

## Student Attendance Policy

### Policy Review and Approval

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Reviewed by:	Deputy Head - Behaviour, Attitudes and Safeguarding
Approved by:	Executive Head Teacher
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*A copy of this policy and other related policies can be obtained from the School Office.*

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At Gildredge House, we believe that outstanding attendance is important to ensure children are safe and have full access to the educational provision made for them. We have high expectations for attendance and punctuality. This is central to our school's ethos, values and day-to-day life.

Improving and maintaining attendance is everyone's responsibility. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all students want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Gildredge House works hard with our school community to support both students and parents. Some students find it harder than others to attend school, therefore it continues to be our aim to work with parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships. We recognise that attendance is a continuous process. We have policies and procedures in place to ensure we continually monitor, review, listen, support and enforce.

### Aim

The aim of our Student Attendance Policy is to enable the school to provide 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.

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. 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 students are as successful as possible, able to reach their full potential and gain maximum benefits from their educational experience.

This policy can be read in conjunction with the DfE guidance 'Working together to improve School Attendance'. This guidance is based on existing best practice and was with effect from the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

### Rewarding good attendance

Gildredge House acknowledges outstanding attendance in the following ways:

- Verbal praise
- Assembly recognition
- Inter-House Competition
- ASPIRE points and certificates (Secondary phase)
- Acknowledgement in school newsletters

Secondary phase students will receive recognition for achieving excellent attendance (96% and above) each term.

### Understanding attendance

- **Present** - The student is on site at the time of registration.
- **Approved educational activity** - The student is engaged in an approved, supervised activity off site; for example - an educational visit, sporting activity or work experience.
- **Authorised absence** - Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause. This will include medical appointments, bereavement, religious observance or any other circumstances that the school deems appropriate and in line with guidance. Medical evidence will always be required to authorise a medical appointment or a prolonged absence following a procedure or medical intervention.

Absence may be granted at the discretion of the Head of School in the event of an emergency such as bereavement. It is important to note that whilst an absence for a medical appointment will be authorised with medical evidence, it is still counted as an absence.

The school will authorise an absence when a student needs to be absent from school with permission; external extra-curricular exam, attending an interview, work experience, college/school taster day, study leave, a temporary time-limited part-time timetable, approved sporting activity, attending alternative provision, or to attend another school for a pre-agreed period of time.

- **Suspension or Fixed term exclusion** - The student is suspended from school (please refer to the schools Behaviour for Learning and Exclusion Policy for further information).
- **Unauthorised absence** - Unauthorised absences are coded where the school does not consider the absence to be unavoidable and includes parents keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy, and absences where no evidence has been provided.
- **School refusal** - School refusal is an unauthorised absence and often occurs where there are wider family, psychological or behavioural concerns affecting a student's ability to attend school. The school will use interventions to support families and students in a case of school refusal.
- **Persistent Absenteeism** - Where absence escalates, and students miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year). Schools, parents and the local authority are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these students. If attendance fails to improve, Gildredge House can make a request to the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Legal Team for a 'Notice to Improve' to be issued. The Legal Team will review our application and if deemed appropriate issue a 'Notice to Improve' which they will monitor for a set period. If attendance still fails to improve, ESCC may issue a fixed penalty notice (please refer to page 9 of this policy and the National framework for penalty notices section).
- **School trips and educational activities** - students in all Year Groups have planned educational trips and end of year reward activities. In the event of a student's behaviour or attendance not meeting the school's expectations and values, the student's attendance on an off-site activity will be reviewed and the relevant Head of School will have the final decision on whether to withdraw attendance on a trip.

## Key roles and responsibilities

### Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child regularly attends school.
- Notify the school **before 8.00 am** by using the 'Absence Reporting' link in the EduLink app, by sending an email to [absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk](mailto:absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk) or by telephoning 01323 400650. Please select option 2, 1 and remember to include the child's full name, Tutor Group / Class, and reason for absence.
- Inform the school of a planned absence by completing a 'Withdrawal from Learning Form' and sending it to [absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk](mailto:absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk)
- Refrain from requesting any authorised absence except under exceptional circumstances.
- Engage with the school around attendance concerns or barriers which may be affecting attendance.
- When possible, arrange medical and dentist appointments outside school hours. When it cannot be avoided, ensure their child attends as much of the school day as possible.
- Keep the school informed of any change to medical circumstance which may affect their child's attendance including long-term medical conditions with supporting evidence.
- Provide evidence of any appointment during school hours (e.g. copy of an email, text or a photo of an appointment card).

**Students are expected to:**

- Be aware of the school's Student Attendance Policy, and when and what they are required to attend.
- Speak to their Class Teacher (Primary phase), Form Tutor or Head of Year (Secondary phase), or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.
- Attend all lessons on time and be ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested.
- Follow the correct school procedure if they arrive late to school or lessons.
- Sign and comply with Gildredge House Home School Agreement.

