs to state the nature of the appointment, the time and location of the appointment, and approximate time of return to school. Parents need to sign their child 'out' and 'in' at the school office, on the proforma provided.

#### Background Information

- 90% attendance = ½ day missed every week
- 1 school year at 90% attendance = 4 whole weeks of lessons MISSED.
- Over 5 year at 90% attendance = ½ a school year MISSED.
- Research suggests that 17 missed school days a year = GCSE grade DROP in achievement (DfE). The greater the attendance the greater the achievement.
- If a school can improve attendance by 1%, they will see a 5-6% improvement in attainment (DfE).
- Parents, please help us and your child by ensuring their attendance remains above 95%, allowing them to achieve their potential.

### **The Process of Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality**

Attendance is monitored closely on a half termly basis. Children with attendance of less than 90% are flagged as a concern. Punctuality is monitored regularly and records kept. Those pupils with 4 or more late marks are flagged as a concern. The Deputy head contacts parents asking for support. If there are problems or concerns regarding a pupils attendance or punctuality , advice and support is sought from the EWO.

Attendance data is scrutinised daily by Office manager. Should a child not attend school and no reason has been given by parents/carers the school will contact the family in the first instance. Should a child be unaccounted for by mid morning the office manager alerts the SLT. A decision is then made as to the next steps. Consideration is given to family circumstances and previous records. SPA is alerted regarding unaccounted for absence after 5 days.

### **Attendance percentage is low (less than 90%) over each half term and cumulative over the year**

#### **Stage 1**

An initial letter is sent home to parents outlining the concern and stating the attendance rate. The letter asks for support from home to rectify the situation. A meeting may be held with the Deputyhead.

#### **Stage 2**

Should the situation not improve after the initial letter then families are made aware that involvement with EWO is the next stage. Ways to support the family are explored as well as the legal implications of the situation. A letter maybe sent or a telephone call made or a meeting arranged.

#### **Stage 3**

Should the situation still not improve then advice from EWO is requested from the school. The EWO is given the attendance record and minutes from any meetings with parents. A decision is then made whether a home visit is needed or a meeting in school with EWO present. The EWO may request that absences due to illness are supported by medical evidence.

#### **Stage 4**

If concerns persist the school will make a formal referral to the Educational Welfare Service to deal with the issue.

### **Procedures Students changing school or moving out of the area**

Should a parent wish to remove their child(ren) from our school then a letter indicating this needs to be sent to the Headteacher. The letter needs to state the reason for the change of school, the date the change will occur, the name of the



receiving school and a forwarding address for the family. The school will then inform the EWS of the de-registration.

### **Children Missing in Education**

The school recognises it's role with regards children missing in education. Our procedures are;

- When a family informs school they intend to leave Grand Avenue we ask for details of the receiving school
- After the child has left we contact the receiving school to ensure the child is registered and attending the new school
- If a family gives no details of a receiving school we contact the local authority informing them if this.( this notification is in writing)
- If after 10 days of notifying the authority regarding a child potentially missing in Education, there is no response from the authority the school will contact the authority again.

### **Promoting Good Attendance**

At the end of each term certificates are awarded to children with 100% attendance. These are bronze. Should a child have 100% for two terms then a Silver certificate is awarded. A child attending school for a whole academic year is awarded a Gold certificate.

The class achieving the best attendance during a term will be rewarded with a mufti day.

### **Concluding Statement**

Grand Avenue is committed to working with parents and pupils in the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible, bringing down unnecessary absence rates and instances of lateness thereby increasing the learning opportunities of all children.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

#### **The school must-**

- Keep an attendance register
- Keep an 'on – roll ' register
- Keep accurate records of reasons for absence
- Indicate absences on the attendance register using given codes
- Monitor attendance on a half termly basis
- Inform parents of rates of authorised and unauthorised absences annually
- Send information regarding attendance and absence to the Dfes and LA annually
- Act promptly in cases of non-attendance
- Work in conjunction with EWO with regards to attendance issues

## **APPENDIX B**

Since 2004 Local Authority officers, typically EWOs, headteachers and the police have had the power to issue fixed penalty notices for truancy. A fixed penalty notice may also be issued if a parent or carer fails to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during the first 5 days of an exclusion. There are two levels of fine £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid later than 21 but within 28 days.

Parents or carers who pay the fixed penalty notice cannot later be prosecuted for the offence to which the fixed penalty notice relates.