

Attendance Policy



Groveside
School

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Document History

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1. AIMS

The aims of this policy are to:

- Outline Groveside School's and government's expectations around promoting good attendance and punctuality
- Communicate the benefits of good attendance
- Reduce unauthorised absence and act early to address patterns of absence
- Detail attendance and absence procedures
- Articulate how Groveside School monitors and evaluates attendance
- Describe the strategies and support Groveside School and its staff utilise to enable an improvement in pupil attendance and support families

2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance 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:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3. A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

Groveside School strongly promotes, encourages and celebrates good attendance for all its pupils and their families because of the benefits it provides to each pupil's personal development and academic progress.

However, we recognise that many of our pupils are experiencing ongoing mental health needs, and some are in crisis. In these circumstances, each pupil's attendance is viewed individually and within the context of each pupil's needs and it is essential that Groveside School, parents/carers and other professionals communicate and work together to understand, promote, improve good attendance on an individual, pupil level.

Punctuality is part of Groveside School's expectation of good attendance but as a school, with many young people being transported by Local Authority transport, this is sometimes out of their control. Groveside embeds a whole school approach to attendance in which all staff, pupils and parents/carers understanding the benefits of good attendance and believe in this mindset.

All staff are trained in valuing and celebrating good attendance and identifying persistent or declining attendance to ensure early intervention. As a school, we work in partnership with the pupil and their family to be a positive, safe and welcoming environment in which they want to be present. We

communicate the benefits of good attendance throughout a pupil's time and celebrate this in reports and communication with families.

However, as per our Admissions Policy, many of our pupils have experienced significant gaps in education, and/or have experienced emotionally-based school avoidance. Therefore, we set expectations around attendance for each pupil and allowing them the time to achieve this goal. We want to work with our pupils and their families to be able our pupils to contribute to our school community but, for most, this takes patience and time for them to achieve.

During our admissions process we identify those who experience emotionally-based school avoidance, or with significant gaps in education, and work with the pupil's previous school, their family and the Local Authority to support this from the start of their journey at Groveside School to develop a bespoke attendance plan.

Appendix A, taken from "Working together to improve school attendance" captures our whole school approach.

4. BENEFITS OF GOOD ATTENDANCE

There are numerous benefits to a young person's mental health and wellbeing, personal, social and academic from regularly attending school. These benefits can be taken for granted and easily overlooked. At Groveside School we feel it is important to communicate the positives of regular attendance.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of the benefits for pupils who regularly attend into the following areas:

- Access support to meet learning and other needs from trained teachers and tutors
- Increase self-esteem through positive recognition of effort and achievement
- Enhance literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- Increase opportunities for college, university, employment or chosen future
- Develop forms of intelligences (e.g. emotional, interpersonal, logical-mathematical, verbal/linguistic)
- Develop confidence through learning with a supportive network of teachers, tutors and wellbeing professionals
- Increase organisational ability
- Access greater number of qualifications through regular attendance
- Experience the transformative potential of education
- Social and personal development
- Experience a sense of belonging and community outside of the family
- Build and experience friendships
- Develop resilience
- Develop teamwork and understanding of others' needs and beliefs
- Develop social communication and interaction skills
- Experience positive routine and structure
- Experience a sense of achievement
- Engage with kind and nurturing adults who can be positive role models
- Develop positive routines
- Develop practical skills, such as cooking, gardening and employability skills
- Experience new cultures, beliefs and people to broaden horizons and break down prejudice and stereotypes.
- Develop identity, purpose and independence
- Access mental health support from experienced, trained and caring adults, including signposting to other services

- Develop strategies for positive mental health and wellbeing for success in school and in post-16 education and workplace environments
- Develop confidence and self-esteem through relationships peers and trusted adults
- Develop friendships to challenge feelings of loneliness
- Develop positive relationships and routines (e.g. to support sleep)
- Attend a non-judgemental, accepting and calm environment
- Engage with physical exercise to boost mental wellbeing
- Access therapeutic activities, such as art, crafts and music to benefit wellbeing

5. ACHIEVING "GOOD" ATTENDANCE

Groveside School knows that for its pupils, who have significant gaps in education and/or have been identified as emotionally-based school avoiders, good attendance requires a bespoke, pupil-centred and holistic approach. We know from experience that pupils with mental health needs often struggle to sustain education for 30 hours per week across a school year and require flexibility at times dictated by their mental health. For example, each pupil's "battery" capacity can be too low due to their mental health and wellbeing (blue/red zone) to learn and succeed and requires a timetable intervention to prevent further escalation, and ultimately withdraw from education altogether.

It is therefore important that pupils have the opportunity to temporarily "recharge" at home and have a mental health break to develop resilience whilst learning positive and sustainable mental health strategies long term, alongside the school's mental health team, to ensure that they can sustain education and employment long term.

