

GOSFORTH ACADEMY

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Gosforth Academy expects all students to aim for 100% attendance. We believe that students who are punctual and achieve a high level of attendance are given access to high quality teaching and learning opportunities and will leave school with better qualifications and access to greater employment opportunities. The school strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels safe, valued, happy, accepted, and included. Our goal is that all students reach their full potential.

Introduction

The schools will regularly review their systems for improving attendance to ensure that they are achieving set goals. We will use incentives and rewards that acknowledge the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

The school will maintain effective and efficient communication with students, parents/carers and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice, guidance and support in regards to school attendance.

Each year we will examine our attendance figures and set attendance and absence targets. This policy will contain within it the procedures that the schools will use to meet attendance targets.

Aims

- to maintain high standards of attendance of students registered at school;
- to make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents/carers, staff and governors;
- to develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks;
- to provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students;
- to develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data;
- to further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school;
- to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority's Attendance Team and with other services and agencies;
- to recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence; and
- to reduce the number of students who have more than 4% overall absence and reduce the number of persistent absentees, that is those whose attendance falls below 90%.

Why Regular Attendance is so important

For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education a high level of school attendance is vital. We will work with students and their parents/carers towards achieving the goal of attending school each day it is open and arriving on time. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility. Our school's attendance policy is written to reflect the various laws that school attendance is subject to.

Promoting Regular Attendance

To ensure that parents/carers are aware of school attendance procedures and their parental responsibility for their child's attendance and punctuality school will:

- give information on attendance and punctuality in the parent handbook, prospectus and website;
- involve parents/carers from earliest stage of poor attendance;
- encourage all parents/carers into school (via appointments);
- provide information in a user-friendly way (may include languages other than English, Braille and non-written);
- make phone contact, using designated school staff, on first day of absence if contact has not been made by parents/carers;
- include parents/carers in reintegration plans;
- make full use of computer generated letters regarding attendance and punctuality;
- promote expectation of absence letters/phone calls from parents/carers; and
- promote good attendance via the the PRAISE Code – Attendance Pyramid.

To ensure that students are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality the schools will:

- establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality;
- relate attendance issues directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum;
- display materials at focal points – near student reception etc;
- reward students half termly for 100% attendance via PRAISE Code or termly (Sixth Form);
- record lates to school and lates to lessons;
- include students in reintegration plans;
- highlight attendance in PHSCE, assemblies and registration and
- not allow students from Years 9 to 11 off site for lunchtimes.
- not allow students in Years 12 and 13 off site before 10.35am or 11.35am at key periods of the school year.

To raise the profile of attendance and punctuality to school staff/Local Advisory Group we will:

- relate attendance issues directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum;

- provide information regarding attendance in staff handbook, school prospectus and website;
- provide INSET for appointed/promoted staff/new tutors;
- produce annual reports to the Local Advisory Group; and
- discuss attendance issues in Attendance and Welfare Officer/Pastoral staff meetings and in relevant staff meetings (for example attendance review meetings, pastoral management meetings, multi agency meetings).

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED by the principal (not by parents/carers). This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absence codes are entered in line with statutory guidance.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If students are late at the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher/tutor getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

- the school day usually starts at 8.40am and we expect students to be in registration at that time;
- afternoon registration is at the start of Period 5;
- morning registers are marked at 8.40am and students will receive a late mark if they are not in registration by that time;
- For Main School students, lateness to school will result in a formal written warning (planner comment). Three planner comments in a week will lead to detention (please see PRAISE code guidance);
- at Post 16, students are able to apply for their ILA (Independent Learner Award) which allows them to come in late once per week if they have no lessons. Any student who is late for registration or lesson regularly will be monitored by his or her tutor and placed on report.
- if a student is late into registration or school, they must report to student reception or sixth form reception. Failure to do so will result in a further sanction;
- Registers will be closed at 9.30am. In accordance with regulations, if students arrive after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents/carers of compulsory school age students could face the possibility of a referral to the Attendance and Welfare Officer and face legal sanctions if the problem persists;

