

# Gilford Primary School



## Attendance Policy

## **Introduction**

At Gilford Primary School, we want the whole school community - governors, staff, parents and pupils to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Good attendance helps the children to maximise their learning. This policy will support us all to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

## **Legal Duty**

Section 7 of Education Act 1996 states;

*Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.*

*The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full time education suitable -*

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and*
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise*

## **Target Setting**

'Local authorities and schools should note they are no longer required to set targets for persistent absence and overall attendance respectively and the regulations will be amended accordingly. The Department however remains firmly of the view that unnecessary absence is unacceptable and must be prevented and tackled by schools.

The Department therefore expects all schools and local authorities to continue focusing on reducing overall absence, particularly unauthorised absence and persistent absence. Absence will continue to be monitored closely via the pupil level school census and the Secretary of State's power to require an individual school to set absence targets where a school's absence record is of particular concern is being retained.'

A new inspection framework for maintained schools and academies will be introduced in January 2012. The quality of teaching and learning judgement relates to attendance because, however good the teaching, it does not benefit pupils if they are not present.

### **Expectations**

The responsibility for good attendance is shared between school, parents and pupils. All these groups need to understand the expectations which the policy makes of them. Gilford Primary School:

- will provide a safe learning environment
- will ensure that records of attendance are maintained according to Government legislation and guidance on a daily basis
- will follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality

The expectations for parents:

- Parents are expected to ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped, according to the School's uniform policy and in a fit condition to learn
- Parents will inform school on the first day of absence, of the reason for their child's absence from school
- Parents will maintain regular communication with school staff where necessary
- Parents will ensure that school are informed of any changes of contact details

The expectations for pupils:

- All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually
- Pupils must remember to hand any note giving reasons for absence to the relevant person
- Pupils are expected to be ready to learn

## Day to day procedures

- Entry to the building
  - The bell rings at 8.45am and the entrance door is open and pupils enter the building. Please note there is no supervision in the playground before 8.45am
  - The entrance doors will close at 9.00am, after this time children will need to be signed in via the school office as late.
  - If there is severe adverse weather children will be supervised in the assembly hall by a member of staff

## Registration

- Registers are called between 8.55am and 9.00am
- Registers close at 9.10am. Registers are marked consistently by staff.
- Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed they are marked as being late. If an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the child has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

## Lateness

- A log of lateness is kept for all children arriving late with reasons given for the lateness.
- Parents whose children are regularly late for school, will be contacted by the Headteacher, to make an appointment to discuss why the child is regularly late. The school will work with the parent(s) to bring about an improvement in punctuality. Strategies to improve punctuality may include individual charts or rewards, individual signing in books etc. The attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) is informed and appropriate action taken.

## **Leaving and returning to School during School Day**

- When pupils leave or return to school during the school day, parents must sign their children in at the office.

## **Absences**

Parents are responsible for informing the school if their child absent. This should be done on the first day of absence and at the time should also provide an explanation for the absence. On a daily basis, if your child is going to be absent from school for any reason, we ask parents to do one of the following:

- Telephone the school as soon as possible before 9.15am
- Inform the School Office in person
- Send a written note to the school in advance of the absence

Absences are authorised by designated staff within the school, children will have individual records of attendance / punctuality acknowledged by the school. The school may decide not to authorise absence, even when a reason is provided. Parents should avoid if at all possible making medical / dental appointments for their child during school hours. Pupils who have been sick at home are to be kept home for 24 hours from the last time of sickness.

## **Authorised / Unauthorised Absence**

It is vital that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

At Gilford absences are recorded according to 'School Attendance: Policy and Practice of Categorisation of Absence' (DfES 1994). This states that absence can be authorised if:

- The pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the Governing Body or proprietor of the school')
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body of which the pupil's parent belongs
- There is a family bereavement
- The pupil is participating in an exceptional special occasion (e.g. the graduation of an older sibling)

Absence should be unauthorised if: (NB: Only the school can authorise absence)

- No explanation if forthcoming
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The pupil stays at home due to a parent being unwell
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings
- The pupil is shopping during school hours
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions (e.g. Birthday)
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday for a period of time longer than that negotiated with the school
- The pupil is on family holiday without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday, and instead seek retrospective approval on their return.

### **Following up Absence – First Day Response**

- If after the close of registration there is no explanation for a child's absence, the priority 1 contact will be called

- Please inform the office of any weekly patterns which would require a different priority contact to be called

## Holidays

Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for a holiday. If in exceptional circumstances parents apply to the Headteacher, in writing, at least 2 weeks in advance, the school may grant authorised absence. Requests for holiday absences will be considered individually. When making the decision the Headteacher will consider the following factors:

- The amount of time requested
- Age of the child
- The child's general absence / attendance record
- Proximity to SATs and assessment periods
- Child's ability to catch up the work
- Child's educational needs
- General welfare of the child
- Circumstances of the request / purpose of the leave
- Frequency of the activity
- When the request was made

## Rewards

Gilford Primary School rewards good attendance. Certificates will be awarded for

- 100% attendance at end of school year
- Children whose punctuality or attendance improves significantly
- Best class attendance month

## Working with the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)

Gilford Primary School works in partnership with the allocated AIO to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school.

The school works with individual children and their parents to improve poor attendance. When attendance does not improve sufficiently, and after discussion with the AIO the school will make a formal referral to Children's Services.

### **Publication of Information**

Parents, pupils, staff and governors are informed of whole school attendance issues and statistics on a regular basis. The School shares information on individual pupils' attendance as necessary with parents, pupils and staff.

A summary of this policy is included in the School Prospectus and Information for New Parents.