For every pupil, the school has designed a personalised "good" attendance figure based on attendance at their previous setting and previous terms at Groveside school. This is reviewed half termly.

5.1 INDIVIDUAL ATTENDANCE PLANS (IAP)

Individual Attendance Plans (IAP) are used:

- When pupils have experienced a mental health crisis
- Struggling to sustain full-time education due to feeling burnout, exhaustion or other mental health need.

How this presents depends on each pupil and can range from proactive communication to prolonged and sustained emotional dysregulation even after bespoke mental health and wellbeing interventions on site.

There are two variations of these plans: on-site and off-site.

1. Pupils may be on site but not attending all lessons due to experiencing difficulties. In these cases, pupils are completing mindfulness activities, task trays or independent learning projects.
2. Off-site plans are for those who are struggling to manage being on school site. The Headteacher, tutor or other member of staff may identify a pupil struggling to attend school during contact with the pupil or their parent/carer.

These plans are agreed with parents/carers and recorded and reviewed fortnightly by the Headteacher. A daily safeguarding phone call takes place on the days when they are not expected to attend school or engage in face to face school visits or activities.

5.2 INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION PLANS (ITP)

Individual Transition Plans are for those pupils who start at Groveside School who are anxious about returning to education. These are gradual transition plans agreed by the Headteacher, pupil and parent.

On admission to Groveside School, the school's Pastoral Lead or SLT member will visit the pupil and their family at home. Based on the pupil, their parents/carers views, and their EHCP/background, the school will agree a bespoke transition timetable which will be reviewed every two weeks. If a pupil is doing well and wishes to attend more frequently, the school will promote and encourage this.

These plans are agreed with parents/carers and recorded and reviewed fortnightly by the Headteacher.

6. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

Alongside our timetable interventions, to improve attendance long term, the following is a non-exhaustive list of strategies and supportive measures Groveside School implements to improve attendance.

- A small step approach to returning to school, including simply "crossing the threshold"
- Implement a reduced timetable, with fortnightly reviews to look to increase the reduced timetable gradually and supportively
- Be met by a trusted member of staff at the start of each day
- Time at the start of the day (or another time during the day) with Groveside School's therapy animals.
- Accessing additional therapeutic and wellbeing support within school.
- A home visit to discuss concerns and identify appropriate support.
- A personal return to education plan can be formulated at home visits, identifying trusted adults, effective strategies and embedding pupil voice.
- Social stories and visual timetables, led by the SEND Lead
- Referrals for further support such as SEN departments, Early Help Hub, Children's Services or CAMHS.
- Hold an Interim Annual Review

If following all these interventions a pupil continues not to attend education, and other strategies have been put in place, and there has not been any other safeguarding considerations which have prompted a Children's Services referral will be made.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 THE HEADTEACHER

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

7.2 THE DESIGNATED SENIOR LEADER RESPONSIBLE FOR ATTENDANCE

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating Individual Timetable and Individual Attendance Plan in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Headteacher

7.3 TEACHERS AND TUTORS

Teachers and tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9.30am each school day and again every afternoon.

It is everyone's responsibility to share concerns around attendance of pupils.

7.4 PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends according to their timetable.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9.15am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

7.5 PUPILS

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend every according to their timetable

8 PROCEDURES

Schools have to register attendance twice per day – at the start of the day and after lunch. Registers are open for 30 minutes in the morning and 5 minutes in the afternoon but it is the expectation that these will be completed at the beginning (within the first 5 minutes) of these form periods.

8.1 INFORMING SCHOOL OF AN ABSENCE

If your child will be absent on a specific day, please use the following procedures to inform the school.

If you know that your child will be absent in advance (e.g. a medical appointment) please contact the school by:

- Phone on 01183 744556
- Email at info@grovesideschool.co.uk

If your child has an unexpected absence (i.e. illness), we ask that you contact us by email or phone by 9.15am using details provided above.

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school directly on the first day of absence, and all subsequent days, with a reason for absence.

Parents/carers who do not make contact with the school regarding a child's absence and cannot be contacted by the school will have an unauthorised absence recorded for their child.

If no contact is received by 9:45am the school admin team will contact you directly as part of our safeguarding procedures.

8.2 REQUESTING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE

If you wish to request a leave of absence (e.g. holiday), please contact the School office.

The Education (Pupil Registration England) Regulations 2013 regulations make clear that Headteachers can only grant leave of absence during term time when there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will determine if the request for an absence in term time is exceptional and will consider each request on a case by case basis.

If a request is made for longer than 10 days parents/carers will be contacted to discuss the request. Similarly, if multiple short breaks are requested that add up to 5 days parents/carers will be contacted to discuss the matter.