- if a student has a persistent late record parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Pastoral Team and/or Attendance and Welfare Officer to resolve the problem. Parents/carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

Absence Procedures

- if a Gosforth Academy student is absent parents/carers must contact school by 8.30am on each day of absence by telephone on (0191) 255 9020 which has a 24-hour answering service, or for Sixth Form telephone (0191) 255 9040;
- send a note in to student reception/sixth form tutor on the first day of their child's return with an explanation for the absence – they should do this even though they have contacted school by telephone; and
- parents/carers can call into school and report an absence for Main School to reception or email studentabsence@ga.newcastle.sch.uk; however, it is preferable to make telephone contact.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

If a student is absent, on the first day of absence we will:

- mark the absence in line with statutory guidance with authorisation being at the discretion of the Principal. An Admin Assistant (Attendance) will gather the information regarding absence and mark the register appropriately giving consistency and allowing for more effective data interrogation. The reasons given for absence will be noted on the school system by an Admin Assistant (Attendance);
- mark the absence as unauthorised in the first instance if no reason for absence has been given;
- telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not received a reason. An Admin Assistant (Attendance) will ring the parents of those students that are marked absent in registration and whose parents have not rung in, which begins at 11am;
- where no contact is made the Admin Assistant (Attendance) will liaise with the school Attendance and Welfare Officer for further investigation.
- any missing students' names are passed to their Pastoral Manager/Learning Manager/Sixth Form Tutor; and
- if telephone contact is not made and there are absences with no reason given, then a letter will be sent out by the Admin Assistant (Attendance) requesting the information regarding the absence of a child within one week of the absence (this applies to Main School only).
- Home visit, by the Attendance and Welfare team, will take place for students who are absent from school.

Telephone Numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers, including for absence, so we need to have current contact numbers at all times. It is parents'/carers' responsibility to make sure we always have an up to date number.

Frequent Absence

If a child is frequently absent we will:

- contact parents/carers and students to see if support can be given to deal with any issues causing absence;
- invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with our Attendance and Welfare Officer and Pastoral Team if absences persist;
- refer the matter to the Attendance and Welfare Officer if the attendance of a Main School student moves below 90%, for consideration for a Parenting Contract;
- Students whose attendance falls below 96% will be in the amber zone and a letter will be sent to parents/carers to inform them of their child's attendance level. Parents/carers may also be invited in to school for a meeting.
- invite parents/carers and students in for a reintegration with their learning manager if a significant amount of school has been missed (Main School).
- ask for further medical information if illness is given as a reason for absence on a regular basis. Please note that we will not authorise absence for illness which means a student's attendance level falls below 90% unless supporting medical evidence is provided.

Sixth Form Specific Frequent Absence

- All of our Sixth Form students are enrolled on the basis that they are full-time students, taking a full programme of at least 580 guided learning hours per year. We draw down funding on this basis and are accountable for this being an accurate reflection of our students' programmes of study. Part-time timetables can therefore only be used as a temporary measure as part of a reintegration strategy leading to improved full-time attendance.
- If a student is identified as persistently or severely absent, (attendance is below 90% or 50% respectively) we ask that parents come in for meeting with the Learning Manager and Tutor. The student should also be present for all or part of this meeting. Full engagement with this process is an absolute necessity on the part of parents and students.
- We follow an 'EBSNA' based approach to discussing the factors affecting attendance and will draw up an agreed strategy for improving attendance. 'EBSNA' stands for Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance and is an approach to identifying the barriers to attendance in a non-stigmatising and supportive way. This will include discussing the 'push/pull' factors to school attendance for an individual student and then the drawing up of an agreement, with targets. This will create an action plan and attendance contract, with review dates. The agreement is also likely to include some bespoke arrangements to support improved attendance.
- Follow up meetings will be arranged for each of the review dates, which will be at fortnightly intervals over the course of six weeks, with the final meeting being a final review, at which either the student moves on from the support period or is progressed to next steps.
- School, parents, and student will all sign to agree to play a fully engaged role in the support strategy.

