Attendance Policy

Durham Gilesgate Primary School

Academic Year

2026 / 2027

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Author of document:	Mark Turner	**Job role:**	Headteacher
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24/25 Policy	Sept 2024	Full revision in light of DfE and LA guidance	1	
26/27 Policy	Sept 2026	Add EWO details and monthly awards	2	

Attendance key contact List

Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.

Name	Role	Contact details
Mark Turner	Head Teacher and attendance champion	gilesgateprimary@durhamlearning.net
Lisa Blondrage	School Office Administrator for attendance	gilesgateprimary@durhamlearning.net
Michael Bulmer	Education Welfare Officer (Education Five)	M.Bulmer259@gilesgatepri.org.uk
Sarah Tallentire	Special Interest Governor for attendance	s.tallentire500@gilesgatepri.org.uk

If a pupil is going to be absent from school the person who should be informed is: L Blondrage, Admin Staff school office or via 0191 3847284, voice mail facility is available.

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Class Teachers	Class Teachers	0191 3847284
Lily Morris	Positive Futures Advisor	l.morris102@gilesgatepri.org.uk
Mark Turner	Head Teacher	m.turner100@gilesgatepri.org.uk
Michael Bulmer	Education Welfare Officer (Education Five)	M.Bulmer259@gilesgatepri.org.uk

Help & Support

On a day to day basis parents are able to discuss attendance issues with their class teacher or with staff in the school office. Depending on the nature of your enquiry you may be passed onto Lily Morris or Mark Turner for advice and support.

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupils whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. **It is vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. A pupils place in schools is at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treated as a safeguarding issue.

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

Durham Gilesgate Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the Working Together to improve school attendance statutory guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. We expect everyone to attend every session they are able to, to benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer.

Communication is vital to ensure we are able to work with our parents and pupils and support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date and are communicated to school as soon as possible as it is extremely important school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The school day

The school day is from 8:50 to 3:20

Children in EYFS (Two Year Olds, Nursery and Reception) enter through the EYFS porch where staff will meet and greet families. Parents and Children can congregate and line up on the paved area in front of the EYFS entrance prior to 8:50.

Children in Key Stages 1 and 2 walk through the nursery garden and onto the yard where staff will meet and greet them. The gates to the nursery garden will be opened from 8:50, prior to this children and parents can line up on the path leading to the gates.

Some children with additional needs might enter through the main entrance with prior agreement from school staff.

Registration is from 9:00 to 9:05 am The register will close at 9:15 am. Pupils must be in school to be marked present, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended).

Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed (between 9:05 and 9:15) will be recorded as late (L code).

In line with government guidance the registers will close no more than 30 minutes after the registration period ends. We have chosen 9:15 as our closing time because we believe that it is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any day can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class.

The beginning of the day is often when children take part in some intervention work such as gross or fine motor skills, practising handwriting or responding to marking and making corrections to previous work. Missing out on any of this work impacts negatively on the attainment of children. Pupils that are late beyond 9:05 often miss out on the start of the lesson and find it hard to catch up and know what to do when they enter their class.

Pupils who arrive after 9:15, when the registers close, will be recorded as a U code unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact Mark Turner if there are any issues which are affecting a pupil's ability to attend school on time.

If your child is late for school:
All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the electronic register.

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions
In the first instance you will be contacted via telephone in order to highlight the unauthorised lateness and to explore any support needed or actions you can take to improve punctuality.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality

If unauthorised late attendance continues you might want to consider using the school breakfast club or using your family or friends to help walk your child to school on time. If there are circumstances which are impacting on your morning routine the Early Help is an option which can be explored so that you have support to improve punctuality.
Because lateness after the registers close is an unauthorised absence then a possible referral to the local authority for action will be considered if there is no improvement.

Term dates and planned Inset days
Term dates, teacher training days and school holiday dates can be obtained from the school office and are available on the school website.
2025-2026 Term Dates and Holidays PDF

Leave of Absence in Term Time
Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission must be requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with, completing the form which is available from the school office or via the school website.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

How We Manage School Absences and Advice for Parents regarding Absences

On the first day of absence
If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to contact the School by phoning and either giving the reason to the office staff or by leaving a voice mail message providing a reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home to find out why the pupil not in school. We will do this by telephone and then by text message if we cannot contact you on by phone.

Medical and Dental Appointments
Appointments for the dentist and GP etc should be made outside of school time where this is possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should do. If you child has a medical appointment in the afternoon they can still attend school in the morning and you can collect them for their appointment.

Headlice
If your child has headlice you do not need to keep them off school for a full day. If you notice this in the evening after the pharmacist has closed or in the morning, the best thing to do is to call in at the

pharmacist and pick up some treatment then treat your child's hair and bring them to school mid-morning. This will be recorded as C code (Other authorised circumstance). Sometimes we might spot headlice or suspect that your child had headlice because they are scratching a lot. In this case we will contact you so that you can be prepared to call in at the pharmacist at home time. There is no need to pick your child up from school to treat them.

Sickness and Diahorrea

Both of these illnesses can be contagious and can quickly spread though the school community, particularly in the autumn term when 'winter illnesses" are circulating.

If your child is sick and they have an associated high temperature or other symptoms which would make you suspect that it is caused by a virus then we request that the child stays at home for 48 hours after the last episode of vomiting. This helps to control the spread of the virus. If your child is sick because they have just been to a birthday party and have eaten too much cake, or because they have a sensory intolerance to certain foods than they may attend school as normal.