Senior Leaders and Governors at Groveside School fully recognise the stress and sensory overload that some children can experience in crowded situations from high levels of noise, needing to queue etc. When children are stressed this places additional strain on the rest of the family. This means that for some families to have a relaxing, restful holiday this needs to take place outside busy school holiday periods.

Please contact the school office for a copy of a term time leave request form.

9 ATTENDANCE MONITORING

9.1 MONITORING ATTENDANCE

The school will:

Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual level Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

9.2 ANALYSING ATTENDANCE

The school will:

Analyse attendance and absence data monthly to identify pupils and cohorts in need of additional support with their attendance and use this analysis to provide targeted support for these pupils and their families.

Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

9.3 REDUCING PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE

Attendance and absence is discussed at pupil review meetings, which can include Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Annual Reviews, Individual Education Plans (IEP), and any meeting requested by parents/carers or suggested by the school.

School attendance is reported termly to the Groveside School governing board including the cohorts overall percentage, the number of 'persistently' and 'severely' absent, and is differentiated by category of vulnerable pupils (e.g. Child Protection, SEND, EAL, Looked After Child, Pupil Premium, FSM and Looked After Children). The overall attendance percentage is compared term-on-term and year-by-year.

10. SAFEGUARDING AND EXTERNAL SUPPORT

As outlined in this policy, Groveside School will be in daily contact with parents/carers if their child is absent.

If Groveside School staff are not able to contact the two emergency contacts provided during admission this will prompt an unannounced visit from a member of the safeguarding team. For Reading and the surrounding area this will take place within 48 hours. This may take longer for pupils living outside of this radius due to the small size of the school and may prompt a Children's Services referral.

If there is no one at home or no contact is made at the home visit the member of the safeguarding team will contact the police and make a referral to the relevant Childrens Services.

A pupil's absence could be indicative of a deeper issue. Although Groveside School will do all it can to support a pupil and their family, there will be some support that it cannot provide and require the involvement of other partners and agencies, such as Early Help, CAMHS and the Local Authority.

After Groveside School has exhausted all other options, it will seek to involve other partners, which may include legal intervention (see "Working together to improve school attendance").

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, Groveside School recognises the safeguarding risks associated with those pupils who are absent from education and proactively acts to prevent this.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to lead these discussions with the pupil and their family following home visits and other communication.

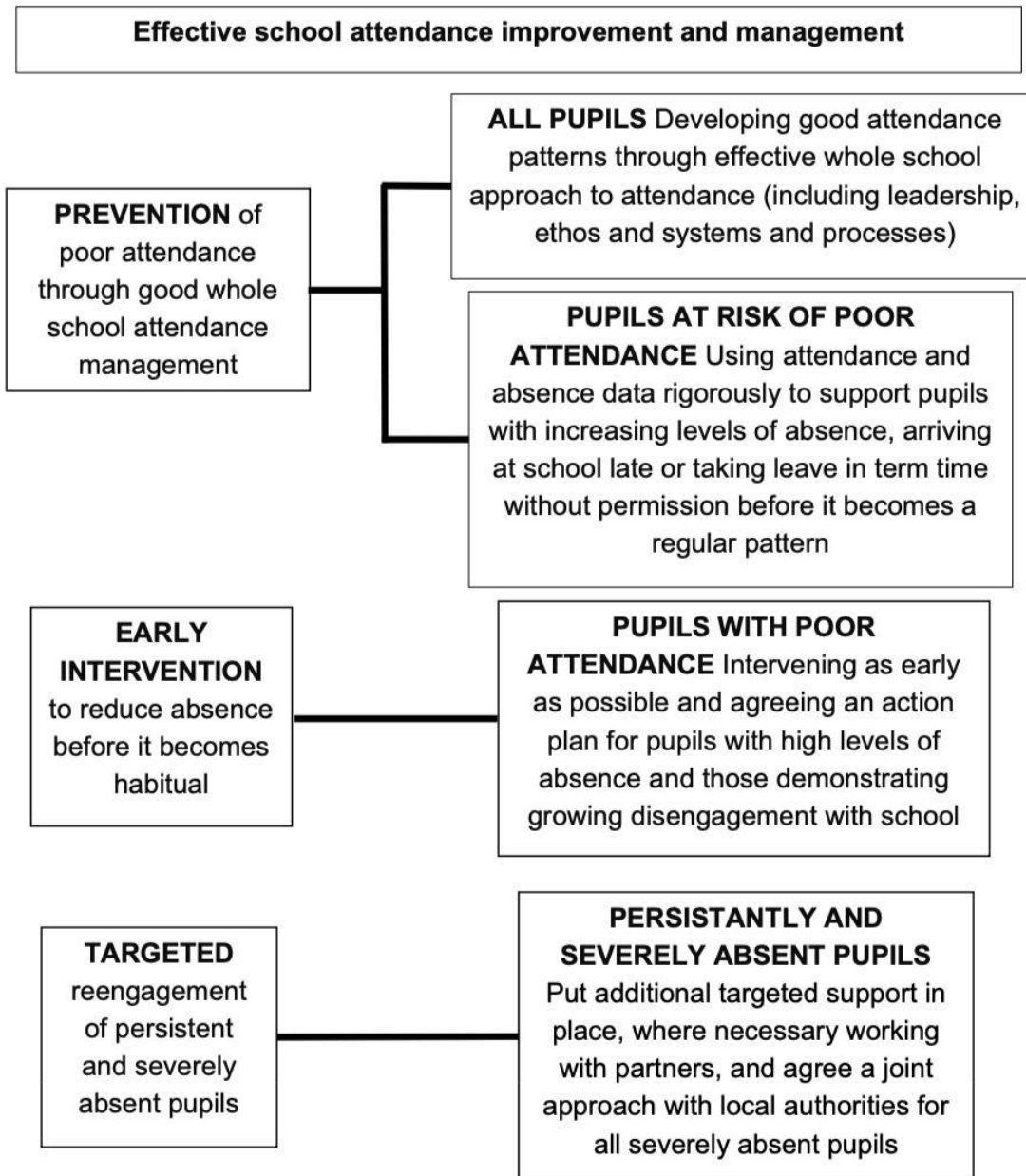
Ultimately, if attendance does not improve, it indicates that Groveside School is not the correct placement for that pupil.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix A: whole school approach to managing and improving attendance

