



Attendance Policy

Godinton Primary School

Policy approved by Governor's Strategy Group 16/09/15

This Policy is due for renewal in Term 1 2017 - 2018

Godinton Academy Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with company number 9404783. The registered office is at Lockholt Close, Ashford, TN23 3JR.

1.0 Introduction

Godinton Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all Our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

Ensuring regular and punctual attendance will:

- Give children the best possible start in life
- Help children make the most of educational opportunities
- Instill in children good timekeeping habits
- Prepare children for the world of work

We recognise that parents and carers have a vital role, and a legal responsibility, to ensure good attendance and we identify, investigate and work in partnership with parents / carers, pupils and other agencies to resolve attendance difficulties. We support children who might be experiencing problems that might affect their attendance.

2.0. Absence from School

It is the parents' / carers' responsibility to contact the school **whenever** their child is absent. Parents should inform the school of their child's absence on each day of a continued absence and not just on the first day. The school has a designated telephone line on which parents can leave a message reporting a child's absence.

Teachers take the register at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. This is done electronically. School office staff then review the attendance registers. They identify any children who are absent from school and for whom they have not received a message from the parent/carer.

Office staff will then attempt to make telephone contact with the parent/carer, using all of the contact numbers which the school holds. It is a parent's /carer's responsibility to ensure that contact telephone numbers held by the school are up to date. If the office staff cannot make contact with the parent/carer, they will, if possible, leave a telephone message to explain that the child is absent and asking for the parent/carer to return the call and confirm that the child is safe.

This process will happen each day of a child's absence.

On a child's return to school, the parent must provide a written explanation for the absence. An absence will only be authorised if a legitimate and acceptable reason has been provided by the parent / carer. If no explanation is received, the school will send a note home to parents / carers to request a reason for a child's absence from school. If the parent does not respond, a second enquiry will be sent out. If still no response is provided, then the child's absence is marked as unauthorised.

However, the school is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation as a reason for granting an authorised absence; a letter from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. The school's Attendance Officer will review the given reason for a child's absence and if they feel the absence may warrant being unauthorised; they will refer it to the Headteacher for consideration.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

If the Headteacher decides that an absence is not authorised, the parents will be notified in writing.

4. Low Levels of Attendance

If a child's attendance falls below 90% in any one term, the Attendance Officer will review the reasons which have been given for the absence and, if deemed necessary, will then make telephone contact with the parents/carers to discuss the situation. The child's attendance will then be monitored at monthly attendance meetings held between the Attendance Officer and Headteacher.

If the child's attendance continues at 90% or less for an extended period, the Deputy Headteacher will request a meeting with the parents/carers to discuss the situation and to satisfy themselves that the absences are unavoidable.

If a child's absence continues at 90% or below for more than two terms, the issue may be referred to the Attendance Service.

5.0. High levels of Unauthorised Absence

If a child has unauthorised absence for 5 or more school days in a term, the parents will be asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss and resolve the situation. If a child has continued unauthorised absence after such a meeting, the school will make a referral to the Attendance Service.

The Attendance Service issue a Penalty Notice warning letter, setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded. If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

6.0. Lateness

Pupils arriving after 9am must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will proceed to their classes where they will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

Pupils arriving after 9.30 will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

If a child is frequently late, the issue will be discussed with the parents and may be referred to the Family Liaison Officer. Ten incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed in a term will lead to a referral to the Attendance Service.

The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sent out by the Attendance Service sets out 15 school days during which no lateness is to be recorded. If lateness is recorded during the 15 day period, Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)

7.0. Leave of Absence/Holiday

In September 2013 the Department for Education amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term time will not be authorised.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance, and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, and it amounts to 5 school days or more, the case will be referred to the Attendance Service.

In addition, if the school's Attendance Officer suspects that a particular absence of 5 days or more is a term time holiday which hasn't been disclosed to the school, she will report the matter to the Headteacher. Parents will then be asked to prove that the absence was not a term time holiday. This proof may take the form of a doctor's note if the child has been ill. If the parents cannot prove that the absence was not a term time holiday to the satisfaction of the Headteacher, the absence will be reported to the Attendance Service.

The Attendance Service may then issue a penalty charge. This is payable by each parent of the child. Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

8.0. Reporting Attendance

The school will report a child's annual absence to parents in term 6. This indicates the number of authorised and unauthorised absences. If a parent wishes to discuss this, they can make an appointment to do so with the Headteacher. Parents may request information about their child's attendance at any time.

9.0. Equal Opportunities and Racial Equality (Refer also to these specific policies)

All school policies have an explicit aim of promoting race equality and will be reviewed in terms of their contribution and effectiveness in achieving this aim.

10.0. Children in Care

As for all our pupils, Godinton Primary School is committed to helping every Child in Care achieve the highest standards they can. Staff are aware that Children in Care can be at risk of underachieving at school because they have experienced disruption to their family life and education. Some may have low expectations, poor emotional and psychological health and a lack of family support. Godinton Primary School will support Children in Care with their attendance.

11.0. Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Headteacher and the policy is reviewed by staff and the Strategy Group of the Governing Body.

Appendix 1

Address

Date

Dear

Request for leave during Term Time Child's Name

I have received your request to take out of school for a family holiday between , a total of school sessions.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term time will **not** be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- Agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- Each case will be judged on its merits
- My decision is final
- Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

I have considered your request but I am writing to confirm that on this occasion the leave will not be authorised. If you decide to take out of school the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and if it had involved missing 5 days or more of school a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued would be made. (Please be aware that should have any further unauthorised absence during Term ... and Term which when added to this term time absence totals a period of 5 or more days, this will also require us to make a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

For future reference and your information, Penalty Notices are issued to **each parent of each child** and the amount of the penalty would be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

I appreciate the difficulties which parents face when organising affordable holidays around work and family commitments, but I am afraid that the new legislation means that very few situations will be regarded as exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

J Holditch
Headteacher

Appendix 2

Address

Date

Dear

Request for leave during Term Time Child's Name

I have received your request to take out of school for a family holiday between , a total of school sessions.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term time will **not** be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- Agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- Each case will be judged on its merits
- My decision is final
- Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

I have considered your request but I am writing to confirm that on this occasion the leave will not be authorised. If you decide to take out of school I will make a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to **each parent of each child** and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

I appreciate the difficulties which parents face when organising affordable holidays around work and family commitments, but I am afraid that the new legislation means that very few situations will be regarded as exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

J Holditch
Headteacher