**Primary phase Class Teachers will:**

- Take an electronic register each morning by 8.50am, and each afternoon by 1.00pm (for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) and by 1.30pm for Years 3-6.
- Record any concerns about absentees through MyConcern.
- Use SIMs to record any lates.
- Liaise with the Primary phase Attendance Lead regarding interventions and individual concerns.
- Liaise with Attendance Officer around any concerns.
- Have initial conversations with parents regarding absences/punctuality.

**Secondary phase Form Tutors will:**

- Encourage all students to have regular attendance by engaging in frequent reminders and sharing attendance data with their tutees.
- Have conversations with their tutees regarding absences.
- Have direct correspondence with parents regarding the students' wellbeing and attendance if this falls below 96%.
- Keep an overview of student attendance.
- Liaise with the Head of Year regarding interventions and individual concerns.

**Secondary phase Subject Teachers will:**

- Take an electronic register each lesson within 10 minutes of the start of the lesson.
- Pass on any concerns about absentees using the 'Transfer' system and recording where appropriate through MyConcern.
- Use SIMs to record any punctuality issues and pass any concerns to the Form Tutor and Head of Year.
- Sanction poor punctuality to any lesson.

**Pastoral Leaders will:**

- Track and monitor attendance for their Year Group.
- Inform parents of any students with poor punctuality or regular attendance lower than expected, and put appropriate interventions in place.
- Hold attendance meetings with parents.
- Use assemblies and the school reward system to promote regular attendance.
- If taking students off-site, follow the trips protocol for notifying the Attendance Team, Pastoral Support Leaders, and the School Office.

**The Attendance Team will:**

- Track and monitor whole school attendance and punctuality, initiating whole school policies and systems as required.
- Track and monitor the attendance of vulnerable groups, passing such information to the relevant members of staff.
- Record any attendance concerns on MyConcern.
- Support Heads of Year and Phase Leaders to lead their teams to foster regular attendance.

- Liaise with external agencies to devise any necessary interventions for students with persistent absenteeism or students at risk of long-term absence.
- Contact parents on the first day of absence and every day thereafter.
- Compile attendance data for the Executive Head Teacher, the Governing Board, Heads of Year, Phase Leaders and the Deputy Head Teacher - Behaviour, Attitudes and Safeguarding.
- Hold attendance meetings with parents, Primary phase Class Teachers, Heads of School, Heads of Year and the Deputy Head Teacher - Behaviour, Attitudes and Safeguarding.
- Oversee the Withdrawal from Learning applications.
- Formalise required support through an attendance contract or education supervision order in conjunction with ESCC.
- Liaise with external agencies to enforce attendance through statutory intervention, penalty notice or prosecution to protect the student's right to an education.

#### **The SEND Team will:**

- Work in partnership with families for students with SEND needs to develop specific support approaches to support attendance to school.
- Work in partnership with families to help support routines, scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments as appropriate.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers SEND students may face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of students who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a student has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with, the student and their parents.

#### **The Heads of School will:**

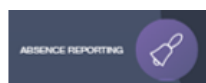
- Monitor this policy and ensure the policy is adhered to.
- Ensure this policy is fair, and clear for all leaders, staff, students, and parents to understand.
- Track and monitor whole school attendance and punctuality, initiating whole school policies and systems as required. This will be achieved with the Senior Leadership Team and other members of the Pastoral Team.
- Support Heads of Year and Phase Leaders to lead their teams to foster regular attendance.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer regarding whole school attendance.
- Ensure that attendance data is presented to the Governing Board and shared regularly with staff.
- Set attendance targets as part of the School Development Plan.

#### **The Governing Board will:**

- Receive reports on attendance from the Executive Head Teacher.
- Scrutinise the working of the policy considering the attendance data presented.
- Support the implementation of the policy.

## Reporting an absence


### Option 1: EduLink



The 'Absence Reporting' area of EduLink enables a parent to report their child absent from school each day due to illness.

If your child is absent from school due to illness, please notify the school before 8.00am using the 'Absence Reporting' function in EduLink. Please notify the school if your child is unwell on each day of their absence.

The date, hour and minute needs to be selected for the start and the end of the absence period. A full reason should be provided for the absence and the details submitted to the school by clicking the 'Send' button. Should evidence supporting an absence be required, this can be attached using the paperclip symbol.

In the app, a parent can switch between their children using the  symbol.

We do expect all children to attend on a daily basis, but if a leave of absence is required due to exceptional circumstances, a Request for Withdrawal from Learning Form must be completed a minimum of 14 days in advance of the day(s) concerned. The form is available on the website or the school office.

### Option 2: Email

Parents can send an email confirming the name of the child, the name of their Class Teacher/Form Tutor, and the reason for absence. Where applicable, supporting medical evidence can be attached to evidence the absence. Parents are welcome to copy in the relevant Class Teacher and/or Form Tutor.

