

Great Linford Primary School

Attendance Policy

**January 2019**

# Introduction

**Regular attendance is important**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student’s absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child’s regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined ‘regular’ attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Great Linford Primary School.

# Aims

This policy outlines the aims and expectations of Great Linford Primary School to support student attendance at school.

# Overview

No student should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.

In the first instance, it is the responsibility of students and their parents/carers to ensure attendance at school as required by law.

Situations beyond the control of students and/or parents/carers may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents/carers, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.

The vast majority of students want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

# Expectations

We expect the following from parents/carers:

* To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually;
* To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day.
* To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child’s performance in school.
* To ensure that they contact the school office either by telephone, gateway or email by 9am to advise the school if their child will not be attending school that day and the reason why

# Responding to Non-Attendance

When a student does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively, for safeguarding purposes.

In cases where a problem may appear to be emerging, the head teacher may telephone the families concerned or invite parents/carers to meetings about attendance discreetly, to discuss the situation with them.

## Recording Student Attendance and Absence

Parents/carers are asked to inform school on each day of absence by 9am if their child is either ill or if they know that their child will be arriving late. If contact has not been made with the school by the parents/carers they will receive a text and an email via school gateway asking them to call to explain the reason for the absence. This will then be followed by a telephone call if a reason has not been provided. Absences not explained can be marked as unauthorised. Should the school not require parents/carers to telephone about absence, e.g. when a child is expected to be absent for some time for hospitalisation etc., the school will inform parents whether they are required to telephone in. An accumulation of unauthorised absences may result in a FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) being issued.

When a student is late into school, i.e. after 8:55am for the morning session or after 1pm for the afternoon, it is important that their parents/carers sign in the student at reception on arrival. They will receive a late mark in the register.

It is essential that our contact details are kept up to date and ask that if parents/carers change either address or phone numbers then these details are communicated to the office so our records can be amended.

If parents/carers fail to communicate the reason for their child’s absence to the school despite contact being made by the school, they may be subject to a home-visit by our Attendance Officer and Family Champion to establish the cause of absence and the whereabouts of the child.

## Absence Management

It is the school that authorises absence. Parents/carers provide a reason for children being absent from School. It is at the discretion of the school as to whether this reason is acceptable or not. The School may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to each Parent or Carer who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child at School. This currently stands at £60 if paid within 21 days, but rises to £120 for those paying within 28 days. Great Linford Primary School follows the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct to ensure a consistent approach across the school.

### Authorising Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a student to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. An absence can only be authorised for the following reasons:

* Illness of the student concerned (not of the parent or another family member);
* A medical or dental appointment (please provide evidence)
* For the purpose of religious observation (one day only);
* It is an educational event / trip;
* Unavoidable cause
* Family bereavements associated directly with the child;
* Fixed term exclusion;
* Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.
* Exceptional circumstances authorised by the Headteacher

It is important that you understand the circumstances when absence in term time will **not** be authorised by the school – such as:

* Immediately before and during assessment periods;

In cases of medical absence, where the school has initially authorised the absence but the issue persists, the school may request the parent to complete the GP stamp form (see appendix 1) or request other GP/medical proof of absence from the parent; this change should be communicated to the parent in writing or included as part of a meeting with the school.

### Holidays and requests for a leave of absence during term time

We advise parents that Great Linford Primary School follows the guidance which can be found at www.education.gov.uk:

Head teachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This, however, will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Parents who wish to request a leave of absence during term time are asked to complete a *Leave of absence* *request form* (ask Julie Newton Attendance Officer for a copy ) and submit any supporting evidence with it. Forms can be obtained from the school office or downloaded from the school website.

Parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. The school works within the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

### Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised under the following circumstances:

* Shopping trips;
* Holidays in term time;
* Minding the house or looking after siblings;
* Lateness after 9.05am when the registers have closed;
* Medical appointments that cannot be verified;
* No reason given;
* School staff have cause to believe that the note or reason given for absence is not genuine valid.

### Attendance Monitoring

Attendance of all pupils is monitored by our Attendance Officer and Family Champion on a weekly basis, every child’s attendance is considered and an overall percentage figure is created based on attendance during this academic year.

### Absence Procedures

Great Linford Primary School applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

#### Attendance Below 95%

Parents will be contacted with a letter (see Appendix – attendance letter 1) to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family via the School’s Family Champion and Attendance Officer.

#### Attendance Below 92%

Parents will be contacted with a letter (see Appendix – attendance letter 2) to outline the decline in attendance and to invite the parent to meet with the Attendance Officer and Family Champion. The purpose of the meeting is to listen to families and their reasons for low attendance. The school will support and work with parents and where possible will find a reasonable solution to improve and increase the child’s attendance. A parent contract will be agreed and signed and future absences will be unauthorised without medical evidence or a GP stamp.

