Attendance & Punctuality Policy

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

It also refers to:

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

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 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

3.3 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
- 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 intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Louise Aziz and can be contacted via 0208 540 1053.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Pia Woods-Vinasco and can be contacted via 0208 540 1053.

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis and submitting this information to the school office via SIMS.
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues

3.6 School admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9:00am 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

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.
We take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils should arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer should notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school admin staff or completing an absence GoogleForm via the school website.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a print out from their child's records between the specific

dates, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence (the School Office can advise what else may constitute appropriate medical evidence) We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Requests for leave of absence should be recorded on our relevant form. The form can be accessed via a Google form on our school website or a paper copy can be provided from the school office.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Please refer to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed at (8:50-9:15am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed (9.15am) will be marked as an **unauthorised absence**, using the appropriate code (U)

Persistent lateness: We believe that a pupil arriving late will not receive the best outcomes. Arriving late can be unsettling for the pupil and may cause classroom disruption. Parents who bring children to school persistently late will be invited to attend a School Attendance meeting.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may make a home visit. If contact cannot be made by the end of the first day, the police may be called
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer following the EWS Missing Child Procedure
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels every year.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The School Attendance (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2024 state 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.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form. The form can be accessed via a Google form Request for Leave or a paper copy can be provided from the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. A response to the application for Leave of Absence in Term Time will be sent to the parent/carer within 7 days.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – the headteacher will use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence
- Wedding of an immediate family member
- Attendance at secondary school tests, interviews, open days and induction days
- Parent travelling for occupational purposes

The following will not usually be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Birthday treat
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member
- Parent/carer's working commitments (other than travelling) - if a parent provides evidence that they cannot take LOA in school holiday periods consideration of this evidence will be given.

The only criteria that will be considered for leave of absence in term time is the exceptional nature of the request for the absence. We will not consider your child's current attendance or attainment in order to decide the outcome of your request.

5.2 Legal sanctions

Any leave of absence that is not authorised may result in a Penalty Notice being issued and/or prosecution under s4441 Education Act 1996, by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £160 per child if paid within 28 days reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- If the child has been marked as unauthorised absence for 10 sessions in a 10 school week period
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where a pupil is suspended or excluded and is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

5.3 Suspension from school

With effect from the 1st September 2022, any pupil who has been suspended from school, and provision arranged, if the student does not attend the provision this shall be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may result in further action taken by the school, please see also the penalty notice section.

5.4 Part-time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. (Working Together to Improve School Attendance).

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision.

There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, we have agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised and code in the register as a C, which is an authorised absence.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

- An end of year summary is sent home at the end of the summer term.
- The headteacher will remind the children (in assemblies etc.) about the importance of good attendance and will also regularly remind parents in letters and School Newsletter. The fortnightly School Newsletter will also inform parents & carers about the whole school attendance so far this year and how that compares to the school target of 97%. It will also detail the attendance over the last two weeks of each year group.
- It is made clear that if children are genuinely unwell then they should not attend school but feeling a bit 'under the weather' or 'wanting a day at home' are not acceptable.
- A weekly 'Best Attendance' Garfield and "Punctuality" Garfield (Reception to Year 6) is awarded during the Friday achievement assembly.

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data daily, fortnightly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level

- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data monthly (from late September) to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.
- The headteacher and Attendance officer meet fortnightly (from the end of September) to review the attendance of all pupils. The reasons for the absence are investigated.
- If a child's attendance has fallen below 95% and there is no clear, ***valid*** explanation for the low attendance (e.g. single illness) we will write a letter to the parents & carers explaining that attendance has fallen below the school's expected threshold of 96% and offer support. This is recorded on the Attendance Follow up log.
- If the child's attendance does not improve & falls below 92%, parents & carers will be written to to make them aware that their child's attendance has fallen below 92%. They will be alerted to the fact that if attendance falls below 90%, the Local Authority will be alerted. Parents/carers may be asked to meet with the headteacher/Deputy Headteacher to discuss the support that can be offered and what the next steps are in ensuring the attendance improves.
- If attendance falls below 90% or if the informal support from school is not working, an attendance contract meeting may be offered. An attendance contract is a formal written agreement with the School, Parent(s), Pupil(s), and (sometimes)the School Education Welfare Officer (EWO). An attendance contract is not a punitive tool and is designed to provide a support framework. Attendance Contracts should be in place for a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 12 months. A review date should be set at the initial meeting.
- If there have been no improvements to attendance, the School may consider completing an Early Help Assessment (EHA) to explore the needs of the whole family and take a Team Around the Family (TAF) approach. Where there is a whole family plan in place, an attendance contract is not required.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services (Early Help) to remove the barriers to attendance

8. Ten days unexplained absence

Any child who is absent without an explanation for 10 days in the space of 10 weeks will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the EWO. The school will include any details of the action that has been taken in the referral.