- Email address: [absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk](mailto:absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk)

### Option 3: Telephone

Parents can leave a voicemail on 01323 400650, selecting option 2, 1. The voicemail should confirm the name of the child, the name of their Class Teacher/Form Tutor and the reason for absence.

Any retrospective requests for Withdrawal from Learning will not be considered and this absence will automatically be processed as unauthorised.

### Religious observance

Gildredge House recognises that there are times where families of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of the school holidays and weekends. The school will allow authorised absence for these times in line with government guidance. The Department for Education specifies that schools should allow one day off as 'obligatory religious observance'. Any additional days of absence, for example when Eid falls during term time, is at the discretion of the Head of School or Executive Head Teacher.

Parents will be aware of these dates and should follow our procedure by completing a Request for Withdrawal from Learning Form. This form must be submitted to:

- Email address: [absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk](mailto:absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk)

### Punctuality

The school day starts at different times for students. These times are detailed below.

<b><u>Year Groups</u></b>	<b><u>Registration Open</u></b>	<b><u>Registration Close</u></b>
R-6	8.15am	8.35am
7-11	8.25am	8.55am
<b><u>Check out timings</u></b>		
Years R-2	2.55pm	
Years 3 & 5	3pm	
Years 4 & 6	3.05pm	
Years 7-11	3.05pm	

Students who arrive after the start of registration will be marked as late. Students who arrive half an hour after the registers close will have the absence marked as unauthorised. Students who arrive after the start of registration should go straight to the Main school office to sign in manually and give a reason for their lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised.

**We require all late arriving students to sign-in at the School Office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all students are accounted for.**

If a student arrives late for registration, parents will receive a standard notification via EduLink. Late arrival can be authorised in some cases, for example, an unavoidable delay, such as transport and known appointments. For pre-booked appointments, parents must follow the procedure for notifying the school of the absence. Parents must notify the school in the event of unavoidable transport delays as soon as possible on the morning of the delay.

In the Secondary phase, a register is also taken at the start of all subject lessons by the Subject Teacher and any unexplained absences will be reported back to the Attendance Officer.



Within the Primary phase, the register is taken for a second time after the lunchbreak. If a student is late to the lesson, this will be recorded on the register.

Persistent lateness will result in an appropriate sanction.

Students with persistent late arrival to school and late arrival to lessons will be sanctioned and parents will be contacted should further intervention be required.

### Check-out procedures

#### Reception - Year 4

Students will be checked out from the appropriate door by a member of staff at the end of the day. If a student has been booked into an after-school club, they will be escorted there. Each child will only be checked out to the parent/approved adult. If a student is to be collected by another adult, this must be written in the child's home/school contact book and an **Authorisation to Collect my Child Form** is completed.

All students must be picked up promptly to allow staff to engage in other appointments and duties. When leaving an after-school club, children must be signed out by the person collecting the child. If a child is not collected at the appropriate time, we will follow the procedure as outlined in our **Uncollected Child Policy**.

#### Years 5-6

Students will be checked out from the appropriate door by a member of staff at the end of the day. If a student has been booked into an after-school club, they will make their own way there. As the children are older, they are allowed to walk home or alternatively make their own way to their parent.

All students must be picked up promptly to allow staff to engage in other appointments and duties. If a child is not collected at the appropriate time, we will follow the procedure as outlined in our **Uncollected Child Policy**.

### Withdrawal from learning

Parents must ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. The DfE does not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Therefore, in most cases any holiday taken in term time will be unauthorised.

In cases of unforeseen circumstances, such as family bereavement, which may require the child to travel to another country, the specifics of each request will be considered when reviewing the request for withdrawal from learning.

Any retrospective requests for withdrawal from learning will not be considered and this absence will automatically be processed as unauthorised.

A copy of the Withdrawal from Learning Form can be downloaded from our website, or a hard copy can be collected from the School Office.

### National framework for Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided.

Procedures for requesting a Penalty Notice include when a student has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions within 10 school weeks, with one of, or a combination of, the following codes;



- a) Code G (the student is absent without authorisation for the purpose of a holiday)
- b) Code O (the student is absent from school without prior authorisation or notification from the parent i.e. illness)
- c) Code U (the student arrived late to school; half an hour after the register closed)

A Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

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.

If a child is absent directly before / after a school holiday period, the school will automatically unauthorise this absence.

**The Penalty Notice fee is £160 per parent, per child, decreasing to £80 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.**

Further details on the East Sussex County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct can be found via <https://czone.eastsussex.gov.uk/inclusion/attend/penalty-notices>

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at a higher rate of £160. A family who incurs repeating fines for unauthorised absence will be considered for a parenting order or prosecution.

If the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine in the first instance is £2,500 per parent, per child.

#### **Other resources relevant to this policy**

- The DfE 'Working together to improve school attendance' - May 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>
- Behaviour for Learning and Exclusion Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure