



The Shrubberies Attendance Policy and Procedure

The School's attendance policy is designed to reflect best practice, statutes and statutory guidance to assist the achievement of the aims, ethos and values of the school. The Headteacher and governors acknowledge the school's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 as well as safeguarding procedures and Keeping Children Safe in Education. This document also refers to School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (May 2022).

Aims

- To achieve an attendance target of 95% or above.
- To work closely with parents/carers to promote good attendance.
- Respond to concerns about levels of absence promptly.
- To encourage parents not to take their children out of school during the term time.
- Support parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly

Purpose

The Shrubberies School wants each and every student to have the best possible attendance at school to enable them to reach their full potential. There is a strong link between good school attendance and achieving good results for children. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less. Children who frequently miss school may fall behind in their work which may affect their future prospects. Absence may also have an effect on friendships. Young people who are frequently absent from school are more likely to become involved in, or be a victim of crime and anti-social behaviour. At The Shrubberies we work closely with families to support them to achieve the best possible outcomes for our children.

Promoting Good Attendance

The register closes at 9.30am. The school recognises that due to the special educational needs and disabilities of some of our students, travelling and transitions can be challenging. Parents can arrange for students to come in after 9.30am if this is required to meet their individual needs. These children will not be marked absent until the agreed arrival time has expired. All pupils should attend school for every session available to them, unless the reason for their absence is one that meets the school's criteria for authorising absences, e.g. illness, non-routine medical/dental appointments, religious observance, educational visits and other unavoidable cause.

Children Missing Education

We have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions. Where reasonably practicable, for



every pupil, we hold an emergency contact number for more than one person. Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. This goes beyond the legal requirement but is good practice. Doing so provides us with additional options for making contact with a responsible adult when a child is missing school and is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern. Where we have concerns about a child, we should use our professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated.

When a student is absent with no authorised reason the School will;

Contact parents on the first day before 10.00am.

Analyse individual pupil data on a fortnightly basis to identify quickly any patterns of absence which cause concern.

We will provide attendance certificates to parents/carers at the end of every half term, so they are aware of their child's attendance.

Our parent support adviser will investigate and resolve unexplained absences within a week.

School attendance will be discussed by the senior leadership for pupils causing significant concern.

For pupils below 95%, a letter will report their attendance figure and asks parents to be mindful of their child's attendance rate. In addition, parents will be offered the opportunity to talk to the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Parent Support Adviser about their child's attendance as a means of support.

Monitoring Attendance

The school recognises that Early Help is essential and, consequently, absenteeism will be considered on an individual basis. This is essential as all of our students have Special Education Needs and Disabilities. All mitigating circumstances such as social care issues, medical issues, social emotional and mental health issues, incidences of bullying etc. will be considered before the three letter system is implemented. The school endeavours to work with the families to support them in developing and maintaining regular attendance.

The Three Letter System (A procedure for school intervention):

Introduction:

The three-letter system is intended to enable the school to continuously and consistently monitor and address poor school attendance. The system offers the school the opportunity to target non-attendance methodically and progressively up to and including the point at which a referral to the Local Authority may be necessary.



This system fulfils the requirements for school action prior to considering legal proceedings (Appendix 1, Flow Chart Gloucestershire County Council, September 2017). The system is based on three model letters which the school can send to parents when there are concerns about any emerging patterns of absenteeism. It is intended to apply essentially to absence which is unauthorised, but with some modification (and appropriate rewording of the letters) it might in certain circumstances be used to target patterns of absence which are authorised but which are beginning to cause concern.

Key Features and Potential Benefits:

- Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher can focus on the attendance of all pupils at least once a fortnight.
- Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher can quickly and easily identify those pupils whose attendance is becoming a cause of concern.
- In most cases Letter 1 brings about a rapid improvement in attendance and no further action is required.
- The system provides a clear record of the school's own efforts to improve attendance should it subsequently be necessary to involve the Local Authority.
- As the Gloucestershire County Council 'School Attendance' leaflet is sent with Letter 2, parents are made aware of the existence and role of the Local Authority prior to any subsequent involvement should this prove necessary.
- The school can readily identify emerging attendance problems and therefore target support accordingly.
- The school builds up a consistent record of their own attendance interventions and is able to ensure that when they do need to involve the Local Authority they do this only when their own efforts have proved unsuccessful.
- The school produces a record of attendance every fortnight for all pupils whose attendance has fallen beneath 94%.
- Families are targeted by the Parent Support Adviser for support.

Letter 1

For those pupils who have been identified for the first time, a copy of Letter 1 is sent to the parents.

Should the pupil's attendance improve but the improvement fail to be sustained, a further copy of Letter 1 may be sent at a later date.

This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the absence letters folder on the network. The file name will indicate Name, Letter Type and Date.



Letter 1

Dear SALUTATION,

I have reviewed our attendance records yesterday for the current academic year. I have noted that <NAME>'S attendance is currently only X%. Please find attached a copy of <NAME>'S attendance record for your information. If the absence is due to medical reasons, please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes or appointment details.