- Some examples of bespoke arrangements to help students meet the needs of push/pull factors identified include, for example, a phased reintegration, timetable changes or referral to the school counsellor.
- By the time of the final review (which will involve the Deputy Principal), students must have met threshold of 90% attendance in the weekly data total.
- If the threshold is met and then attendance deteriorates again, students re-enter the support cycle but this time it will be a four-week cycle. The cycle can only be re-entered once in each year of Sixth Form. (i.e. two support cycles in Year 12 and two in Year 13 maximum).
- If a student does not meet the threshold on a first or a second occasion in any given year, the following possible options will be applied, as appropriate to the circumstances:
 - The student comes off roll but is offered a restart the following year (usually suitable when a long term mental or physical health issue lies behind the attendance);
 - The student comes off roll and is offered a progression appointment and support to apply for an alternative destination (usually suitable when a student has no significant underlying health issues affecting attendance);
 - The student comes off roll and sits exams as an eternal student, with exam fees paid by parent (usually only suitable when a student is in the final term of Yr 13 and there are no apparent safeguarding concerns);
 - The student stays on roll but has to drop one or more courses in order to maximise achievement, with exam fees paid by school only if there is then 90% attendance at lessons for remaining course(s) (usually only suitable when a student is in the final term of Yr 13).

At all times, our guiding principle is to do what is best for each individual student and to support their progression routes through to fulfilling their ambitions.

Main School Students PRAISE Code – Attendance Pyramid

We consider that students who have over 96% attendance to be attending well and in our green zone of the PRAISE Code - Attendance Pyramid. Those who fall below 96% down to 91% have attendance that is a concern and are in the amber zone. These parents/carers will be informed of our concern either by telephone contact or by letter. Those students with below 90% attendance are classed as persistently absent and can be referred to the Local Authority. These students are in the red zone and they will be internally monitored for a four week period. Parents/carers of those main school students failing to achieve above 90% during this monitoring period will be invited into school to complete a parenting contract with a member of the pastoral team and/or the Attendance and Welfare Officer. Should improvements not be forthcoming and attendance does not rise to at least 90%, then legal sanctions are likely to commence.

Parenting Contract: Main School

A parenting contract is a formal written agreement between a parent/carer, the Local Authority and School and will be offered if a student has irregular attendance. They are intended to encourage a positive working relationship between the school, Local Authority, parents/carers and students. Under

the contract, all agree to do certain things for a specified period which are realistic and which address the issues of non-attendance. If the Local Authority pursues legal sanctions against a parent, any endeavour to comply with a parenting contract may assist their case; similarly, any unreasonable failure or refusal to comply with a contract may also be presented as evidence in the case.

Persistent Absentee (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when he or she misses 10% or more schooling for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any Main School student who is seen to have reached the PA mark, or is at risk of moving towards that level, is given priority and parents will be informed by letter from the school's Attendance and Welfare Officers.

PA pupils in Main School are tracked and monitored carefully. All PA cases and those at risk of becoming PA are closely monitored by our Attendance and Welfare Officers and legal referrals to the Local Authority may be made in circumstances where improvement in attendance is not made or sustained.

Leave in term time

Students should not take holidays or seek leave of absence in term time. Any requests need to be made in advance on the school absence request form (available from the student office). Please note that only the school has the right to authorise absence and, in line with statutory guidelines, the school may only authorise such absence in exceptional circumstances.

Leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not arranging to take children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice.

School term dates are as advertised by Newcastle Local Authority. Parents/carers are notified of any modifications by newsletter at various points in the year. All parents/carers receive a copy of key calendar dates, including module dates, at the start of the year and these are available on the school website.

The school must notify Social Care:

If there is any unexplained absence of a pupil with a Child Protection Plan of more than two days (consecutive) duration from school, or one day following a weekend; or as agreed as part of any child protection or core group plan.

