

Gad's Hill School

Attendance & Registration Policy

HOW TO NOTIFY THE SCHOOL OF ABSENCE

Call 01474822366 or email office@gadshillschool.org as soon as possible and **before 9am on each day of absence.**

Give a reason for absence and a date when the child is expected to return.

POLICY UPDATED: **September 2024**

NEXT POLICY REVIEW: **September 2026**

REVIEW SCHEDULE: **Annually or subject to immediate review in line with statutory changes**

STAFF RESPONSIBLE: **Headmaster (Senior Attendance Champion)**

GOVERNOR RESPONSIBLE: **Chair of Safeguarding Committee**

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Gad's Hill School's Senior Attendance Champion

Our Senior Attendance Champion is the Headmaster.

You can contact the Senior Attendance Champion at p.savage@gadshillschool.org

Related Policies

Procedures in the Event of a Missing Child (Staff Handbook; available to parents on request)

Gad's Hill's attendance values

At Gad's Hill we value the educational opportunities for our pupils and expect excellent attendance with pupils taking full advantage of these.

At Gad's Hill we aim to:

- foster a shared understanding of the importance of good attendance across the whole-school community;
- promote good attendance and punctuality;
- reduce unnecessary, unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education;
- build effective working relationships with parents and carers to ensure that every child is accessing education;
- establish protocols to ensure that attendance issues are addressed early and effectively, address unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education where they occur.

This policy meets the requirements of *Working together to Improve School Attendance 2024* outlined by the Department for Education (DfE).

Why Attendance Matters

Positive attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

National data published by the DfE (from 2022) shows that the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%). At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 4 to 2. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

Promoting Positive Attendance

Positive attendance is promoted through the school values, culture and practices. Gad's Hill promotes positive attendance through ensuring that the school is somewhere pupils want to be as a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

Methods of promotion will include letters to parents for 100% attendance, recognition in tutor comments on school reports, the awarding of distinctions for full or improving attendance, and from 2024/25 a House-based attendance competition which will contribute points towards the House Shield.

Roles and Responsibilities

Attendance is the responsibility of all members of the school community.

It is the responsibility of all staff to promote the importance of attendance and respond appropriately where concerns arise, logging this on isams and, where relevant, as part of safeguarding procedures.

Governors will:

- keep up to date with changes in guidance and legislation and ensure that the school fulfils statutory attendance requirements;
- work with leaders to establish policies, protocols and expectations relating to attendance;
- hold Senior Leaders to account for the effective implementation of this policy.

The Senior Attendance Champion will:

- take responsibility for the implementation of this policy, fostering a clear vision and expectations throughout the school community;
- ensure that all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance and are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need
- monitor school-level attendance and absence data
- monitor the impact of any attendance strategies and systems, identifying new approaches where relevant;
- decide whether requests for leave should be granted in exceptional circumstances;
- arrange meetings with parents/carers to address unexplainable and/or persistent absence from education, or on the day of any truancy.

Senior Leaders will:

- support the Senior Attendance Champion in delivering the above

The Assistant Head: Pupil Development will:

- retain an oversight of attendance data across the school, producing termly reports for SLT and governors;
- identify and/or devise systems and interventions to promote and improve attendance.

The Attendance Officer will:

- update registers when notified of absence by parents
- ensure teachers complete registers promptly at morning/afternoon registration times
- sign pupils in and out of school when they arrive late, depart/return from medical appointments etc.

When a pupil is absent, if the school does not receive a message from a parent or carer, the Attendance Officer will use the parental and emergency contact numbers to endeavour to ascertain the whereabouts of the child. This first attempt at contact will be made before 10am (or an hour after an agreed reduced timetable scheduled start). If the child cannot be traced a DSL/DDSL will be informed at 12pm, who will decide the next course of action. This is likely to involve a DSL/DDSL visiting the home address, or contacting police to request a welfare check.

Subject Tutors:

1. Will keep a register of pupils attending each lesson.
2. Record a pupil being 3 minutes or more late in the pupil's planner.
3. Support pupils who have agreed absence in making available (via teams) lesson resources.

Form Tutors:

1. Monitor their tutee's punctuality and issue a detention where two or more lates occur within a week.
2. Monitor their tutee's attendance and liaise with parents/carers where initial absence concerns arise.
3. Alert the Form Tutor and/or Head of Lower/Upper School of any ongoing absence concerns.

Pupils will:

- attend school punctually every day;
- attend all lessons on time;
- engage with any support offered by the school to help them overcome any barriers to attendance.

Punctuality

Pupils must arrive at school on time each day.

The morning register will open at 8.40am and will be kept open until 9.00 am.

Pupils arriving after the register opened but before the register is closed will be marked as late using the appropriate code. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as absent using the appropriate code; however, the arrival time will be noted to ensure that there is a clear record that the pupil is on site.

Pupils must arrive to lesson within 3 minutes of the scheduled start time.

Late Arrival

All pupils who arrive after registration must sign in via the school office.

In the Upper School:

If a pupil arrives late twice in a week, or three times across a half term they will receive a demerit, outside of exceptional circumstance.

Pupils arriving to lessons over 3 minutes from the scheduled start time will receive a note in their planner.

Two or more lateness notes within a week will result in a detention being issued by their form tutor.

If a pupil truant then a demerit and detention will be issued, with parents/ carers informed on the day.