I am sure you are aware that it is important that <NAME> maintains regular attendance, as any absence may interrupt HIS/HER progress and may have an effect on friendships. You should also be aware that regular attendance is a legal requirement.

If there are any particular circumstances that we may not be aware of which are having an influence on <NAME> attending school regularly, or if you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to speak to Clare Jordan or myself.

We will continue to monitor <NAME>'S attendance and we look forward to seeing an improvement.

Letter 2

Following the sending of Letter 1, should the pupil's attendance fail to improve or should it fall to a lower level, a copy of Letter 2, together with a copy of the Gloucestershire County Council 'School Attendance' leaflet is sent to the parent. This letter invites parents/carers to a formal, documented Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) with those who have parental responsibility, as well as the child, in order to draw up a plan, setting agreed targets.

This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the absence letters folder on the network. The file name will indicate Name, Letter Type and Date.

Letter 2

Dear SALUTATION,

I am writing to inform you that <Name>'s attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting <NAME>'s progress and we would like to meet with you.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. There is a risk that if your child's attendance remains at the



current level a referral may be made to the local authority, who will start a legal process. I enclose a leaflet which gives more detail about school attendance. We consider regular attendance to be above 94%.

The Headteacher has requested that you attend an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) to discuss <NAME>'s attendance on the DATE at TIME. If this time and date is not convenient please contact me. If you do not attend the meeting will take place without you and you will be sent the AIM plan.

During the meeting, we will discuss any concerns you may have, so we can continue to support <NAME> in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve HIS/HER attendance. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Letter 3

Should the pupil's attendance still fail to improve or should it fall to a lower level, then a copy of Letter 3 is sent to the parents along with the Gloucestershire County Council 'Penalty Notice' Information leaflet. A record of each letter sent is kept in the attendance folder for each class. The case is formally referred to the Education Performance and Inclusion Team of the Local Authority.

Letter 3

Dear SALUTATION,

I note that there has been no significant improvement in <pupil's name> attendance since <date>.

<Pupil's name> attendance for this academic year has fallen to...%. Furthermore I have not received any satisfactory explanation for <pupil's name> absences.

It has now become necessary to refer <pupil's name> and the concerns around his/her attendance to the Education Performance and Inclusion Team. A member of staff from this team will contact you in due course.

Should you have anything you wish to discuss concerning this matter, I will continue to be available.

Please contact me on the above number should you require an appointment.

Attendance Improvement Meetings (AIM) - Good Practice Guidance September 2017

First Step



Before inviting parents to an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM), the school will have warned in writing of the risk of prosecution. The reason(s) for absence will have been explored by the school through formal or informal meetings possibly including off-site visits. The school will have also explored and tried a range of strategies to improve attendance.

Attendees

The AIM should be attended by parent(s)/carer(s), the student (where appropriate), and sometimes, where appropriate, agencies working with the family (e.g. Social worker, CYPS). Two members of school will be present staff present. This is so that any decisions regarding altered timetables or curriculum, for example, can be made at the time.

Invitation

Parents are invited to the AIM by letter. Arrangements may be made verbally to find a time that suits everyone – but once agreed, details should be confirmed in writing. A copy of the AIM plan should be sent to the parents if they do not attend the meeting. These letters and plans can be exhibited in court.

The meeting

The focus of the meeting should be on how to improve attendance and prevent legal proceedings being initiated. It will focus on what has worked well or had a positive influence. It is an opportunity for everyone to share ideas about anything else that might help, including any new strategies or interventions that may be worth trying. At the end of the meeting, everyone will have a clear plan of the way forward.

Attendance targets

Realistic targets for the period of attendance between the AIM and the review meeting will be set. This helps the student feel that it's achievable. The target will be set according to circumstances. The Gloucestershire County Council AIM Template will be used to record this meeting and to set targets.

Review

There will be a 4 week review period. This will allow us to monitor the impact of any new interventions or strategies that have been tried during the AIM process. The Gloucestershire County Council AIM Review Template will be used to record this meeting, review attendance, review targets and set further targets. The date for the next Review will be set.

Holidays during term time

The Headteacher will only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If the Headteacher grants a leave request, they will determine the length of time that



the child can be away from school. This will not be more than two weeks per academic year. Holidays are not guaranteed and will be considered on an individual basis as, at the Shrubberies, we recognise the social emotional and mental health benefits they provide.

A child missing education for 10 days or more continuous unauthorised absences is classed as a Child Missing Education.

Any child missing for 5 days without contact with parents/carers will be reported to the inclusion adviser of the local authority.

Email it to: attendance@gloucestershire.gov.uk

This policy was written with referral to Guidance for Schools: Securing Regular and Punctual Attendance, A guide for schools and other professionals in Gloucestershire, September 2017, Schools Attendance Guidance, DFE, May 2022 along with Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2022.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually and should any significant amendments will result from whole school discussion. The policy will then be presented to the governing body for approval. This policy was reviewed and updated in September 2022

School actions when considering request for legal proceedings following unauthorised absence