Attendance Procedures for Staff

All staff have a responsibility for monitoring the attendance of students. They should refer attendance concerns to Tutors, Plan Managers, Senior Learning Pastoral Supervisor, Learning Manager and Leaders of Teaching and Learning where appropriate. Time may be wasted by following up non-attendance issues that other staff are already aware of. This can portray school in a bad light and may cause unnecessary stress to pupils and parents/carers. Staff must pass on all attendance information to the admin assistant with responsibility for attendance. Staff should remember that some pupils are vulnerable and all students should be welcomed back from absence in a positive manner.

Registration

Tutors and class teachers will mark a student as present, late or unauthorised absence (/ present am, \ present pm L late or O absent). The accuracy of registers will be monitored by the Admin Assistant (Attendance). Any issues with registers will be taken to senior management for further action. A school register is a legal document that must be filled in accurately.

All staff have a responsibility to complete a register accurately, and as early in the lesson as is practical, for every class they teach.

Communication with students (Main School)

Tutors and Plan Managers are responsible for the promotion of high standards of achievement. This is done through regularly monitoring indicators of pupil progress such as attendance. They complete termly 'informed conversations' with students where targets are set and reviewed and punctuality and attendance discussed (see staff handbook). All staff must maintain the PRAISE Code system - Rewards are issued for half termly 100% attendance and punctuality. Lates to school and lates to lessons are recorded in planners by staff.

Staff should be aware of issues that may impact on a student's attendance such as low self-esteem or other personal issues and refer/discuss appropriate actions with the most relevant member of the pastoral team.

Communication with students (Sixth Form)

In the Sixth Form, rewards are issued termly for 95% attendance and no punctuality detentions that term. ILA 1 and ILA 2 can also be gained to reward students who show they are Independent Learners.

Attendance Procedures for Staff with Pastoral Responsibilities

The Head of Year/Senior Learning and Pastoral Supervisors/Tutors and Learning Managers will, where relevant:

- carry out initial enquiries/intervention prior to referral to other agencies or members of school staff.
- refer to the Attendance and Welfare Officers;
- gather and record relevant information to assist completion of Local Authority Attendance Team referral forms;
- have priority given to timetabled meetings with Attendance and Welfare Officer;
- respond to lateness by speaking to both students and parents/carers;
- discuss attendance issues in Attendance and Welfare Officer/Pastoral staff meetings and in relevant staff meetings (for example, attendance review meetings, pastoral management meetings, multi agency meetings);
- Heads of Year of Main School will meet with the Senior Learning and Pastoral Supervisor once per week to discuss attendance related matters;
- Heads of Year of Main School will meet with the Attendance and Welfare Officer once per fortnight to identify developing patterns of irregular attendance and lateness, those at risk of becoming PA and action plans to address these issues;
- Heads of Year of Main School will keep a running total for all students who have < 90% cumulative attendance to monitor trends, and reasons given for absence. This will form the basis of a discussion between them and Attendance and Welfare Officer
- Learning Managers in the Sixth Form will keep a log of any student below 90% attendance and provide reasons for absence. Those with no good reason for poor attendance will be spoken to and interventions will be used to address the issues.

Pastoral staff will contact teaching staff by email to ensure that students are given the opportunity to catch up and reconnect with their work. School have developed a scheme which allows students to access work electronically. This is called FROG. It can be accessed via the website vle.ga.newcastle.sch.uk or from our webpage.

The Senior Management Team will:

- be given protected time allocation to fulfil their responsibilities regarding attendance and punctuality;
- be responsible for monitoring consistency in registration procedures;
- be responsible for ensuring that all staff are trained to use the electronic registration system;
- be responsible disseminating attendance data to Governors;
- work with the Attendance and Welfare Officer to analyse data by vulnerability factors, absence categories, classes and year group and to relate attendance data with attainment data;
- regularly review attendance data and procedural issues and have a written plan of action to improve attendance included in the school improvement plan;
- ensure there is a governor with responsibility for attendance matters; and
- work with the Attendance and Welfare Officer to develop strategies to deal with issues that arise through consultations with staff or data analysis.