9. Children Missing from Education (CME)

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing education (CME). The Education Welfare Officer will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Parents are asked to help us by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

If a pupil moves too far from Garfield Primary to attend the school or moves out of the area/abroad the parents must complete a school leavers form, available from the school office. This will provide us with the pupil's new home address, potentially their new school name and contact details and contact information for their parents/carers. If no/insufficient detail is provided to the school, the pupil will be referred to the Local Authority as a Child Missing from Education and the Local Authority will need to make appropriate checks.

10. Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

The school attendance officer will work together with the local authority and other relevant professionals to ensure any child who is going to be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons either consecutively or cumulatively, will have access to relevant and appropriate education. This includes Public Exam provision and the education of siblings where the family have had to travel and stay away from the home for medical reasons. Please see Supporting Children with Medical Needs policy for further information.

11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

12. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy

Approved by FGB:

Reviewed annually

Appendix 1: attendance codes

Registration and absence codes September 24

Description	Registration code	Physical meaning	Statistical meaning
Attending school	**/**	Present am	Attending school
	****	Present pm	Attending school
	L	absent when the register was taken but arrives before the register is closed at 9.15	Attending school
Attending an education activity not on the school site	**B**	Attending any other approved educational activity	Attending an approved educational activity
	D	Dual registered at another school	Not counted as a possible sessions
	K	Attending an education provision arranged by the LA. Schools must record the nature of the provision, be notified of absences and record these with the relevant code.	Attending an approved educational activity
	P	Participating in a sporting activity	Attending an approved educational activity
	V	Attending an education visit or trip	Attending an approved educational activity
	W	Attending work experience	Attending an approved educational activity
Absent with authorisation	**C**	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance	Authorised absence
	C1	Participating in a regulated performance	Authorised absence
	C2	Compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable	Authorised absence
	E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Authorised absence

	I	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related)	Authorised absence
	J1	Attending an interview for admission to another educational institution	Authorised absence
	M	Attending a medical or dental appointment	Authorised absence
	R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
	S	Studying for a public examination	Authorised absence
	T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Authorised absence
Absent without authorisation	**G**	Holiday not granted by the school	Unauthorised absence
	N	Reason for absence not yet established	Unauthorised absence
	O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Unauthorised absence
	U	Arrived in school after registration closed at 9.15	Unauthorised absence
Unable to attend or not required to attend	**Q**	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	Not a possible attendance.
	X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school (under or over compulsory school age)	Not a possible attendance
	Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Not a possible attendance
	Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Not a possible attendance
	Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Not a possible attendance
	Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	Not a possible attendance
	Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	Not a possible attendance

	Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Not a possible attendance
	Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. Schools must record the nature of the provision, be notified of absences and record these with the relevant code.	Not a possible attendance
Administrative codes	**Z**	Prospective pupil not on the admission register	Not collected for statistical purposes
	#	Planned whole school closure	Not collected for statistical purposes
Codes that have been deleted	**H**	No longer in use.Exceptional leave for holiday or other reason will be recorded with the C code.	Do not use not a legal code

Garfield Primary School

Attendance Contract

Student's Name		DOB / Year group		Student's school	
Parent/carer 1 full name		Parent/Carer 2 full name		Address	
Contact number		Contact number			
Child's ethnicity		Any SEND		Date	
				Time (start/end)	
Attendance during last 12 weeks		Sessions of unauthorised absence		Number of late marks	
What are we worried about?		What's working well?		What needs to happen?	

		What will it look like to not be worried anymore?

1 ……10
On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 means (pupils name) is attending school regularly on every day the school is open and only absent in exceptional circumstances and when authorised and 1 means that (pupil's name)'s attendance is not improving, where do we rate the situation?

Targets for pupil, parent, school and agencies	**Date to be achieved by**	**Review of targets**	**Date to be achieved by**

Date of review:
This is a voluntary agreement where all parties agree to work together to follow the agreed plan to support the pupil to attend school regularly and punctually.

I agree to work together with school and the local authority to follow the agreed plan

Signed: …… Date: ……. Student's score ……
[child]

Signed: …….. Date: ……. Parent's score …….
[parent]

Signed: …….. Date: ……. Parent's score ……..
[parent]

I agree to provide the above support to the parent(s) for the purpose of complying with the plan.

Signed: …….. Date: ……. School score ……
School

I agree to provide the above support to the parent(s) for the purpose of complying with the plan.

Signed: …….. Date: ……. EWO's score ……
EWO

Signed: …….. Date: ……. Professionals score ……

Other professional List job title/role