Appendix B: Working together to improve attendance absence codes

Appendix A: whole school approach to managing and improving attendance



Appendix B : Working together to improve attendance absence codes

Attendance Code Changes - effective 19th August 2024

Blue – nature of absence needs to be recorded

Red – New or replacement codes

Code	Code Name	Description of Code
/	Present	AM session - present at school when attendance register is taken
\	Present	PM session - present at school when attendance register is taken
B	Educated off site	Offsite supervised activity approved by the school (not at home). <i>(Nature of the educational activity must be recorded in the Nature of Absence area)</i>
C	Absent with permission - other	Authorised by the school - other circumstances
C1	Absent with permission - performance	Leave of absence for regulated performance or employment abroad
C2	Absent with permission - part time timetable	Leave of absence for period of temporary part time education
D	Dual registered	Scheduled to attend another school at which they are registered
E	Suspension/Exclusion	Suspension or exclusion (but no alternative provision made)
G	Unauthorised holiday	Holiday not authorised by the school
I	Illness	Illness - not medical or dental
J1	Interview	Interview for employment or other educational institution
K	Other education provision	Attending a place, other than the school or another school at which they are a registered pupil, for educational provision arranged by the LA. <i>(Nature of the educational activity must be recorded in the Nature of Absence area)</i>
L	Late (before register close)	Late arrival before the register has closed
M	Medical or dental	Attending a medical or dental appointment (should not be used for periods of illness)
N	Reason for absence not yet provided	Temporary code to be used when not aware of the reason for absence. Code should be amended once the reason has been established
O	Unauthorised absence	Absent from school without authorisation
P	Supervised sporting activity	Supervised and approved activity by the school
Q	No access arrangements	Local authority not provided access arrangements
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence for religious observance
S	Study leave	Study leave to be granted to Year 11 pupils for public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those students who wish to attend school to revise
T	Traveller absence	To be used when traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the schools, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

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U	Late (after register close)	Arrived after registration has closed. Schools should be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek and explanation
V	Education visit	Attendance at an organised trip or visit (including residential trips organised by the school or supervised trip of an educational nature by an organisation approved by the school)
W	Work experience	Work experience for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Failure to attend work experience placement must be recorded using the appropriate code.
X	Not required to be in school	Non-compulsory age children not expected to attend school
Y1	Transport not available	Transport normally provided not available and not within walking distance to school
Y2	Widespread travel disruption	Widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Partial school premise closure	Part of school premises is unavoidably out of use
Y4	Whole school unexpected closure	School is unexpectedly closed (for example - adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil in criminal justice detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Attendance at school would be contrary/prohibited by guidance/law relating to incidence or transmission of infection or disease
Y7	Other unavoidable cause	Other unavoidable cause (not covered by any other Y code above). (Nature of the educational activity must be recorded in the Nature of Absence area)
Z	Pupil not on admission register	For enablement of registers in advance of pupils joining the school. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that it has been agreed that the pupils will attend
#	Planned whole school closure	Planned whole school closure (school holiday, bank holiday, INSET)