

# The Good Shepherd Multi Academy Trust

## Attendance Policy



### The Good Shepherd Multi Academy Trust

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Date of Adoption</b>    |  |
| <b>Reviewed</b>            |  |
| <b>Date of Next Review</b> |  |
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|                            |  |

## **1. Values**

Every member of the Trust family of schools will be valued and encouraged to fulfil their potential. In our Trust we believe:

- Everyone has something to offer
- Trust, honesty, empathy and social responsibility are the Christian values that frame our work
- We are here for the whole person, spiritually, morally, educationally and socially
- In working with transparency and openness

## **2. Aims**

The Trust schools aim to meet their obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

They will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. The Trust and our schools fully recognises their responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at Trust schools and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our schools through each individual school website.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Trust directors, Headteachers and members of the Local Governing Body will work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

## **3. Legislation and Guidance**

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. It meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

#### **4. School Procedures**

##### **4.1 Attendance Register**

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See **Appendix 1** for the DfE Attendance Codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Parents must be aware of the start time for the morning and afternoon sessions of the school their children attend. Pupils must arrive in school by the start of registration on each school day. The register for the first session will be kept open for half an hour, after which time pupils will be marked as absent. The register for the second session will be taken at start of the afternoon session.

##### **4.2 Unplanned Absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Unplanned absences must be notified by telephoning the school office.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

##### **4.3 Medical or Dental Appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Absences for medical and dental appointments must be notified in advance by letter or by telephoning the school office.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 5.

#### **4.4 Lateness and Punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Pupils who arrive after the close of register automatically lose a half-day's attendance.

Persistent lateness has a detrimental effect on pupils' attainment and progress and can also affect friendships. Pupils arriving late also disrupt lessons for staff and other pupils as they have to "catch up". Consequently, persistent lateness is treated seriously and parents of children who often arrive late will be contacted by the school so that this can be addressed.

#### **4.5 Following up Absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If a pupil has not arrived in school by close of register then the school office staff will telephone parents (in order of priority as recorded on the school's data management system) to check the reason for the pupil's absence. If there is no response, staff will leave a message asking for parents to contact the school. If a response is not received, any other contact numbers will be called. In the interests of safeguarding the pupil, school staff may visit the pupil's home address or request that other agencies (the police/children's services) follow up the unexplained absence.

Whilst the above sets out the standard procedure for safeguarding pupils, where there are particular concerns about the safety of a child, the school may expedite these procedures, e.g. calling before the close of register; calling all available contacts from the information management system; visiting the pupil's home address

Schools have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing from education (CME). The Attendance Advisory Service staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

#### **4.6 Reporting to Parents**

Pupils' attendance will be reported to all parents termly, using a printout from the data management system. An overall attendance figure for the academic year will be recorded on pupils' annual reports to parents.

### **5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

#### **5.1 Granting Approval for Term-Time Absence**

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for granting approval for the term time absence and there WILL be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations the headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 4.2 and 4.3
- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if the headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement (documentary evidence of this event will be required)
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs"; If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

#### Flexi-home schooling:

Trust schools **do not** have to agree to flexi-home schooling. However if the individual school LGB and headteacher do agree to receiving requests for flexi home schooling then these will only be allowed where there is a clear benefit to the pupil concerned and only then if the pupil's attainment and progress does not suffer.

- Applications for flexi-home schooling must be submitted in writing to the headteacher
- Flexi-home schooling can only be authorised by the headteacher in consultation with the LGB.
- There should be a written agreement between the parent(s) and the school in any flexi-home schooling arrangement, including expected targets.
- Children must be marked as absent when they are educated at home.

- A flexi home schooling agreement can be rescinded at any time by the school, should the pupils attainment and progress not meet expected targets or the school have any other concerns about the arrangement
- Agreement to the flexi home schooling of one child does not automatically mean the agreement of similar arrangements for other children in the same family or other children at the same school

Examples of types of absence that are **not** considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the headteacher
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (After the close of registration)
- Truancy

## **5.2 Legal Sanctions**

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the Local Authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

## **6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

Trust schools will use a range of strategies to promote good attendance, which could include some or all of the following examples:

- **Individuals:**
  - ✓ pupils can earn certificates for 100% or improved attendance or punctuality
  - ✓ pupils receive a raffle ticket for each week when they have full attendance. At the end of each half-term, winning tickets are chosen and prizes are awarded. Obviously, the more tickets a pupil has, the greater chance they have of winning.
- **Classes :** The class with the best attendance or the fewest late arrivals (depending on your priority) each week, month or half term should receive a reward:
  - ✓ The reward can be something which is free such as being first in for lunch for a week. The best attending class could have extra free time or be first out for

break by 5 minutes. You may be able to identify a reward which would be particularly valued by your pupils or you may choose to ask your pupils what they would like to receive as a reward.