If your child has diahorrea we request that the remain at home for 48 hours after the last episode to prevent the spread of the virus.

COVID

There are still variants of COVID circulating in the world population. The current guidance for school aged children is that we treat COVID in the same way as any other respiratory illness. If your child is not well enough to attend then they remain at home to recover, there is no requirement to buy COVID tests.

If your child is well enough to attend school they must do so, if they have asthma or any other underlying respiratory illness please inform us and make sure that we have an in date inhaler.

Illness Absence and Periods of extended absence

We do appreciate that children can be ill and in most cases childhood illness is mild. Your child can come to school if they have a cold or if they are feeling under the weather. In these cases, send your child to school and let us know so that we can keep a special 'eye out' for them. If they have tooth ache you can give them paediatric paracetamol and let us know. We can now store paediatric paracetamol in school and administer this with your permission during the day which means your child can attend and you do not have to come back at mid-day to administer medication.

Sometimes your child might present with a high temperature or viral illness which means they are too ill to attend school. The NHS provide a useful guide for parents which is available on line; search for Is My Child Too Ill for School or follow this link Is My Child Too Ill For School?

School has access to information from the Public Health Agency around illness which is contagious and which means that a child cannot attend school for a period of time. We can provide this advice when you tell us about your child's illness and let you know if they should attend or not.

If your child is ill for longer than two days we would expect you to contact us on the third day and then every other day to provide an update regarding their illness. This includes contagious illness where your child is not allowed to attend school.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some

circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences. This might be your appointment card from the GP or a photograph of medication (with the prescription label) that has been prescribed.

In some cases where illness is persistent or where a child is ill for the same reasons we will ask you to consider getting support from the School Nurse.

No reason for absence provided

If we have not been provided with reasons for absence and attempts to contact you have not been successful then in the first instance the absence will be recorded as an N code. All N codes will be followed up and if a valid reason for absence is provided the N code will be changed to reflect that reason. If we cannot contact you on the second day we will escalate our efforts to contact you by following family contacts that you have provided. If there are no family contacts or if those contacts fail to help in speaking to you we will treat the absence as a potential safeguarding concern. **We will either make a home visit or request that Police carry out a welfare check.**

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence it will be recorded as unauthorised; O code. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate and if so will refer the matter to the local authority.

Supporting Attendance

We want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

In order to promote attendance and punctuality the school will use the following rewards:

- Each week children with 100% attendance will receive a golden 100% attendance sticker.
- We will present a weekly trophy for the class with the best attendance.
- Children who have good attendance or who have attendance that has improved will receive a letter from the Headteacher praising their attendance.
- We will give monthly attendance certificates out for children with good attendance that month

In order to promote attendance and punctuality the school will implement the following processes:

- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences
- 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 our families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters, website, or letters home

All processes and associated actions will be applied in line with the equalities duty.

Attendance data
The attendance registers are held electronically and information from them is shared with the DfE and the Local Authority.

We analyse attendance data and track the attendance of each child in school. This means that we can quickly pick up on repeated illness absences, punctuality issues or unauthorised absences.

We will use attendance data to consider different pupil cohorts such as all pupils, those who have free school meals, those with special educational needs or disabilities, pupil premium, children who have a social worker or are looked after etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will communicate information to families, the Local Authority and DfE as required. In some cases where a family is accessing external support attendance data will be shared with other agencies that support the family.

Absence Concerns
Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in their child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so people can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

Persistent absence
Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent. We spot this through our tracking of individual attendance. If your child's attendance is 90% or below you will be contacted if there are not good reasons to explain those absences.
This may lead to an Attendance Support Meeting where we identify the issues and look for strategies that will help improve attendance and get it back above 90%. In some cases strategies might include accessing other services such as Early Help.

Severe absence
Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent.
If your child's attendance is lower than 70% an Attendance Support Meeting will be scheduled and support will be offered to families in conjunction with the Local Authority. We may be taking advice from colleagues in the Attendance Improvement Team to ensure that our support is targeted and helpful to families

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention
To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 school-week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, this should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Penalty Notice or Offence investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. (DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. (DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet)

If penalty notices are not paid then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence.
If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

Pupils with specific needs

This policy accounts for the specific needs of individual pupils and pupil cohorts, this policy will be applied fairly and consistently and consider the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

In development and implementation of the policy, we have considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding
Behaviour
Special Educational Needs
Equalities

APPENDIX 1

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Expect

Statement of expectation –

We all want the best for pupils and therefore aspire to have the highest attendance possible for each individual to allow them to access the education on offer to them in a culture they feel safe, part of the community and where they want to be.

Monitor

We will rigorously monitor and track attendance to identify patterns at both and individual and cohort level so that actions can be planned to improve attendance.

Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

All school, staff will support and encourage good attendance and will communicate with you. A quick chat about attendance at home time or during a parent consultation meeting will not be unusual and is your opportunity to let us know if there are things you need help with. Staff will listen to and understand any barriers there are to achieving good attendance.

Facilitate support

Mark Turner is the School Attendance Champion and it is his responsibility to track attendance and formalise meeting with parents where attendance needs to improve. In school Lilly Morris or Mark Turner can help you further and signpost you to external services and support if you need them.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, we will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. This may include formalising support through an attendance contract.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.