Parents/ Carers will:

- read and agree to the attendance policy
- ensure that their child is in school each day, except for when a statutory reason applies;
- notify the school of their child's absence as soon as possible before 9am by phoning/emailing the school office, giving a reason for the absence and a date when the child is expected to return to school. If a telephone call is not received by 9 am, the staff on reception will try to contact the parents or authorised adults on the contact list to ascertain the reason for absence.
- ensure that leave of absence is only requested in exceptional circumstances and, where possible, advance notice is given;
- book any non-emergency medical and dental appointments outside of the school day, where possible;
- engage with any support offered to address any barriers to their child's attendance.

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Call 01474822366 or email office@gadshillschool.org as soon as possible and before 9am.

Give a reason for absence and a date when the child is expected to return.

Requesting term-time absence

Requests for advanced approval of term-time absence will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents or carers should plan their holidays around school holidays and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

If there are exceptional circumstances, then a request can be made to the school in writing. Requests for term-time absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking the facts, circumstances and any supporting evidence into consideration. Leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances is at the discretion of the Headmaster. This includes the length of time that the leave will be granted for.

Seeking support

If parents would like to request support with attendance, there are several useful contacts within school who are well-placed to provide this:

- Form tutor – specifically for support with removing low-level barriers to attendance such as concerns about homework, friendship issues
- School Nurse – specifically for support with recovery for medical issues
- Head of Lower/Upper School – qualified safeguarding leads who can support with safeguarding concerns that may be preventing a child from wishing to attend school, e.g. bullying
- Director of Inclusion- qualified safeguarding lead/SENDCO who can work with pupils, their family, and relevant further staff to create a Personal Support Plan to manage Emotionally Based School Avoidance.
- Headmaster/ School Attendance Champion – for serious concerns about persistent or severe absence, or concerns relating to members of staff which could be a barrier for attendance

Staff can be contacted by telephone (01474822366) or via email (firstinitial.surname@gadshillschool.org)

Protocols and Procedures

Recording attendance

In line with statutory requirements, we will keep a register of school attendance and ensure that the name of every pupil is entered onto the register, irrespective of whether they are of statutory school age or not.

The school will also record:

- whether the absence is authorised or not (if the pupil is of compulsory school age);
- the nature of any off-site activity;
- any exceptional circumstances that have resulted in an absence.

Authorised and unauthorised absences

We recognise that every absence is unique so the school will consider whether to authorise an absence on a case-by-case basis.

The following will give a guide as to whether the absence is likely to be authorised.

Typical scenarios for authorised absences include:

- illness/ long term medical needs;
- emergency medical and dental appointments;
- religious observance for recognised religious holidays/festivals;
- a pupil taking part in a performance/event;
- pupils on a temporary, part-time timetable, where this has been arranged by the school;
- bereavement (close friend or family member);
- study leave (where this has been approved by the school);

In the examples listed above, the school will still usually need to grant permission for the absence to be authorised.

Unauthorised absence is where a pupil's absence is for a reason that is deemed to be unacceptable by the school or where the reason for a pupil's absence has not been provided and cannot be established. In the case of unauthorised absence, the school will follow Department of Education guidelines [Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2024](#), including, where relevant, the issuing of penalty notices.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe pupils who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors. There is no single cause for EBSA and there are likely to be various contributing factors for why a young person may be finding it difficult to attend school. These can include, but are not limited to, uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school, such as feelings of anxiety or low mood; situations that the child might perceive as stressful, such as academic demands, social pressures and/or aspects of the school environment; or separation anxiety from care givers.

The school recognises that whilst EBSA can result in persistent or chronic absence, the difficulties can also be faced by a pupil who is currently managing with sporadic attendance, missing the odd day here and there or particular lessons, or may only be able to attend school when provided with a high level of support and a modified timetable.

In following the school Attendance Policy, staff will ensure that pupils know that staff care about them, empower and involve them in planning what support is needed to enable them to access school successfully.

Managing persistent and severe absence

We will identify and address instances of persistent and severe absence. Persistent absence is defined as a pupil who is absent for 10% or more of scheduled sessions. Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of scheduled sessions.

To respond to persistent and severe absence, the school will seek to identify and address root causes. As there are a wide range of reasons for this occurring, the response will be determined on a case-by-case basis. However, typical strategies will include:

- supporting the pupil and their family to understand the reasons that attendance is important and the possible implications of repeated absences;
- enhanced monitoring of individual pupils where attendance is (or could be) an issue;
- holding meetings with parents or carers to discuss concerns;
- offering specific pastoral support using the resources and staffing already available within the school;
- working with external partners to address the underlying factors that are causing the absence.

In developing this support, the school will:

- Work to understand the individual needs of the pupil and family;
- Work in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place, facilitating any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying issues;
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments would be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parent/carers;
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by short term medical needs or Emotionally Based School Avoidance;
- Co-create with the pupil and family a Personal Support Plan, which considers individual risk and resilience factors, for those pupils experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance;
- Work with other the local authority and/or other agencies where external support is needed (and available);
- Follow a graduated approach to regularly review and update the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

If avenues of support are not successful and attendance contract will be drawn up. Where necessary, the school will issue a Notice to Improve and/or penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour. The school will, if it vies necessary, intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years. If there are any changes in legislation or government updates, the policy may need to be reviewed before the next scheduled update.