



PARK LANE  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Date: September 2023  
Review Due: September 2024

Reviewed Annually

## 1. Introduction

At Park Lane, we believe that punctuality and good attendance are essential for all pupils, to ensure that they can benefit fully from the Proud Traditions, Wide Horizons and High Achievement that Griffin Schools offer. We aim to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any barriers to this are identified and acted upon as soon as possible. The school aims to 100% attendance for pupils and promotes good punctuality now and for the future.

There are good reasons (especially illness), which make attendance at school sometimes difficult. Nevertheless, lessons missed cannot be repeated and ‘catching up’ on work is never as good as the original learning experience. Pupils who do not have persistent absence are more likely to attain their full potential at school, to stay in education after leaving school, and to enjoy other positive outcomes.

## 2. Aim of the Policy

The aim of the Policy is to create a culture within school where good attendance and punctuality are valued and where the importance of establishing the foundations of effective attendance is understood by parents, children and staff.

## 3. Objectives of the Policy

To ensure children attend regularly and to reduce persistent absence by:

- Setting out the school attendance expectations for parents and their children
- Explaining the processes that will be used to record attendance, manage attendance issues and support children and their families in achieving regular attendance
- Informing parents, pupils and staff of the legal framework surrounding school attendance

## 4. Definitions

*“Compulsory School Age”* A child reaches Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday

*“Parent”* for the purposes of this Attendance Policy is defined as a biological parent of the child (even if they do not have Parental Responsibility or even if they do not live with the child), or someone who has Parental Responsibility for them by way of a Special Guardianship Order, Care Order, Residence Order, Adoption Order, or Step-Parental Responsibility Order or someone who has care of the child, according to The Education Act (Section 576)

*“Absence”* in school is categorised as either “authorised” or “unauthorised”

- (i) Authorised (i.e. approved by the Head)  
That is, when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason **and** school has received notification from a parent. For example, if a child is unwell **and** their parent telephones school to explain why they will not be in school that day.
- (ii) Unauthorised (i.e. not approved by the Head)  
That is when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. For example, if a child is taken on holiday during school time without the Head’s authorisation.

*“Persistent Absence”* The government uses the term Persistent Absence to refer to an absence rate of 10% or more, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

Regular attendance is a pre-requisite of effective schooling. Without good attendance, children are less likely to reach their potential. We think that everyone in our school community has a part to play in our children achieving excellent levels of attendance, and outline below the responsibilities we each have:

### 5.1 The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for developing the strategic direction of attendance at school, including:

- developing an attendance policy and reviewing it at appropriate intervals;
- making sure that school keeps an attendance register;
- setting targets for pupil attendance;
- monitoring pupil attendance levels;
- appointing a Member to oversee attendance issues;
- ensure that building of emotional resilience is sufficiently delivered through the school curriculum and pastoral support
- regularly monitoring and consider the school’s approach to promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing within school

### 5.2 The Head of School and Senior Leaders

The Head of School and Senior Leaders are responsible for managing attendance within school effectively, including:

- taking an attendance register twice a day
- keeping accurate records of attendance in line with government guidance
- passing attendance information on to the Local Education Authority and the Department for Education and Skills
- monitoring and evaluating attendance data to identify individual pupils who give cause for concern
- taking appropriate action to encourage participation generally and improve the attendance of individual pupils
- determining whether to authorise any proposed absences requested on the school’s Leave of Absence Request Form, or any absences which have taken place without a request having been submitted.
- informing staff regarding the Attendance Policy and supporting them to contribute towards its effective implementation
- involving the local authority and developing a multi-agency response to support pupils and their families

### 5.3 School Staff

School staff promote the school’s ethos by:

- Setting an example of attendance and punctuality;
- Enabling the school to keep accurate records of attendance;

- Setting and maintaining high expectations for attendance for children with mental health concerns and work with pupils and parents/carers to maximise attendance;
- Facilitating support for pupils experiencing mental health problems as well as normal but difficult emotions through sensitive conversations with pupils and parents/carers
- Considering additional pastoral care inputs and, where appropriate, make referrals
- Engaging with parents at early stage to support their child

## 5.4 Parents

### 5.4.1 Legal Responsibility of Parents

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child has an education by “regular attendance at school or otherwise” if their child is of Compulsory School Age, according to The Education Act 1996 (Section 7).

This means that they must ensure that their child attends school regularly or is educated at home (in which case the parent must make sure that the education they receive at home is suitable for their age, ability and aptitude and special educational needs). If their child fails to attend regularly, then the parent is guilty of an offence under The Education Act (Section 444).

Regular attendance has been defined by the courts as “in accordance with the rules set out in the school”, which at Park Lane is on every day of term where the Head of School has not authorised their absence.

The Department for Education has stated that it expects parents to proactively engage with any support that is offered to address barriers to their child’s attendance; to work with school and partner organisations to help all parties to understand the perceived barriers to attendance with a view to their child receiving the most appropriate support to maximise attendance. If parents do not engage with the support offered, then the school will work with the local authority to consider whether to formalise support or enforce attendance through legal intervention.

