



Great Totham Primary School Attendance Policy

Key contacts for attendance

All absences should be reported to the office team:

admin@greattotham.essex.sch.uk

Tel: 01621 891091

Miss Cleghorn is the Senior Leader responsible for attendance: deputy@greattotham.essex.sch.uk

Mrs Wilson (Family Support) provides additional regarding attendance:

a.wilson@greattotham.essex.sch.uk

Tel: 01621 891091

Great Totham Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for children to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance 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.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Promoting Regular Attendance

We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, children and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families
- Promote the benefits of high attendance
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law
- Report attendance at February parent consultations and in end of academic year reports
- Contact parents should their child's attendance cause concern

Absence Procedures

We monitor and review all children's absence, and the reasons that are given.

If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school office on the first day of absence before 9.20 am
- Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail or email to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school before we make a decision whether to authorise the absence
- Contact the school on every subsequent day of absence, again before 9.20 am
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested
 - Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons

If your child is absent we will:

- We will contact you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us
- If we are unable to reach parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding
- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be "missing from education"

If absence continues we:

- Will contact you if your child's attendance is causing concern or where punctuality is a concern
- May arrange a meeting to discuss the situation
- May create a personalised action/support plan, such as an attendance contract, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child
- May signpost support to other agencies or services
- Will refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Children who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

The times of the start and close of the day:

Doors open: 8.35am

School gates close and registration: 8.50am

School closes at 3:20pm

- Children arriving after **8.50am** must be walked to the school office, signed into the late book and a reason stated
- At **9.20am** the registers will be closed.
In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence;
- The school may contact parents regarding punctuality concerns;

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with Mrs Wilson or Miss Cleghorn but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Understanding barriers to attendance

We recognise that children may struggle to attend school due to a variety of reasons. We take a compassionate and supportive approach to helping children and families address root causes in line with our whole school approach to Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP).

We encourage any family experiencing difficulties to contact our Family Support Worker, Mrs Wilson who can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support including external partners, where appropriate. In the unlikely event that home and school partnership cannot improve overall attendance then support from the Local Authority Attendance Specialist will be sought.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

DfE guidance:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

Local Authority attendance support services

Local Authority Attendance Specialists work strategically by offering support to schools, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and if attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

School Attendance and the Law

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, rather than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

National Framework for 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 unauthorised 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 for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). 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. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive

a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

Essex penalty notices: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/school-attendance-and-absence/penalty-notices>

There is no entitlement in law for children to take time off during the term 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.”

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child’s overall attendance. Only the headteacher or her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Essex Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

At *Great Totham* 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are events that are “rare, significant, unavoidable and short”. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

In addition, penalty notices will be requested if after investigation the school has grounds to suggest that a false reason for absence has been given for example claiming illness when on holiday.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence.

Deletion from Roll

For any child leaving, other than at the end of year 6, parents are required to complete a ‘Moving School’ form which can be obtained from the school office. This is essential to appropriately safeguard all our children, even those who leave us.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are now **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the children being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that child, and in any event no later than the time at which the child’s name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a child’s name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the child has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

Attendance Data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual children when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit daily attendance data to the Department for Education via the Wonde portal.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Monitoring & Review

The impact of the policy and attendance matters are shared formally with the Governing body every term as a standing item in the Headteacher's report to Governors. The Senior Leader responsible for attendance is present to respond to Governor questions.

This policy was approved by the Governing Body Summer 2024 following a rewrite in line with the updated DfE publication 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' 29th February 2024. This document applies from 19th August 2024.

It will be reviewed every year.

Date	Comments
Autumn 2022	Approved WGB September 29th
Spring 2024	Approved WGB January 16th 2024
Summer 2024	Approved ready for implementation 19 th August 2024 following new DfE requirements.