- ✓ The school could purchase a mascot such as a large cuddly toy which is named by pupils or a trophy, and the class with the best attendance is able to keep this in their classroom until another class has better attendance.
- **Assemblies:** There will be regular assemblies illustrating the lifelong benefits of good attendance and punctuality habits
- **Communicating with Parents:** Termly/half-termly attendance summaries will be issued to parents so that they have a clear picture of their children's attendance. Regular information about the school's overall absence figures, the benefits of good attendance and punctuality and the consequences of poor attendance and punctuality. Working with parents to help them improve their children's attendance and punctuality.

## **6.1 Home School Attendance Agreements**

Trust schools can use home/ school attendance agreements as a strategy for promoting good attendance. These are agreements which clearly outline the responsibilities of the parents and the school in ensuring good attendance. **(See Appendix 2 for template)**

## **7. Attendance Monitoring**

Pupil absence is monitored on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's attendance falls below the school's target, parents will be contacted by letter to alert them to the problem and to offer advice. If a pupil's individual attendance is equal to or below 90%, the pupil will be classified as a **persistent absentee** and plans will be put in place with parents so that attendance can rapidly improve.

If a pupil's attendance falls below the school's target, parents will be contacted by letter to alert them to the problem and to offer advice (Step 1). Where there is no improvement, a second letter will be sent (Step 2) inviting parents to a meeting with the headteacher to agree strategies for improving the pupil's attendance. If a pupil's individual attendance is equal to or below 90%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee, a further letter will be sent (Step 3) and plans will be put in place with parents so that attendance can rapidly improve.

**Please see Appendix 3 for sample attendance letters (Steps 1, 2,& 3).**

**Please see Appendix 4 for an overview of how attendance can affect children.**

If after contacting parents a pupil's absences continue to rise, consideration will be given to involving the access and inclusion staff from the Local Authority.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with our local governing body.

## **8. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **8.1 Trust Directors**

Trust Directors are responsible for monitoring the Trust's overall attendance figures as well as monitoring each school's attendance figures against its agreed targets. The Trust

Directors are also responsible for ensuring that the Local Governing Bodies and headteachers of each school take appropriate and effective action, in line with this policy, to improve poor attendance.

## **8.2 The Local Governing Body**

Each Local Governing Body is responsible for setting annual attendance targets and monitoring attendance figures against those targets for their whole school on at least a termly basis. The LGB also hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

## **8.3 The Headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the schools Local Governing Body.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and works with the Local Authority in issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

## **8.4 The Attendance Administrator**

The administrator:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when attendance is a concern

## **8.5 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

## **8.6 Office staff**

Office/reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record information on the school system.

## Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

| Code | Definition                    | Scenario  |
|------|-------------------------------|---|
| /    | Present (am)                  | Pupil is present at morning registration  |
| \    | Present (pm)                  | Pupil is present at afternoon registration                                      |
| L    | Late arrival                  | Pupil arrives late before register has closed                                   |
| B    | Off-site educational activity | Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school   |
| D    | Dual registered               | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered  |
| J    | Interview                     | Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment    |
| P    | Sporting activity             | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school |
| V    | Educational trip or visit     | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school     |
| W    | Work experience               | Pupil is on a work experience placement   |

| Code                      | Definition                        | Scenario   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Authorised absence</b> |                                   |  |
| C                         | Authorised leave of absence       | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| E                         | Excluded                          | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made         |
| H                         | Authorised holiday                | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances   |
| I                         | Illness                           | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness        |
| M                         | Medical/dental appointment        | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment                                |
| R                         | Religious observance              | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance                      |
| S                         | Study leave                       | Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations           |
| T                         | Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence | Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school  |

| <b>Unauthorised absence</b> |                            |   |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| <b>G</b>                    | Unauthorised holiday       | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school   |
| <b>N</b>                    | Reason not provided        | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| <b>O</b>                    | Unauthorised absence       | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence   |
| <b>U</b>                    | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed   |

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Definition</b>                                 | <b>Scenario</b>  |
|-------------|---|--|
| <b>X</b>    | Not required to be in school                      | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend   |
| <b>Y</b>    | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| <b>Z</b>    | Pupil not on admission register                   | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school  |
| <b>#</b>    | Planned school closure                            | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day  |

## Appendix 4: Home/School Agreement – Attendance



The Good Shepherd  
Multi Academy Trust

**School  
Logo**

The Trust schools aim to meet their obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

