

# Greyfriars Catholic School

*A Catholic School that champions all students so they flourish individually and collectively.*



## Attendance Policy

Revised: September 2024

Review Date: September 2025

Approved by Governors: TBC

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### 1. Principles:

The Governors and staff of Greyfriars Catholic School recognise the critical importance of good attendance and punctuality to both achievement in education and success in employment. Because our role is to assist parents who are the primary educators of their children, we aim to work together with parents and carers to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality, enabling all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

#### **Our Attendance Policy is framed around our Mission Statement:**

We are a Catholic School that champions students so they can flourish individually and collectively. Attendance is central to this mission:

**Knowledge:** Our teachers plan and deliver a curriculum that is carefully sequenced such that knowledge builds over time. We promote good attendance and punctuality as essential to the process of acquiring and retaining this knowledge.

**Care:** We are clear that our students are what makes this school. Each and every student makes a valued contribution to this community. We know our students well and respond sensitively to the needs of families, recognising that there are some rare occasions where it is appropriate for children to be absent from school. There are also times when we need to work closely with families as well as external agencies to support a child's attendance. We will act fairly and consistently in dealing with attendance matters.

Ambition: We are ambitious for all children to succeed. We will teach children to value good attendance and punctuality as aspects of personal responsibility. We will work with others to defend the right of children to an education, in accordance with the law.

### **Why Regular Attendance is so important**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our newsletter
- Report to you at least half-termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- Celebrate good attendance
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school

### **Understanding types of absence**

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

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. If this occurs, school will require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

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 (County Attendance Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

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 and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, never 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.

**You can support your child by:**

- Ensuring regular and early bedtimes
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with your child's school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
- Encouraging your child to invite friends home to socialise

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any child that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an action plan around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the County Attendance team. If your child becomes a PA pupil, we will seek your consent to complete an Early Help Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

**Severe Absenteeism (SA)**

A pupil becomes a 'severe absentee' when they miss 50% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing significant damage to any child's academic and social progress will have lifelong consequences. All SA pupils at our school will have an Individual Attendance Plan which will incorporate multi-agency input. You will be expected to engage with all partners to improve your child's attendance to 95+%. SA pupils are our highest priority at our school.

## **Absence Procedures**

If your child is absent, you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Managers, Head of Year, Assistant Headteacher or Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90%.

## **Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers at all times. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

## **The County Attendance Team and Penalty Notices**

Parents 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 child to the County Attendance Team at the Local Authority.

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if their child fails to attend school regularly, and the absences are classed as unauthorised. Such cases may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996.

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court, whilst still securing an improvement in the child's attendance.

From August 19 2024, under the new national penalty notice framework, all schools will be required to consider a penalty notice when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (usually equivalent to 5 days) within 10 school weeks for unauthorised reasons.

From September 2024 the fine for school absences across the country will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. If a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent/per child will be capped to two within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached a prosecution may be considered. If you are prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could be fined of up to £2,500.

Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court.

“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.”

Parents or children may wish to contact the County Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01865 323513 [attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### **Lateness**

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

### **How we Manage Timekeeping**

We ask that students arrive on site by 8.40am at the latest. The school day starts at 8.45am and we expect your child to be at Line-Up at that time. Any students arriving after 8.45am will be marked late. At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives 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 you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. Whilst there is no mandatory time for pm registration, the school will take the register at the start of period 4 (12.35pm). If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with a member of the School Leadership Team and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Exceptional Leave**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking 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.

1. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.

2. Requests for Exceptional Leave must be submitted to the headteacher together with evidence.
3. Exceptional Leave is most unlikely to be authorised in Years 9 and 11.
4. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student's attendance is less than 95%.
5. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
6. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
7. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

The County Attendance Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave'.

### **School targets, projects and special initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child'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 in Oxfordshire.

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.

### **Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

Mrs Whyte | Attendance Officer

Dr Rogers | Assistant Headteacher for Raising Standards | Attendance Champion

Mr Masterson | Deputy Headteacher

Ms Caldwell | Headteacher

Mr Walker | Governor with responsibility for attendance

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment.