



Student Attendance Policy

1. Aim

The aim of Gildredge House Student Attendance Policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all students. Regular attendance at school is key to steady progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its Student Attendance Policy is adhered to. Children returning from an absence are unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching. Teachers then have to give more time to help individual children catch up on missed work. This poses a potential risk of the under-achievement of other students in the class. This is something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

Gildredge House takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, students and all staff members to ensure that students are attending school as they should be. The school endeavours to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support. The school's key priority is to ensure the children are as successful as possible, able to reach their full potential and gain maximum benefits from their educational experience.

2. Legal Framework

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude; and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age –

- (a) when he attains the age of five, if he attains that age on a prescribed day, and
- (b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his attaining that age

Prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March.

A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year (the last Friday in June) –

- (a) if he attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following;
- (b) if he attains that age on that day; or
- (c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his attaining that age.

From September 2015, Section 2 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requires a young person to continue in education or training until their 18th birthday.

Gildredge House is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this Student Attendance Policy accordingly.

3. Key Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Board

As part of the school's whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the Governing Board will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff;
- annually review the school's Student Attendance Policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents and children to implement the policy effectively;
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children and staff;
- work out appropriate and accurate annual attendance numbers and future attendance targets, and submit these to the LA within an agreed timescale each year;
- take time at Governors' meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year;
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site;
- ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff;
- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future.

Senior Leadership Team

As part of the school's whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promote good attendance to students and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families;
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement;
- coordinate with the Governing Board to monitor the implementation of the Student Attendance Policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full policy review;
- ensure that all relevant staff are up-to-date with the school's Student Attendance Policy, legislation and government guidance, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues;
- ensure that legislation and government guidance on attendance is complied with and that they (the Senior Leadership Team) are up-to-date with any legislative changes and how to implement them.
- nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this role;
- report to the Governing Board annually on attendance records, data and provision;
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively;
- develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend;
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.

Teachers and Support Staff

As part of the school's whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promote good attendance to students and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families;
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement;
- ensure that they are fully aware and up-to-date with the school's Student Attendance Policy, legislation and government guidance, and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue;
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily;
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed;
- work with external agencies to support students and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Parents

As part of the school's whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, parents are requested to:

- engage with their children's education - support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school;
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home;
- encourage and support their children's aspirations;
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school and include an expected date for return (Section 5);
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as making medical and dental appointments outside school hours;
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises;
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance;
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance;
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the Head Teacher (Section 5);
- sign and comply with the Gildredge House School Agreement (as part of the admissions process).

Students

As part of the school's whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, students are requested to:

- be aware of the school's Student Attendance Policy, and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to students through the school staff, their parents and the school timetable;
- speak to their Form Tutor, Head of Year or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance;
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable;

- bring a note of explanation from their parents to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen;
- follow the correct school procedure if they arrive late (Section 5). Students are held responsible for this and it is made clear to all students what this procedure is by their Form Tutors. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation;
- sign and comply with Gildredge House Home School Agreement.

4. Definitions of Student Absence

Gildredge House defines absence from school as either:

- arrival at school after the register has closed; or
- not attending school for any reason.

Gildredge House defines authorised absence from school as:

- an absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave;
- medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the school has granted leave and have received medical evidence;
- religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave;
- an absence due to a family emergency for which the school has granted leave;

Gildredge House defines unauthorised absence from school as:

- parents keeping a child off school unnecessarily or without reason;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- arrival at school after the register has closed;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been authorised;
- leaving school for no reason during the day.

Gildredge House defines 'persistent absence' (PA) as missing 10 per cent (10%) or more of schooling across the year for whatever reason.

5. Categories of Absence and Procedure for Reporting Absence

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the student's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences.

Staff will make it clear on the school register when taking attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised. Where staff have any concerns regarding absences they will follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and each day thereafter. For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a written note from the parent of the child and appropriate evidence for example, medical appointment letter or card. Alternative arrangements will be made individually with non-English speaking parents.

Correspondence relating to absences should be directed to the following personnel:

- Years Reception to 4: Lower School Secretary
- Years 5 to 11: Attendance Officer
- Years 12 to 13: Director of Sixth Form

Absences reported by email should be sent to absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk, however, parents are welcome to include the relevant Class Teacher and/or Form Tutor.

5.1 Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents will need to make a phone call or email to alert the school on the first day and each subsequent day of absence.

For prolonged absence due to illness and illness lasting more than three school days, parents must provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

5.2 Medical or Dental Appointments

Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

5.3 Authorised Absences

There may be some instances where the school will authorise absences for exceptional circumstances.

5.4 Exclusion: Fixed Term Exclusion

This is treated as an authorised absence. The school will arrange for work to be sent home for the first five days. Reference should be made to the school's Student Behaviour and Exclusion Policy.

5.5 Family Holidays and Extended Leave

Parents must ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. Parents may request a Request for Withdrawal from Learning during term time. Requests for leave of this type must be made in writing to the Attendance Officer who will obtain a decision from the Head Teacher, 14 days in advance of the leave being taken. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration.

Retrospective applications will not be considered and this time taken will be processed as unauthorised absence. The Head Teacher may only grant such requests in exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher's decision is final on whether the request is approved and the length of absence approved.

All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing, and will outline the details of when the child is expected to return to school. Parents should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

When deciding whether to authorise absence, the Head Teacher will take the following into account:

- previous attendance history;
- how close the time is to public examination;
- the age of the child;
- the ability to catch up;
- frequency of requests;
- attainment and progress levels; and
- the purpose of the leave.

If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents may be subject to further action by the school or prosecution by the local authority.

Furthermore, if the child is absent before / after the holiday or has additional days off before / after it, the school will ask for medical evidence by way of doctor's appointment letter / card or will ask for a copy of the holiday booking to confirm the dates of the holiday, if

applicable. Failure to provide this evidence will result in the school referring the parent(s) to the Local Authority for a penalty notice.

As a school, Gildredge House is obliged to inform parents that Gildredge House use East Sussex County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/4085/code-of-conduct-september-2015.pdf>

Parents may be subject to a Penalty Notice if the child's absence from school is unauthorised.

The Penalty Notice is:

- £120 per parent, per child decreasing to
- £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

If the fine is not paid within 28 days the parent may be prosecuted under S444 of the Education Act 1996.

If the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine in the first instance is £1,000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

5.6 Religious Observance

Gildredge House recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times in line with government guidance.

Parents will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance by way of a Request for Withdrawal from Learning form.

5.7 Late Arrival

Registration begins as follows:

Years	Open	Close	Accessibility
Reception to 4	8.45am	9.00am	Entrance gate opens at 8.25am
5 to 6	8.25am	8.45am	Access to class at 8.10am
7 to 11	8.25am	8.45am	Entrance gate closes at 8.20am
12 to 13	8.25am	8.45am	Entrance via Temple Grove 8.25am

Students who arrive after the open time will be marked as late. Students who arrive after the registers close at 8.55am will be marked as unauthorised. Students who arrive after the registration period should go straight to the School Office to sign in, manually, biometrically and give a reason for their lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised. It is vital that students sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all students are accounted for.

A register is also taken at the start of all subject lessons by the subject teacher within the Secondary phase and Sixth Form, and any unexplained absences will be reported back to the Attendance Officer. Within the Primary phase, the register is again taken after the lunchbreak. If a student is late to the lesson, this will be recorded on the register. Persistent lateness will result in disciplinary action and / or a fine.

6. School Action: Following up Absences

Class registers are completed electronically and monitored by the Attendance Officer at the end of the registration period. Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the Attendance Officer or Head of Year will contact the parents to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

Parents will be contacted if a student gives a reason for an unauthorised absence and there is doubt about the truth of the excuse.

The Attendance Officer will chase a student for written explanation by way of a Request for Withdrawal from Learning forms from their parents for their absence upon the student's return from being away. This is for the school records and is necessary no matter what the reason or length of the absence.

Where students have been away either short or long term, the school will support that child when they re-enter school to help them catch up on any work that they have missed.

Where a child has been absent from school for a period of more than 20 school days, and where the absence was unauthorised and both the school and the Local Authority have been unable to contact the parents, the school may remove the child from the school roll. The school will notify the Local Authority when such action is taken.

The school will take disciplinary action against any students who are discovered to be truanting and parents will be contacted to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help. The school may take further action against the parents, including referral to the Local Authority to begin criminal proceedings against the parents.

7. Rewarding Good Attendance

Gildredge House acknowledges outstanding attendance in the following ways:

- Verbal praise
- Assembly recognition
- Inter-House Competition
- Certificates

8. Complaints

Please refer to the school's Complaints Policy if you have any concerns in relation to the procedures or processes that have been applied in relation to Gildredge House's management of the Student Attendance Policy.

Policy Review and Approval

Review interval:	1 Year
Review term:	Summer Term
Reviewed by:	Assistant Head Teacher
Approved by:	Head Teacher

First approved:	Autumn Term 2013
Last approved:	Summer Term 2018
Next review:	Summer Term 2019

A copy of this policy and other related policies can be obtained from School Office.