Attendance Monitoring Procedures: Main School

Parents/carers should be aware that legal action is likely to be taken if attendance (or punctuality) for students of compulsory school age falls below the threshold of 90%.

Parents/carers will be invited in to complete a parenting contract if their son or daughter's attendance falls below 90%. A letter containing a four week monitoring period will be sent from the Local Authority Attendance Service. If the student has four or more half day sessions of unauthorised absence in the monitoring period the parents will be invited to answer questions under caution. A decision will be made by a senior member of the Attendance Service to take no further action, recommend an Education Supervision Order, issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or referral for prosecution.

Attendance and Welfare Officer: Main School

An Attendance and Welfare Officer is employed by Gosforth Academy. The duties are to:

- check all individual registration certificates on a regular basis to check on levels of attendance and absence patterns;
- respond daily to registration printouts from the Admin Assistant (Attendance) for students who are missing without reason or have an unsatisfactory reason for absence;
- provide lists of all students with attendance of 90% or under for the fortnightly meetings with Pastoral team;
- produce half termly reports to Tutors and the Pastoral Team with class and year group attendance and targets;
- ensure that information regarding students with attendance issues identified by feeder school Attendance and Welfare Officers is passed on to relevant pastoral staff;
- carry out regular post registration truancy checks by looking at lesson marks;
- continue with the current system so that letters can be sent electronically on a termly basis;
- work with Senior Learning and Pastoral Supervisors to identify appropriate parents/carers to be invited in, to complete Parenting Contracts and be part of the meeting if the parent engages;
- request further medical information by letter from parents who regularly attribute their child's absence to illness;
- refer to the Local Authority Attendance Service for legal monitoring;
- work with the Senior Management Team to analyse data by vulnerability factors, absence categories and class/year groups;
- work with the Senior Management Team to develop strategies to deal with issues that arise through consultations with staff/data analysis; and
- work with school staff to identify appropriate students that require flexible learning opportunities.

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the case to the Local Authority Attendance Service, they will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the Local Authority can use sanctions such as Fixed Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Parents/carers may wish to contact the Attendance Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. The telephone number is 0191 2774500.

Dealing with attendance in the wider community

We work across our Feeder Schools to promote good attendance and punctuality. We encourage active involvement of other services and agencies in the life of the school. We have established and maintain a list of named contacts within the local community for example community police contact officer. We arrange multi-agency liaison meetings as appropriate.

Children Missing Education

Parents' Responsibilities

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving efficient full-time education. Some parents may elect to educate their children at home and may withdraw them from school at any time to do so, unless they are subject to a School Attendance Order. Where a parent notifies the school in writing of their intention to home educate, the school must inform the Local Authority, before deleting the student from its admission register. If there are safeguarding concerns around the decision to home educate, these will be passed on to the Local Authority.

There are many reasons why a child stops attending a school. It could be because the parent chooses to home educate their child. However, where the reason for a child who has stopped attending a school is not known, the local authority must investigate the case and ensure the child is receiving suitable education.

'Suitable education' means efficient full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have.

A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August they are of the compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

School's Responsibilities

School must also notify the Local Authority if a pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. It is also important that pupils' irregular attendance is referred to the authority.

Schools also have safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences.

Schools must also arrange full-time education for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed period exclusion, or the first day if the child is a Looked After child. This information can be found in the Gosforth Group Exclusion policy.

Targets

The schools have targets to improve attendance. Parents/carers and students have an important part to play in meeting these targets. Targets for the school are displayed in the school and students should take time to study them.

The attendance target for Gosforth Academy is 96% attendance and 95% attendance in Sixth Form. We will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how each individual student's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this, however, because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Our targets for 2023/2024

- Our target for persistent absence is to remain below the national average of 13.5%
- Our target for absence is 4% or below (Main School) and 5% or below (Sixth Form)
- Our target for unauthorised absence is to remain below the national average of 1.3%

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a legal responsibility to make sure that their children attend school regularly. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils to ensure the highest level of attendance possible.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 19 October 2023