



George Stephenson
High School

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

Governance	Governing Body
Policy Officer	Deputy Headteacher
Adopted Date	March 2020
Review Date	March 2020
Next Review Date	March 2021

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all stakeholders, students, parents, carers and the school are clear about the importance of excellent school attendance and the responsibilities that each stakeholder has to maintain this.

George Stephenson High School believes that achieving a high level of attendance is directly linked to the achievement, life chances and employment prospects of our young people. Parents, carers, staff and students all have a responsibility to ensure students maintain excellent attendance standards and therefore achieve their goals.

Introduction

Excellent attendance promotes excellent learning. Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. We believe that regular school attendance is crucial to allowing children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. We value all students. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to early identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. We believe attendance is a shared responsibility, involving the whole school community and local community; Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a thread that runs through all aspects of school improvement, and is supported by our policies on safeguarding, anti-bullying and behaviour.

Parents or carers of students of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education by attendance at school or otherwise (Education Act). Under the provisions of the Education Act and the Student Registration Regulations the school must keep an attendance register. Every entry in the attendance register is **preserved electronically** for three years.

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

At George Stephenson High School, we define key levels of attendance as:

98 – 100%	EXCELLENT You will receive a positive praise letter home.
95 – 97.9%	GOOD You will receive a letter of praise & encouragement home.
92 – 94.9%	CAUTION – NEEDS TO IMPROVE Your child's form tutor will talk to them and may contact you to discuss attendance.
90 – 91.9%	WARNING – 90% OR LESS IS PERSISTENTLY ABSENT (PA) Your child will be mentored in school and their Guidance Manager. The Education Welfare Officer may invite parents into school to discuss further support.
89.9% or below	SERIOUS CONCERN The Education Welfare Officer will contact/visit you and you may face a fine or legal action. Support will be offered to parents/carers who will be asked to attend a meeting in school. A referral to Attendance & Placement Service may be made. In some cases parents/carers can be issued with a Penalty Notice Warning, Fines or Fast Track to Prosecution may be initiated.

- Students and parents/carers understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality.
- All school staff, including governors, administrative and support staff understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality
- Clear procedures for enabling pupils to come to school
- Attendance issues are addressed in the curriculum as part of our PSHE programme
- Parents/carers and students having the opportunity to raise concerns and feel comfortable to discuss these with school
- Allocating resources e.g. time, people, space to support the policy
- Rewarding students who have for good attendance and those who strive to improve their attendance
- Identifying patterns of absence and intervening early. Patterns of attendance are established early in a school career. Children who miss significant amounts of their education in primary schools are more likely to truant later on. We will work with our feeder primary schools to identify vulnerable students and families so we can give them support early.
- Sanctions for failing to ensure regular attendance are fully understood by the whole school community and parents/carers.

Processes

- Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance targets. These will reflect both national and North Tyneside attendance targets.
- This policy will contain within it all the procedures required to meet the school's attendance targets.
- Attendance will be regularly monitored and intervention strategies put into place to address and improve identified attendance issues.
- The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

Responsibilities

We believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents/carers, students and the wider school community.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Have a named senior manager to lead on attendance (SAL). Kathryn Williams works closely with our school Education Welfare Officer, Sam Scott
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings in the Headteacher's Report/ Data Dashboard
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required
- Have clear systems in school to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are frequent procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Headteacher will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents/carers.
- Promote positive relationships with students and parents/carers
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- set attendance targets as part of the improvement plan and target-setting process
- monitor progress; and
- ensure that strategies are in place to promote and implement the policy throughout the school.
- determine (in collaboration with the Deputy Headteacher and school Education Welfare Officer) whether to authorise any proposed absences requested on the school's official form, or absences which have taken place for which no request was made
- notify parents/carers as appropriate that if a student of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly his/her parents/carers commit an offence;
- initiate with appropriate staff strategies to improve attendance; - make an annual report with statistics to the governing body.

