

Greenwich House Independent School

Attendance Policy (School)

Greenwich House Independent School (“Greenwich House”) recognizes and supports the importance of attendance (including punctuality) to its pupils education and welfare. This policy has been drafted with regard to the Department for Education’s “Working Together to Improve School Attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities” (published May 2022 and applying from September 2022) (“the Attendance Guidance”).

As per the guidance, Greenwich House recognizes that the barriers to accessing education “are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families.” Greenwich House supports the view that “The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.”

Greenwich House will “work with pupils and parents [and carers] to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.” This will include a whole-school approach to addressing, where relevant, the school curriculum, dealing with behaviour and bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing support , and effective use of resources. Greenwich House will in appropriate circumstances work with other local partners including the local authority to support attendance.

The Guidance states:

“The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.”

A copy of the Attendance Guidance (which has been quoted and referred to throughout this policy and, which provides further details of the obligations incumbent on the school so far as attendance) is available on the following website:-

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073616/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

The Department for Education Children missing education Statutory guidance for local authorities September 2016 (available on the following website) also discusses schools duties so far as attendance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

Greenwich House recognizes that poor attendance can be indicative of safeguarding issues.

This policy should not be read in isolation – Greenwich House’s other policies including its Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy, Anti-bullying Policy and SEND Policy should be read alongside this policy.

The Head Teacher, Mrs. A. Brindle (info@greenwichhouseschool.com) has responsibility for championing attendance at Greenwich House School. Greenwich House is required by law to keep an admission register and an attendance register - all pupils are required to be placed on both registers.

Admission and Attendance Registers

Upon admission to the school a pupil’s personal details (, including the date of their admission (or re-admission), information regarding parents and carers and the school at which a pupil was last in attendance) will be entered into the admissions register. The local authority is required to be notified following a pupil’s admission to the school in accordance with the abovemention guidance. Amendments to the register are also required in light of a change in a pupil’s personal circumstances eg. they leave the school. When a child leaves the school, the local authority would also require to be notified in accordance with the above mentioned guidance. Other changes in personal circumstances that would require an amendment to the register would include, by way of an example, where the school is notified that a child will be living at a new address.

The attendance register is required to be taken twice a day and is required to show whether any absence is authorised or not and the type of authorised or unauthorised absence - the codes used to record attendance, an authorised absence and an unauthorised absence are set out and described in the Attendance Guidance. Authorised absence is where the Head Teacher has approved the absence, either before or afterwards. All other absences are unauthorised. The law is clear that it is schools, not parents, that authorise absence. You should write to the school to ask permission for an absence or to explain one that has already taken place.

When the school must authorise absence

The school must/would usually authorise your child’s absence for the following:

- sickness (unless exceptionally the school is aware that the illness is not authentic);
- where school transport is unavailable, e.g. because a road is impassable (unless the child is near enough to walk,)
- days exclusively set apart for religious observance
- any other ‘unavoidable cause ’(which means unavoidable individual circumstances, e.g. flight delays from abroad or a ‘catastrophic event ’at the child’s home).

Reference will always be made to the Attendance Guidance.

Sickness

Some cases can be quite complicated and the school will need full information to decide how it should treat the absence. If, for example, your child has a mental health problem

such as depression or school phobia or a long-term condition such as chronic fatigue syndrome (sometimes called ME) you should send a letter from your doctor to show your child was too ill or distressed to attend school. Your child may need to see a specialist to show the absence is genuine. Keep a note of any appointments you have made and what the specialist said. If your child is too ill to attend school for more than 15 working days, the Local Authority (LA) should then provide some education for them e.g. home tuition.

When the school can decide to authorise absence

In the following examples the school can decide whether to authorise the absence:

- family holidays
- special occasions such as weddings
- family bereavements and other compassionate reasons
- family crises e.g. the child needs to care for a relative for a short period or go on a prison visit.

Family holidays or other absence

Time off for family holidays is not a legal right – the government recommends schools to allow absence in exceptional circumstances, but it is up to the school. If you want to take holiday during the term you must contact the school and get permission beforehand.

Traveller absence

Where children of traveller families can't attend school because they are travelling, the school will normally authorise their absence. Travellers must attend at least 200 sessions a year, i.e. 100 days. Note that 'travellers' means people of no fixed abode who travel with their families for their trade, not people on extended holidays.

Lateness

Subject to any special arrangements in place during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the School register opens at 8.50am each day. If your child arrives at School after 9.00am but before the register closes they will be marked present but arrived as late, but once it is closed, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. The school closes the register at 9.15am.

If you let your child stay off school without permission, you will be breaking the law and might be fined and/or taken to court.

Parents and carers should report a pupil's absence in the first instance by way of contacting the Head Teacher by telephone, e-mail or a direct message prior to registration.

In line with its statutory and safeguarding duties the school will make enquiries to ascertain the reasons for a pupil's absence (in the absence of a valid explanation) and in some circumstances share such information with the local authority and other appropriate authorities.

School records

You may request a copy of your child's school record which includes a record of your child's absence. This is important because it will tell you which absences have been allowed by the school. Write to the head for this. Subject to data protection requirements or other conflicting duties, we will provide the record within 15 school days of receipt of your letter

Authorisation of a pupil's leave of absence in exceptional circumstances form

Please ask the Head Teacher or her designated representative for a copy of this form if required as soon as possible in advance of any proposed absence. A copy of the form is attached for reference.

Strategy for improving attendance

Greenwich House will utilize its resources to maintain and improve attendance at the school. Greenwich House's other policies including its Anti-bullying, SEND, Equal Opportunities, Curriculum and in appropriate cases its Child Protection (Sageguarding policies (and others) are relevant to this goal. As well as it's teaching staff, Greenwich House has a Pastoral Lead in place to support its pupils. Greenwich House will work with pupils and their families to provide a welcoming environment for all its pupils and to remove barriers to learning including attendance.

Signed on behalf of the setting by:

.....*Mrs. A. Brindle*.....*Head Teacher*

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