### 5.4.2 Reporting an absence

On days when their child will not be in school, parents are expected to inform school, on that day, as soon as possible and certainly by 9.30am, of a detailed reason for their child’s absence and the expected day of return and to continue to do so on each and every day that absence continues. Parents may call the school office or they may use the Teachers2Parents App to message school to provide this information.

Wherever possible, parents are expected to make routine appointments such as dental or medical appointments, outside of school time and/or in school holidays. The school requests confirmation of medical appointments during school hours by way of evidence such as an appointment card, letter, prescription or prescribed medication.

According to government advice, it is considered appropriate for parents to send children to school with mild respiratory illnesses (e.g. minor coughs, runny nose or sore throat) but not if their temperature is over 38 degrees C.

### 5.4.3 Requesting Leave of Absence

Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time, and therefore they must apply to school for authorisation. The application must:

- Be made by the resident parent (i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides)
- Be made in advance (failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised)
- Show that there are exceptional circumstances for the leave

Appendix B to this policy has a copy of the form that should be used by parents to request that leave of absence is considered for authorisation by the Head of School.

The Head of School must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional in order to justify granting them and will determine how many days a child may be absent if the leave is granted. The Head of School will consider each case individually on its own merits.

“Exceptional circumstances” are likely to be those which

- involve a crisis, a bereavement, a serious illness, religious observance or;
- where the leave would be of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child and;
- the benefit of attending the event outweighs the loss of teaching time

Examples of cases which are unlikely to be considered “exceptional” would be those which are related to:

- fitting in with parent/carer work commitments
- the availability of cheaper holidays in term time
- the availability of desired accommodation
- weddings abroad, regardless of whether they involve immediate family or not

The Head of School will consider a range of factors in determining whether a leave of absence request is authorised, including the attainment and progress, prior attendance and ability to catch up the work missed of the child and the frequency of other requests.

Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council. The Warwickshire Attendance Service has the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council’s Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council’s Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings.

## 5.5 Children

Children at Park Lane are expected to be at school by 8.45am at the latest each day, ready to start learning.

## 6 Registration

Section 7 of The Education Act requires that an entry must be made on the attendance register for all pupils of Compulsory School Age who are on the school's admission roll. The entry will show whether the child was in school at the start of that morning or afternoon, and if not, whether the absence was authorised by the Head of School or otherwise and where it was authorised, the reason for their absence (e.g. illness, school trip, etc).

When a child is in Nursery at Park Lane, and therefore has not reached compulsory school age, we will use the same method of recording absence and the reasons for absence as it does for the main school. This method is recommended in government guidance.

## 7 Punctuality

Punctuality is vitally important and is a life skill that reaches into employment in later life.

The school gates will be open from 8.30am until 8.45am. Children are expected to be at school, ready to learn by 8.45am. Any children arriving after 8.45am must enter the school through the main school doors, where time of arrival and reason for lateness will be recorded by the office.

When pupils arrive late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson, which can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. A child may also feel awkward arriving to the classroom where everyone else is settled, and when one pupil arrives late, it disrupts the learning of others in the class, as the teacher has to stop the progress of the session and provide support to the latecomer. 10 minutes of lateness a day is equal to 31 hours of education being lost per academic year.

Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, a punctuality letter will be sent to a to notify a child's parents / carers of the lateness and offering them the opportunity to discuss this. If punctuality remains of concern, the child / parents may be invited to a meeting to discuss this, to enable the reasons for lateness to be understood. If appropriate, a Punctuality Action Plan will be put in place.

## 8 Monitoring and Responding to Absence

Schools have a legal duty to investigate unexplained absences, to address concerns that a child is missing important learning time in school, and also for safeguarding reasons; to ensure that children are safe and well.

If the school office has not received notification from parents of their child's absence and sufficient information about the reason for the absence, parents will receive a text message or message via the Teachers2Parents app reminding them to contact the school as soon as possible. If a response to this is not received, the school office will call the parent to establish the required information. If there is no response to this call, school staff will record the absence as unauthorised and may make a welfare visit to the child's home.

Park Lane is committed to the well-being and development of pupils and will therefore consider a family's needs and offer additional support, where possible, to enable children to attend regularly. Teachers are available daily if a parent wishes to discuss a child's

attendance. A parent may also visit the school office to discuss attendance or arrange an appointment with the most appropriate member of staff.

If a child remains away from school for two days without parents providing a reason for the absence, contact with parents will be made by school either by phone or home visit. Absences of more than 10 days will mean that the Child Missing from Education procedures of Warwickshire County Council may be followed. A referral to the Warwickshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub will be made where there are safeguarding concerns.

## 9 Regular Monitoring

The designated senior member of staff responsible will regularly review attendance data so that pupils at risk of persistent absence can be identified. Investigations are made to understand the nature of the problems, identifying how the school can support parents in meeting their legal responsibility. A range of actions may be taken according to the percentage of absence and reasons provided by parents/carers; these may include a package of support with or without referral to the Warwickshire Early Help programme, or referral to Children's Services or the Warwickshire Attendance Service.