The Deputy Headteacher will:

- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Make staff aware of the Attendance Policy and are adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Make periodic checks of the registers to monitor student absence
- Make regular checks on absence notes and the reasons for absence
- Ensure that unaccounted for absences are followed up
- Deal with issues of inadequate registering
- Works closely with our Education Welfare Officer to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource to this
- Liaise with feeder schools and others as required to best support families in ensuring good school attendance or look for patterns in order to intervene earlier to prevent non-attendance becoming an issue
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Headteacher and Governing Body
- ensure that the School Admission and Attendance Registers are available for inspection by HMIs, registered inspectors or LA officers
- Have systems in place to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Collate and analyse attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Co-ordinate intervention strategies to reward positive and improved attendance.
- Work with the Guidance Managers and Achievement Support Co-ordinators to interpret the data to develop solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Involve the local authority and develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

The Education Welfare Officer will:

- oversee the first day contact system on the 3rd day of absence through liaison with the attendance officer.
- work with the Deputy Headteacher and Guidance Managers to ensure the efficient running of the system
- prioritise those students known to have previous unauthorised absences or who are disadvantaged.
- make periodic checks of the registers to monitor student absence;
- make regular checks on absence notes and the reasons for absence;
- ensure that unaccounted for absences are followed up;
- notify parents/carers as appropriate that if a student of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly his/her parents/carers commit an offence;
- initiate with appropriate staff strategies to improve attendance;

Guidance Managers will:

- actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents/carers.
- form positive relationships with students and parents/carers
- reward students for excellent and improved attendance
- put in place support plans for young people returning from lengthy absences where necessary.
- ensure that all student absences are recorded and absence notes received from parents/carers
- make regular checks on absence notes;
- ensure that all suspected truancy is followed up and dealt with
- contact parents/carers over student absences where appropriate;
- make reports to the Deputy Headteacher on the efficiency of the system
- liaise with the Deputy Headteacher over training needs.

Form Tutors will:

- ensure that students are registered accurately
- ensure that students bring absence notes
- follow up cases of unaccounted for absence or unacceptable notes
- discuss attendance issues with selected students as part of the whole-school attendance monitoring systems and procedures
- keep the Guidance Manager informed of any signs of suspected truancy
- inform the Guidance Manager of any possible underlying problems which might account for absences.

Classroom Teachers will:

- check the attendance of students at their lessons
- complete the attendance registers on SIMS at the start of every lesson.

The school expects Parents/ Carers to:

- Understand it is their legal responsibility to ensure that a student of compulsory school age attends school regularly.
- Provide school with an up to date address and telephone number to enable us to make contact. Advise us as soon as possible if you change any of contact details.
- Contact the school on the first day of absence **before the start of the school day** to let us know the reason for the absence and the expected date of return. Parents can do this by calling: 0191 2161115, sending a text to 07841211349 or emailing us on absence@gshs.org.uk.
- This should be followed up with a note where possible. This should be done on a daily basis, unless the absence is long term or it is known how long a child will be absent. ensure their child brings a signed note when they return to school after the absence. If the absence is a prolonged one, school can arrange to have work sent home to prevent students from falling behind.
- ensure their child arrive at school so that they are in their tutor room for 8.30am (Years 7 and 8) and 8.35 (Years 9, 10 and 11). Those registering after 8.40 a.m. will be marked late in the school register.
- Talk to their son/daughter about their experiences in school and to take a positive interest in their child's learning and educational progress
- Instill the value of education and regular school attendance within the home

- Avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make medical appointments outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home learning, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking leave of absence during term-time.
- make any request for leave of absence on the school's official leave of absence form in writing at least two weeks in advance.

Students are required to:

- attend regularly unless they are ill or have an authorised absence ('attending regularly' means registering before the attendance register is closed for the session)
- if possible inform the school of their absence on the first day of non-attendance
- bring an explanatory note on the day of return to school
- discuss with the tutor any planned absences well in advance (e.g. a family holiday)

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents/carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents/carers secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

This responsibility is undertaken by Education Welfare.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2016, expect schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- un-able to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

At George Stephenson High School, all Tutor Group registers will close at the end of break.

Afternoon registration takes place in Period 5 - the register will close 15 minutes after the start of Period 5.