They will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

| <b>The Parent will:</b>   | <b>The School Will:</b>  |
|---|--|
| ensure that children arrive to school on time, every day, properly equipped and ready to learn            | provide a safe learning environment where children feel welcome and valued   |
| inform the school by 9.00am on the first day of any absence   | contact parents promptly if a pupil does not arrive in school and there has been no prior arrangement for this       |
| ensure that all holidays are taken during school holiday times  | ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place, to best meet the individual needs of all students           |
| contact the school if a child does not want to attend school for any reason so that this can be addressed | keep families informed of their child's attendance, and respond promptly and professionally to contact from families |

**Name of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year Group:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Parent)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Headteacher)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3: Letters to Parents

### Step 1 Letter

Parent/Carer of

Dear ?

Attendance in school is vital. Not only does good attendance give your child the best chance of learning and making friends but it also forms good habits for the future at college, university or in the workplace.

Unfortunately, ?'s attendance currently stands at ?%, which is significantly below our whole school target of ?%. If attendance continues to remain at this level or drops lower we will become concerned about the potential impact on ?'s progress and wellbeing.

If your child is feeling slightly unwell please encourage them to come in; coughs, colds, headaches and minor pain can be managed in school. If your child has had medicine prescribed by a doctor, we can administer this as long as you complete the relevant forms at reception. If your child becomes too unwell to remain in school, rest assured we will contact you and arrange for him/her to be collected.

If ? is experiencing any problems in school that are affecting attendance please contact me immediately to discuss this.

Yours sincerely

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Headteacher

## Appendix 3: Letters to Parents

### Step 2 Letter

Parent/Carer of

Dear ?

Attendance in school is important. Not only does it give children the best chance of learning and making friends but it also forms good habits for the future at college, university or work.

Unfortunately, ?'s attendance has now fallen to ?% which is substantially below the school target level of XX%.

I would remind you that it is your legal responsibility to ensure that your child receives a full-time education and that you must contact the school at the earliest opportunity if he/she is absent from school. A reason for absence from a parent/carer is always required for safeguarding purposes.

We will be monitoring ?'s attendance regularly and hope to see a significant improvement during this term. If there is no improvement we will have to refer you to the local authority who may consider issuing a fixed penalty notice. For information on legal action to enforce school attendance please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

Yours sincerely

XXXXXXXXXX

Headteacher

## **Appendix 3: Letters to Parents**

### **Step 3 Letter**

Parent/Carer of

Dear ?

#### **Non-Attendance at School**

Further to our recent correspondence regarding ??? attendance, we have unfortunately not seen any improvement since the last letter and his/her attendance is currently at ??%; as you are aware XX% is the target attendance. ???'s attendance is now a cause for real concern. Children with attendance below 90% are classed as persistent absentees and schools have a duty to make every effort to improve this. Attendance below 90% means that your child is missing at least the equivalent of one full day per fortnight. This will definitely have a detrimental effect to his/her learning and social development.

I would like you to attend a meeting to discuss ways forward to improve ???'s attendance and I have made an appointment for ?? at ??. If this appointment is not convenient, please contact the school office to arrange a more suitable date and time.

Failure to attend the meeting or to contact us will be considered as you failing to work with us to improve your child's attendance. This could involve us asking for the Local Authority to become involved and to make visits at your home to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely

XXXXXXXXXX

Headteacher

## Appendix 4: Attendance Percentage Overview

|   |                             |   |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
|    | <p><b>Above<br/>97%</b></p> | <p><b>Less than 6 days absence a year</b><br/>Excellent attendance! Pupils with this attendance have the best chance of achieving their full potential and getting the most out of school.</p>  |
|    | <p><b>95%</b></p>           | <p><b>Less than 10 days absence in a year</b><br/>Pupils with this attendance are likely to achieve their target grades and are able to access most of what school has to offer.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>90%</b></p>           | <p><b>20 days absence in a year</b><br/>Pupils with this attendance are missing a month of school per year and will fall behind in Maths, Literacy and other subjects; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best.<br/><br/>Attendance which drops below 90% is classed as Persistent Absenteeism and may be the trigger for legal action.</p> |
|  | <p><b>85%</b></p>           | <p><b>30 days absence in a year</b><br/>These pupils are missing 6 weeks of school a year. It will be very difficult for them to keep up and achieve their best. The school will meet with you and involve the Local Authority to make sure that attendance does not dip further.</p>   |
|  | <p><b>80%</b></p>           | <p><b>Pupils with this attendance are missing a day for every week of school</b><br/>It will be impossible to keep up with school work. Parents of pupils with this level of attendance will have been referred to the Education Welfare Officer at the Local Authority. A Penalty Notice is likely to be issued.</p>                                   |