



## 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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## 1. Aim

The aim of this 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. Students returning from an absence are unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching. Teachers then have to give more time to help individual students 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 students 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/her/them to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude; and
- (b) to any special educational needs he/she/they 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/she/they 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/she/they attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following;
- (b) if he/she/they attains that age on that day; or
- (c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his/her/their attaining that age.

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

### 3.1 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; and
- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future.

### **3.2 Senior Leadership Team**

As part of the school's whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the Senior 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 the Senior Leadership Team are up-to-date with any legislative changes and how to implement them;
- nominate or appoint a senior leader 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; and
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.

### **3.3 Teachers and Support Staff**

As part of the school's whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, 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; and
- work with external agencies to support students and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

### 3.4 Parents

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

- engage with their child(ren)'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 child(ren)'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 including long term medical conditions with supporting evidence;
- 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 child(ren) out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so using a Request for Withdrawal from Learning Form (Section 5); and
- comply with the Gildredge House Home School Agreement (as part of the admissions process).

### 3.5 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 Class Teacher (Primary), Form Tutor (Secondary), Head of Year (Secondary) 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;
- follow the correct school procedure if they arrive late (Section 5). It is made clear to all students what this procedure is by their Class Teacher/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; and
- 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 has 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; or
- an educational experience.

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;
- medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the school has not granted leave and has not received medical evidence;
- 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; or
- leaving school for no reason during the day.

Gildredge House defines 'Persistent Absence' (PA) as missing 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. Although it is the parent's responsibility to notify the school of any absence, it is at the school's discretion how this absence is coded in relation to authorised or unauthorised absence.

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

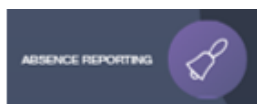
When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school on the first day of absence and each day thereafter and include an expected date for return. If the school is not notified that a student will be absent from school, the parent will be contacted.

For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a written note from the parent of the child and appropriate evidence, for example, a medical appointment letter/card or text. Alternative arrangements will be made individually with non-English speaking parents.

Correspondence relating to absences should be directed to [absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk](mailto:absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk)

## 5.1 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 to [absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk](mailto:absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk). Where applicable, supporting medical evidence can be attached to evidence the absence. Parents are welcome to copy in the relevant Class Teacher or Form Tutor.

### **Option 3: Telephone**

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

## **5.2 Illness**

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents will need to inform the school using one of the methods above on the first day of absence **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, a prescription paper, or a reminder text from medical authority. These absences will be automatically unauthorised without receipt of medical evidence.

The school does not automatically have to authorise an absence reported as an illness. The school may send a medical evidence letter confirming that future absences will continue to be unauthorised without medical evidence. If continued absence, for whatever reason, without explanation by means of medical evidence continues, the school may issue a penalty notice warning letter (Section 5.7).

## **5.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Parents should make every effort to ensure medical or dental appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of the school day as possible. Optician appointments must not be made during the school day unless a medical procedure is required. Evidence to support the absence must be submitted to authorise the absence.

## **5.4 Authorised absences**

There may be some instances where the school will authorise absences for exceptional circumstances. Parents should detail the exceptional circumstance on a Request for Withdrawal from Learning Form at least 14 days in advance of the absence and send the completed form to [absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk](mailto:absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk). Paper copies of the Request for Withdrawal from Learning Form are available from the School Office.

## **5.5 Suspension: Fixed Term Exclusion**

Fixed Term Exclusions are treated as an authorised absence. The school will arrange for the student to access school work for the first five days of an exclusion. Reference should be made to the school's Behaviour for Learning and Exclusion Policy.

## **5.6 Family holidays and extended leave**

Parents must ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. Any parent wishing to take a child out of school for a family holiday or for extended leave during the school term must submit a Request for Withdrawal from Learning at least 14 days in advance of the absence and send the completed form to [absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk](mailto:absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk). Paper copies of the Request for Withdrawal from Learning Form are available from the School Office.

**These types of requests will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The school's decision is final on whether the request, including the length of the request, is approved.**

In cases of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that may require the child to travel to another country, the specifics of the case will be taken into consideration when reviewing the Request for Withdrawal from Learning.

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

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 following will be taken into account:

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

### **5.7 Local Authority Penalty Notices**

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 the holiday period, the school will automatically unauthorise this absence. Parents are asked to provide medical evidence by way of a doctor's appointment letter/card or a reminder text from medical authority, or provide a copy of the holiday booking to confirm the start and end dates of the holiday, if applicable. Failure to provide this evidence for the absence will result in the school referring the parent(s) to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice.

Gildredge House uses the East Sussex County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/rw5jiyxl/penalty-notice-code-of-conduct-v4-july-2024.docx>

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

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.

### **5.8 Religious observance**

Gildredge House recognises that there are times where children 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 Executive Head Teacher.

Parents will be aware of these dates and should request the absence well in advance by completing a Request for Withdrawal from Learning Form. This form must be submitted to [absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk](mailto:absences@gildredgehouse.org.uk)

### 5.9 Late arrival

Registration begins as follows:

Year Groups	Open	Close	Accessibility
Reception - Year 6	8.45am	9.00am	Entrance gate opens at 8.20am
Years 7 - 11	8.25am	8.50am	Entrance gate closes at 8.20am

Students who arrive after the start of registration will be marked as late. Students who arrive after the registers close at 9.20am will have the absence marked as unauthorised. Students who arrive after the start of registration should go straight to the School Office to sign in manually 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 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 be notified using EduLink. Students will receive a same day sanction at break time and this will be logged on the behaviour management system. Late arrival can be authorised in some cases of delay, such as transport and known appointments. For pre-booked appointments, parents must follow the procedure for notifying the school of the absence.

A register is also taken at the start of all subject lessons by the Subject Teacher within the Secondary phase, and any unexplained absences will be reported back to the Attendance Officer. Within the Primary phase, the register is taken again 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 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 Head of Year/Head of School will contact the parents to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

The school may send a medical evidence letter confirming that future absences will continue to be unauthorised without medical evidence. If continued absence without explanation by means of medical evidence continues, the school will issue a penalty notice warning letter.

The Attendance Officer will request a written explanation of the absence through a Request for Withdrawal from Learning Form from the parents upon the student's return to school. This is necessary no matter what the reason or length of the absence.

Where students have been absent either short-term 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 student 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 student from the school roll. The school will notify the Local Authority when such action is taken.

The school will take disciplinary action against any student who is found 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. Children with health needs who cannot attend school**

The school follow the requirements of the Education Act 1996 and [guidance](#) provided by the Local Authority.

#### **8. Rewarding good attendance**

Gildredge House acknowledges outstanding attendance in the following ways:

- Verbal praise;
- Assembly recognition;
- Inter-House Competition; and
- Certificates.

Students will receive recognition for achieving excellent attendance (above 96%) each term.

#### **9. Complaints**

Please refer to the school's Complaints Policy and Procedure if there are concerns in relation to the procedures or processes that have been applied in relation to the school's management of the Student Attendance Policy.