Categorising absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation and or evidence for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents/carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness

In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent/carer informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Where there are repeated absences due to reported illness parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents /carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents/carers should show the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

Dual Registration

Dual registration is meant to cover situations where two institutions have shared responsibility for the education of a given student, e.g. a child on Alternative Provision.

Excluded (No alternative provision made)

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher/form tutor/Guidance Manager will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Study Leave:

Study leave should not automatically be granted by default once tuition of the exam syllabus is complete, and study leave should only ever be granted to pupils in year 11. (DFE School Attendance guidance, July 2019). If and when GSHS does decide to grant study leave, parents will be notified accordingly but provision will still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise. Y11 pupils granted study leave will be marked on the attendance register as authorized absence using code S. Y11 pupils who are 16 years old are of compulsory school age (up to the last Friday in June) and must be marked on the attendance register accordingly.

Leave of absence during term time

Amendments came into force in September 2013 changing the 2006 pupil regulations and removing references to family holiday, extended leave and the statutory threshold of ten school days. (Authorised at the discretion of the Head Teacher)

The amendments make clear that:

'Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted'

Leave of absence during term time is entirely at the discretion of the Head Teacher and is not a parental right. It is at the Head Teacher's discretion to request the Local authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

All decisions in relation to whether leave of absence is granted (authorised) or not (unauthorised) should be applied consistently and equitably.

Application Process

- **A parent/carer requesting leave of absence during term time must make the application in writing at least two weeks in advance on the leave of absence request form**
 - School may invite the parent/carer into school to discuss the reasons for the application and the impact the absence may have on the child's education
 - The school will reply to all applications. All replies will be signed and dated by the Head-teacher/Acting Head.
 - If leave is granted, the length of authorised absence will be clearly stated including the date the child is expected to return to school
 - If the leave is not granted, the reason for not authorising a request will be clearly stated, as well as the possible consequences of disregarding the refusal.
- If a parent /carer removes their son/ daughter from school without requesting leave of absence or without authorisation from the Head Teacher the parent/carer will be informed in writing that a referral will be made to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued.** Parents/carers will be made fully aware of a Penalty Notice being issued, and that failure to pay could lead to prosecution. A penalty notice is a fine issued by the Local Authority of £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days and £120 per parent per child if paid after this date but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty notice could result in the Local Authority starting legal proceedings against you.
- If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents /carers has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2016. This means that the child will lose their school place

Adverse Weather

Recent winter weather conditions caused all kinds of problems for schools across the country and led to the government issuing new guidelines which came into force from September 2011. Schools will not be penalised if they are forced to close nor if they make every effort to stay open and their attendance statistics suffer accordingly.

Short Term Leave

The school can legally grant short term leave for family reasons. It is for the Headteacher to determine the reasonableness.

Where a student becomes pregnant leave will be given of no more than 18 weeks after which the absence would be unauthorised. The school will do all it can to support the student remaining in school as long as possible. (Refer to Circular 10/99 and Annex A Reasons for Absence).

The School may, exceptionally, sanction limited absence for young carers until other arrangements can be made. The Headteacher will set a time limit for such absences in consultation with the Deputy Headteacher and Guidance Manager. The Headteacher may also seek advice from the LA or appropriate agency before coming to a decision.

Religious Observance

We acknowledge the multi-faith nature of British society and recognise that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. There is no legislation or regulation or DfE guidance on this matter.

The Headteacher will review each application reasonably, and in consultation with the Deputy Headteacher, Guidance Manager and the parents/carers.

The school expects advance notice, since religious festivals are likely to be fixed well ahead.

Distance from School

A student will not have failed to attend regularly if the parent can prove that the school is not within walking distance (defined as two miles for children under 8 and three miles for children over 8), in each case measured by the nearest available route, and where the LA has not made suitable arrangements for:

- transport
- boarding;
- and - changing to another school nearer to the home.

Where there are such occurrences the Headteacher will consult with the LA, and the Chair of Governors as appropriate.