## 10 Annual Monitoring

The Governing Body considers the annual whole school attendance alongside attendance of previous years and national statistics, to determine a challenging but realistic whole school attendance target.

Attendance for individual pupils for the academic year is reported to parents via the child's biannual reports. It includes attendance and absence, including any unauthorised absence.

## 11 Staged Approach to the Management of Attendance

Where a child's attendance falls below expected levels, their attendance is more closely examined and, where appropriate, the following approach is used:

### **Stage 1: Attendance Levels are of concern**

If attendance falls below the whole school target, then a child's attendance is of concern. A letter will be sent to parents informing them of the current percentage of attendance of their child, expressing the school's concern about their child's attendance and inviting them to seek support from school. A meeting between parents and a member of staff may be requested by school to discuss attendance issues and improve understanding of any barriers to attending school that may exist. The child's attendance is monitored more closely until attendance levels increase.

### **Stage 2: Attendance Levels continue to fall and remain concerning**

If attendance continues to be of concern, despite receiving the Stage 1 letter, parents will receive a subsequent letter informing them of school's ongoing concerns and requesting a further meeting to discuss the lack of progress, where a target will be set for the next 20 school days of school and actions agreed for both parents and school to implement to remove barriers to attendance.

Should attendance continue to be of concern during the 20 school-day-day period, the formal intervention stage will be followed.



### **Stage 3: Formal Intervention**

If attendance continues to be of concern, despite receiving the Stage 1 and 2 letters, parents will receive a subsequent letter inviting them to an appointment with the Attendance Lead on a specific date to discuss a 50 day action plan of support to increase attendance, including involving outside agencies if appropriate, and to set an internal attendance target. If parents choose not to attend, then the meeting will take place and a target set without them. The Warwickshire Attendance Service may be involved at this stage.

If the 50 day target is not reached, and attendance remains a concern, a formal referral to the Warwickshire Attendance Service will be made.

If attendance improves during the monitoring period, then parents will be informed of the level of improvement and advised that school will continue to monitor attendance to ensure that the improvement continues.

## **12 Nursery**

Whilst Nursery and Pre-School children are not of Compulsory School Age, Park Lane has the same high expectations of their attendance and punctuality that it has of all pupils. Legal sanctions cannot be applied to children not of statutory age, but the school's other practices and procedures will be used to enable the formation of good habits and ensure an early commitment from parents/carers towards their child's education and progress.

The Charlie Taylor report of 2012, Improving Attendance at School supports the importance of monitoring attendance in early years. The school will therefore record the attendance of nursery age pupils in line with the Department of Education Attendance coding guidance.



## APPENDIX A: References used in the Policy

- The Education Act 1996
- Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004
- “Improving Attendance at School” A Department for Education report by Charlie Taylor, the Government’s Expert Advisor on Behaviour (2012)
- The Education (Pupils’ Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by the Education (Pupils’ Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- Children Missing Education Protocol February 2020
- “Working Together to Improve School Attendance: Guidance for Maintained Schools, Academies, Independent Schools and Local Authorities” Department for Education (2022)
- “Summary of Responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance” Department for Education February 2023
- “Letter to school leaders on mild illness and school attendance” Department for Education 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023

APPENDIX B: Form

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR A SCHOOL PUPIL IN  
TERM TIME IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES ONLY

*Important Information for Parents/Carers*

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 only allow Head Teacher to authorise leave of absence (for any purpose) in **exceptional circumstances**
- **If** the exceptional circumstances are agreed, the Head Teacher will determine the length of the absence authorised
- Requests for Leave of Absence should be made in advance and before any arrangements confirmed or money committed
- If Leave of Absence is granted please contact school to discuss measures to minimise the impact of the absence on your child's academic progress
- This form **MUST** be completed by the resident parent(s)/carer(s) before requests will be considered
- Please complete a Leave of Absence form for each child
- Failure to make a request for a Leave of absence in advance will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised

*Please note: Parents do not have any legal entitlement to take their child on holiday during term time.*

I wish to apply for Leave of Absence from school to be granted to:

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Form Group: \_\_\_\_\_

First Date of Proposed Absence: \_\_\_\_\_ Last date of Proposed Absence: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected date of return to school: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Proposed Absence – please provide reasons to support the application including evidence  
(they can only be exceptional circumstances) (see overleaf before completing)

.....  
.....  
.....

Total number of school days requested on this occasion

(For siblings) I have also applied to \_\_\_\_\_ School/Academy for leave of

absence for \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert child/children's name)

Signature of resident Parent/Carer: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For school use only: NAME OF CHILD: \_\_\_\_\_ Date received by school: \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> date of absence requested: ..... Last date of absence requested:.....

Absence Authorised: Yes/No If absence authorised, expected date of return to school: .....

The reasons for this decision are:.....

- **LOA record sheet to be completed by school and submitted where verbal requests made/ for other relevant information**

Head Teacher/Attendance Lead: ..... Date: .....

- **Copy of this completed section to be sent back to parent with appropriate letter**