This letter will also identify procedures that will be followed should the attendance figure continue to drop.

#### Attendance of 90% or Less

A child attending school only 90% of the time or less is considered to be persistently absent according to the Government’s expectations of attendance.

If a child’s attendance reaches this level, parents/carers will receive fixed penalty warning letter - letter 3 and invited to an attendance interview to meet with the school’s Attendance Officer, Head Teacher and Governor (see further detail below). The contents of this meeting will be to agree on 100% attendance (regular attendance) and to explain the further actions and processes which will be taken should this not be met. The meeting will inform parents about the next stage of referring their attendance to the Local Authority. A PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence) information leaflet will be offered and explained. A signed attendance agreement of this meeting will be signed by all present.

**Warning Letters and Prosecutions**

A Fixed Penalty Warning letter (letter 3 see Appendix) will be issued where there are at least 10 unauthorised sessions over 12 school weeks. The warning letter is effective for twelve school weeks but the FPN cannot be issued for at least three weeks after the warning to give time for attendance to improve.

For the standard S. 444 (1) prosecutions, there is a requirement for an overall attendance of below 90% with some unauthorised in the last 4 weeks. There are no limits to the number of times a warning letter can be sent. For the higher level, also known as the 'aggravated offence', a 444 (1A) letter needs to be issued. In these cases, there is a requirement for the parent/carer to have knowledge of the offence.

If the issuing of warning letters does not lead to the desired improvement, Colin Mayo (Senior Attendance Officer – Legal Interventions) should be contacted. At this stage, documentary evidence of the interventions already attempted should be provided by the school. If it meets the criteria, a FPN will be issued and a copy sent to the school. If the school would prefer a prosecution and a warning letter had been sent then Colin Mayo will write to the parent/carer(s) and invite them to an Attendance Interview. At that meeting, a review will not be planned, however, if there is no improvement then parents will be written to again and invited  to a PACE interview. Information will be given at the Attendance interview about the PACE interview and the parent(s) right to legal representation.

The PACE interview will be carried out following the guidelines given to Local Authorities by the Department for Education. A police caution will be given to the parent(s) in accordance with Code C of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

Following the interview, the case will be booked into court. Colin Mayo will inform the parents of the court date and write a section 9 statement based upon the PACE interview and other, supporting information, which has been provided by the school and/or other agencies. This 'court pack' will be sent to parents two weeks prior to any legal proceedings.

## Punctuality

### Start of School Day

The school day begins at 8.50 am and it is made clear to students that they must be present to be ready to be registered at that time. In support of this, the playground is open from 8:30 am and is supervised.

The School gates will be shut at 8.50 any child arriving after this time will need to enter the school via reception.

The register for the morning session will be taken at 8.55 am. Students arriving after this time will be marked late on the register. The register will close at 9.05am. Any child arriving after 9.05am will get an unauthorised late mark. When unauthorised late marks are accumulated this could result in a FPN being issued or legal intervention.

Great Linford Primary School actively discourages late arrival at school by challenging those who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation. School will notify parents/carers of students who are persistently late.

The School may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to each parent/carer where the child has persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed. The school works within the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

If a child’s punctuality is a concern, parents/carers will receive a phone call outlining the School’s concerns. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the punctuality figure, an action plan may be set up and parents may be invited into school to discuss the situation in greater detail. Parents/carers will be informed that should their child continue to arrive late for school, they may be subject to a fine. Ten unauthorised lates, where a child arrives at school after 9.05am, after the register has closed, over 12 school weeks may result in a fine. This currently stands at £60 if paid within 21 days, but rises to £120 for those paying within 28 days.

### Persistent Absentees (PA)

A student becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ (PA) when they miss 10% (90% or below) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents’/carers’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

# School Organisation

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to students the importance and value of education. In addition, there may be specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff such as the following:

## Parents/Carers

Great Linford Primary School expects parents/carers to:

* Make contact with school on first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence thereafter, unless the School asks you not to do this, by the methods mentioned in section 5.1;
* Notify the school ahead of pre-arranged medical appointments by the methods mentioned in section 5.1;
* Support their child and the school in achieving maximum attendance.

## Authorised or Unauthorised Absence

### General Absence

**Authorised absence** is where the school has either given approval in advance for a student to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence.

All other absence must be regarded as **unauthorised.**

### Approved Educational Activity

Where students are away from school but are undertaking an approved educational activity, this should be marked in the usual way but are counted as present for calculating data for the DfES absence return. To avoid confusion in emergency situations students who are off site should not be marked as present. The following activities fall within this category:

* Educational visits and activities, both in this country and overseas.