Un-authorised absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents/carers have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms/shoes
- Having hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Leave of Absence taken without the authorisation of school

Persistent Absentees

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the year for **whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any student's educational prospects, and we expect parents'/carers' support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly and any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority.

Parents/carers will be informed of this by letter and where appropriate, will be invited to a meeting with the school's Educational Welfare Officer and Guidance Manager in order to set targets for attendance and to explore opportunities to support the student and their families.

Discussions with the Education Welfare Officer may take place for any student at any time. A declining pattern or level of attendance may result in a letter from school informing parents/carers all further absences will not be authorised without medical confirmation – the school is responsible for authorising absence, not the parents/carers.

Use of Penalty Notices

School may request the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence in accordance with the local code of conduct.

Penalty Notices **will** be used to tackle unauthorised absence in the following circumstances:-

- Where a parent/carer has chosen to take their child on holiday during term time **and not completed the leave of absence permission request form two weeks in advance of the first day of the proposed absence period.**

Penalty Notice Warnings **may** be issued for the following reasons:

- Where following a truancy sweep, enquiries show that the school has recorded the student absence for that session as unauthorized.
- In cases where a student is persistently late for school before and after the register has closed and a parent has failed our 4 week monitoring agreement.
- In cases where a student's parents/carers fail to work with the school and the Attendance and Placement Service to improve attendance.

Penalty Notices will be issued where a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences sessions during the monitoring period set up by North Tyneside Council.

Use of the Fast Track System

The Fast Track Process will be used when a student's percentage attendance is exceptionally low. Attendance will be monitored by the school for four weeks; parents/carers will be notified of this by letter. At the end of this period if there is no improvement the case will be referred to the Attendance and Placement Service who will consider whether the case should be referred for a court hearing. The result of this can be a substantial fine or in some cases, imprisonment.

Our First Day Response System is summarized below:

**ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES FROM FIRST DAY OF ABSENCE TO
NON-ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

First day contact call or message from parents received by our Attendance Clerk
After 3 rd day if still no contact made
Education Welfare Officer visits home
If no contact made
Follow-up visit made by Education Welfare Officer
If no contact made
Letter posted to home of student
If no contact made
Letter delivered to home with appointment request
If no contact made
Non-attendance Procedures initiated

NON-ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Penalty Notice Warning sent (school monitor for following 4 school weeks)
If no improvement
£60 Penalty Fine Issued (per parent, per child)
If no improvement
Fast Track to Prosecution

Further interventions throughout each half-term:

- **Lates:**

If a student arrives late to school in the morning they may be issued with a break or lunchtime detention on the same day. If students fail to attend their detentions, Guidance Managers may place students on an After School Workshop. As with all after school detentions, parents/carers will be informed by text message. If they are persistently late, further intervention will be put in place, but failure to improve will result in further action being taken e.g. Penalty Notice Warning.

Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2016, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority

The school has its own Children Missing Education Protocol in line with guidance from North Tyneside Council which is followed when a student's whereabouts is unknown.

Using Attendance Data

Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a student's attendance is a cause for concern. We report attendance to parents via our SIMS Parent App, in school reports and half termly communication by either parent mail or letter.

The Deputy Headteacher and school Education Welfare Officer will have weekly meetings to monitor students' attendance using the data collected to see if attendance has, stayed the same, improved or deteriorated. This student data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention.

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school/partnership strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

We will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the local authority as required.

All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Support Systems. School recognise that poor attendance is often a sign that there are more serious issues going on in a child's life. This may be linked to problems at home and or in school. Parents/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children. The school will implement strategies to support improved attendance.

Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents/carers and pupils
- Attendance panels/ School Attendance Contracts
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Student Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Family learning
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and students. Where parents/carers fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, we will refer to Education Welfare and the use of legal sanctions will be considered

Parenting Contracts (Used in conjunction with Fast Track to Attendance) (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school, the parent/ carer and the Education Welfare Officer. It can also be extended to include the child depending on age.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents/carers fail to carry out agreed actions.

Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with North Tyneside Council's Protocol

Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher will review the working of the policy with the Leadership Group and make at least one annual report to the Governing Body.