# 

**GREENWOOD TREE ACADEMY TRUST**

**Attendance Policy**

**Puddletown First School**

Reviewed – **INSERT DATE**(by GTAT)

Reviewed *–* **INSERT DATE**(by LGB)

1. **Introduction**

The attendance of children and young people at school is of vital importance. If children and young people do not attend school regularly their acquisition of skills and knowledge is interrupted and their educational achievements are potentially damaged.

This policy is designed to assist all schools with the advice required whenever dealing with attendance issues and to assist schools in dealing with low/poor attendance in the most effective and responsive way, thus contributing to keeping children safe and improving their outcomes, wellbeing and future prospects.

The policy is not exhaustive and recognises that attendance is a very complex and diverse issue and that each individual’s circumstances will be different.

It incorporates the latest Government guidance, legislation and recommendations.

Each child’s attendance can be summarised as:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **97%+** | Excellent –This will help all aspects of the child’s progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic. |
| **95-97%** | Average. |
| **90%-93%** | Poor – Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. The parents should work with the school urgently to improve the situation. |
| **Below 90%** | Unacceptable – Absence IS causing SERIOUS CONCERN and is known as a PERSISTENT ABSENCE. It is affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting the child’s learning. |

**2. Aims**

This Attendance Policy and Guidance aims to ensure that all schools and the local authority work together to promote the highest levels of regular attendance and thereby help Dorset’s children and young people to achieve their full potential.

**3. Principles**

* School attendance is a high priority.
* All children and young people have a fundamental right to education in order to achieve their maximum potential.
* Good attendance is secured when there is a strong culture of partnership between the Local Authority, School Governors, Head teachers, parents and other partners each with clearly expressed and understood roles and responsibilities. Parents/carers should be fully involved as key partners in securing regular school attendance.
* Early identification, communication and action on attendance problems are critical in achieving successful outcomes.

**4. Statutory Framework**

**Section 7 Education Act 1996**

It is the duty of the parent of every child of compulsory school age**\*** to cause him or her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

* To his/her age, ability and aptitude, and
* To any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

**\****Compulsory school age begins at the start of the term following the child’s 5th birthday and ends on the last Friday in June of the school year when they reach 16. From September 2015 all 16 year olds will be required to continue in education or training until their 18th birthday.*

**5. Roles and Responsibilities**

**5.1 Parents or carers**

Parents or carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned.

**What is expected of parents and carers with regard to attendance?**

* To keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum
* To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence and for ensuring that the absence is covered in writing by a note sent in on the child’s return to school.
* To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness.
* To work closely with the school to resolve any problems that may impede a child’s attendance
* To take family holidays during school holiday periods.
* To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as periods of testing.

**5.2 Schools**

Schools have a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions.

**What is expected of the school with regard to attendance?**

* To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
* To meet the legal requirements set out by Government
* To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance
* To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
* To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the law
* To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance
* To encourage open communication channels between home and school
* To develop procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees
* To develop procedures leading to a formal referral to DASP attendance panel
* To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum

5.4 GTAT Board of Directors?

**5.3 The Local Authority:**

Dorset Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children.

**6. Policy implementation**

**6.1 Registers**

Attendance registers are marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon in all DASP schools. As part of Safeguarding procedures, attendance is monitored daily with phone calls made to understand unreported absences.

**6.2 Recording absences**

Parents are required to offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence and for ensuring that the absence is covered in writing by a note sent in on the child’s return to school. The school will then decide if it wishes to record the absence as authorised or unauthorised based on guidance set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations. These regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during school time **unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

**6.3 Recording lateness**

Registers are marked shortly after the start of the school day at 9:00am. At Puddletown First School, the school gate opens at 8:30am, the children go into their classrooms at 8.45am and the class register will be taken by 9:00am. Pupils who are not present at the start of the school day will be marked absent initially. If they arrive within 10 minutes from 9:00 am this will be changed to ‘present but late’.

Lateness for any pupil arriving after this time will require either a letter or a verbal explanation to a member of staff or the Head teacher and parents will need to register their child at the school office.

All reasons for lateness will be recorded. Although the Head teacher will use her discretion, lateness of more than 30 minutes is likely to be marked as unauthorised absence.

**6.4 Authorised and unauthorised absence**

The law requires that all schools must show the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Authorised absence can be:

* Sickness
* Medical or dental appointments which cannot be arranged outside school hours
* Days of religious observance
* The headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Headteacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. These may be Religious and cultural, leave associated with the armed forces or emergency service. All requests are considered on a case by case basis.

Requests by parents requiring absence due to exceptional circumstances must do so using the school request for absence form at least 2 weeks before the date requested.

Unauthorised absence is:

* Truancy
* Staying at home to look after younger children or sick relatives
* Going shopping or having hair cut
* Any absence which the school has not been informed about, either by letter or telephone
* Any family holiday or leave of absence unauthorised by the headteacher
* Absence for reasons other than medical not agreed as exceptional circumstances.

**6.5 Monitoring attendance**

The Head teacher will review the attendance of all the schools pupils on a regular basis and:

* Parents of children whose attendance falls below 95% per term will be notified by letter informing them of the school’s concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending unless the school is able to identify clear reasons for attendance being below 95%.
* Children with attendance below 95% will be monitored until their attendance returns to a satisfactory level
* Where there is still a concern six weeks after the first letter parents will be invited by letter to a meeting to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the pupil from attending. An individual action plan, developed between the Head teacher, parents and pupil may be set up to support better attendance.
* If the parent/s do not attend the meeting or after such a meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve a formal referral to the DASP attendance board will be made.

**7. Strategies for promoting good attendance and punctuality**

GTAT schools use a variety of strategies to encourage attendance including:

* Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
* Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
* Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports.
* Pupil awareness of the importance of good attendance in helping them to access their right to education will be discussed regularly in class.
* Parents will be reminded regularly in newsletters about good attendance

**8. Actions in cases of poor attendance**

We will work with parents and the Early Intervention Team to improve their child’s attendance. And the DASP attendance panel Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can ‘authorise’ absence. The school will not assess all reasons as ‘valid’.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

Penalty notices for absence from school can be issued by the Early Intervention Team based on requests from schools, the DASP attendance panel and the police.

The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

* Truancy, including truancy sweeps
* Parentally-condoned absences
* Holidays in term time
* Excessive delayed return from extended holidays
* Persistent lateness after the register has closed

A pupil has to be absent from school in one of these circumstances for at least 10 sessions in any term before the issuing of a Penalty Notice can be considered. Any parent in this position would be invited to work with the DASP attendance panel before a decision on a penalty notice was issued.

Following a request by the school for the issuing of a Penalty Notice a check is made by the early Intervention Team that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct. A warning letter will then be sent to parents explaining that unless their child attends full time for the next 15 days a Penalty Notice will be issued. Where a Penalty Notice is issued, each parent is required to pay a fine to the Local Authority.

**9. Children Missing in Education**

The government has placed a duty on local authorities (Education and Inspections Act 2006) to make arrangements to establish (as far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving a suitable education.

Children Missing Education (CME) refers to all children of compulsory school age who are neither on a school roll nor being educated other than at school or who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School and college staff should follow the school's or college's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

# A procedure for CME can be found in the Pan Dorset Pan-Dorset Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policies and Procedures Manual.

# <http://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_ch_missing_care_hme_edu.html>

Schools should put in place appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions.

It is essential that all staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

School procedure for unexplained absence that could be an indicator of a child missing from education