### Other Circumstances

Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Head teacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered.

## Lateness

Schools should actively discourage late arrival by challenging young people who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation.

Registers will remain open until 9.05am. In the event of bad weather this period can be extended at the discretion of the Head teacher.

## Ensuring Student Information is Up-to-date

Schools should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on students and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies are effective. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states ‘Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date’.

Parents/carers are requested to complete an appropriate sheet annually during the Autumn Term. It is the responsibility of the parent / carer to inform the office of any changes as they happen.

GP STAMP FORM

To the GP surgery,

I am supporting and her/his family with school attendance matters. I would appreciate if you could confirm, by surgery stamp, when attends the surgery to see a GP/nurse.

Thank you,

**Date:**  **Surgery stamp**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ parent/guardian give my permission for the surgery to confirm that I visited the surgery with on the above date(s).

ATTENDANCE LETTER 1

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to you as it has been recognised that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has been absent from school for a period of time during this academic year resulting in an attendance rate of\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_%.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined ‘regular’ attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Great Linford Primary School.

Attending school every day is essential for your child and their learning and social development.

Holidays during term time will be recorded as unauthorised absence unless otherwise granted and this will affect your child’s attendance record.

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day we can work with you and your family so please contact Ms Julie Newton or Mrs Carol Mallet to arrange this further.

Yours sincerely

Miss Tara Lovelock

Head Teacher

ATTENDANCE LETTER 2 (PARENT CONTRACT)

I am writing to express my great concern at ----------------- extremely high levels of absence from school and would like to invite you to an attendance meeting on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to discuss this further and to look at how we can improve your child’s attendance.

Great Linford Primary School acknowledges that each family’s circumstances are different and works in partnership with parents to provide the best education for every child

Pupils’ welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment. The Supreme Court Judgement on 6th April 2017 defined ‘regular’ attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Great Linford Primary School

-------------------attendance is currently \_\_\_\_\_%. Action from the authority will be taken where there are concerns over any pupil’s attendance.

Great Linford Primary School will no longer be able to ‘authorise’ ---------------‘s attendance unless a medical note is provided (I have attached a GP surgery record sheet to support this)

This will mean that all absences without medical proof will be recorded as ‘unauthorised’. Persistent unauthorised absences will lead to the local authority prosecuting.

Yours sincerely,

Tara Lovelock

Head Teacher

# SCHOOL ATTENDANCE INTERVIEW

Dear

Attendance Interview

RE: **NAME: DOB: YEAR:**

**REGISTERED AT GREAT LINFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL**

As you are aware the Local Authority is considering pursuing legal proceedings against you in respect of your child’s poor school attendance.

During this term, period \_/09/20\_\_to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the school has been open for \_\_\_ occasions and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_has attended \_\_\_\_ occasions, which is equivalent to \_\_\_\_% present.

Great Linford Primary School wrote to you on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and you were advised that you were liable to prosecution by failing to ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually. You were advised that Great Linford Primary School could no longer ‘authorise absences without a GP medical note. Since that letter and meeting \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_has had ------------further sessions of missed schooling, these sessions are unauthorised as medical evidence/GP appointments were not provided.

Section 7 of The Education Act, 1996 states that you have a legal duty to ensure your child’s regular attendance at school; therefore, if your child’s attendance does not improve the matter will be referred to the Local Authority who will commence legal proceedings. This could mean, under the terms of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, 2003, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to you and a fine of £60 will become payable in 21 days or £120 will be payable after 21 days but within 28 days. A Notice could be issued three weeks after the date of this letter, if there is no improvement in your child’s attendance or punctuality. This warning is in place for 12 (twelve) schools weeks as set out in the Milton Keynes Code of Conduct for their issue.

Alternatively, we will write to invite you to an Attendance Interview or refer the case to the Local Authority who will invite for an Attendance Interview. If there is no improvement after the interview, legal sanctions will commence and the Local Authority will invite you to a PACE interview. You will receive a formal caution interview as required by the PACE Act\* which will lead to a prosecution in the magistrates’ court under Section 444 (1) or Section 444 (1a) Education Act, 1996: if convicted you will receive a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment for an “aggravated” offence or a fine of up to £1000 and a criminal record for a Level 3 offence.

You are now required to attend an attendance interview with our Attendance Officer, Headteacher and Governor on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_am

If this meeting is inconvenient please contact the school office to re- arrange a suitable time. Failure to attend or rearrange your meeting will result in the school having to report this case to the local Authority and a PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence) meeting will be actioned by the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely,

Tara Lovelock

Head Teacher

Date