



# Gosfield School

## Attendance Policy

(including Children Absent from Education)

At Gosfield School, we see education as a partnership between the family and the School. At Gosfield School, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations regarding attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life.

We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing. 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. We will always engage with families to understand barriers to attendance and work together to remove them, and provide additional support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND.

We are committed to providing the highest quality of education for your son/daughter, and we look to you to support this objective. All pupils are required to be in school by 8.30am, ready for registration at 8.30am. New guidance places emphasis on the impact of a late arrival and how unsettling this can be for a child, it is also important for pupils to attend registration to receive information being shared by tutors or class teachers that may affect change during their school day. To proactively manage lateness, we will allow a 30-minute registration point into period 1 for seniors, this registration point will automatically change the absent recorded during registration to a late mark. If the student is not present by this time the absent code will remain.

### **Registration**

Formal registration in the senior school is taken in the morning at 8.30am and at 2.10pm. In the Prep School, formal registration is taken at 8:30am and 1:20pm.

The school day ends at 3.50pm for Years Reception to Year 13. Optional activities run from 4pm until 4.45pm from Monday to Thursday and buses depart the school at 5pm on these days. Buses depart at 4pm on a Friday.

Wraparound care is provided for pupils until 6pm if parents book it in advance; there is a charge for this service. If wraparound is not running then any late pupils will be supervised by a senior member of staff until they can be collected, for which there will also be a charge unless there are mitigating circumstances.

Pupils in Years R to Year 11 are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by a member of staff, for a trip or visit or a sporting fixture, the dates of which will have been notified to parents in advance. Sixth form students are allowed to leave the school grounds if they have free periods, but they are expected to sign in and out at the front office.

Requests for absence must be made in writing and should reach the school preferably 5 days in advance of the planned absence (except in an emergency, when parents are asked to telephone the school before 8.30am). Requests for exceptional absence (absence for days other than medical or dental appointments) should be sent to the child's tutor or class teacher at least two weeks in advance, and will usually be referred to the Principal or Head of Prep for approval.

If your child is ill, please e-mail the school on [absence@gosfieldschool.org.uk](mailto:absence@gosfieldschool.org.uk) or telephone the School before 8.30am on the first day of absence. The School will make contact every day to check on the child's recovery. A letter or email should then be sent by a parent on the return of their child to school, giving a reason for the absence. We will always telephone home on the first day of any unexplained absence in order to make sure that your child is safe.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance> As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of School during term time.
- Term dates are always sent to parents more than a year in advance in order for you to arrange your holidays without disrupting your child's education. **Please note that it is the School's policy, in line with Government regulations and supported by the School's Governors, not to authorise holidays to be taken during term time.**

Regular daily attendance at school is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don't fall behind both socially and developmentally, school participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. We promote regular attendance supporting children to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community, we believe this helps them to make the most of life opportunities and maximise their educational achievement. Irregular attendance or unauthorised absence will be referred to relevant Safeguarding partners or the Police if a child is deemed at significant risk of harm due to being out of education, Gosfield School is committed to promoting the welfare of children, and regular attendance helps to keep children safe. Please see our Safeguarding Policy for further information.

### **Understanding Types of Absence**

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.



**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however is counted as an absence for the session;
- shopping trips;
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- their own or family birthdays;
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends;
- day trips;
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.
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### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)**

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be persistent absentees.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent**'. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

### **Absence Procedures**

**If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:**

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 8.30am, *when our register closes*.
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before deciding as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised;
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 8.30 am;
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide some medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons.

**If your child is absent, we will:**

- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us;
- If we cannot contact parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home, and a home visit may be made for safeguarding.

- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10<sup>th</sup> day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be “missing from education.”
- **If absence continues, we will:**
- Write to you if your child’s attendance is below 90% or causing concern re context to absence, and/ or where punctuality is a concern.
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with our Assistant Principal Pastoral/ DSL and Head of Section.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

### **CHILDREN ABSENT FROM EDUCATION**

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, fulltime education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Children absent from education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children absent from education, or those with unexplained and or persistent absences, including those who are registered but not attending school for other reasons, may be at a significant risk of not meeting their academic potential and underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education. Being absent, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding risks, including abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation; child criminal exploitation; mental health problems; substance abuse and other issues. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of them going missing in future.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for all schools, including independent schools, and local authorities. It is called “Working together to improve school attendance” and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children’s welfare and safeguarding.
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school.
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of the guidance.

All schools (including independent schools) must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from their school admission register. This does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the register at standard transition points, and at Gosfield this is at the end of Year 6 and the end of Year 11. Likewise, all schools must notify the local education authority within 5 days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. Registers must be kept electronically and must be kept six years from the date of the entries.

### School Responsibilities

Schools are required to enter pupils on their admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will start at school. If a pupil fails to start on the agreed or notified date, the school will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. Where reasonably possible, we will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. Where pupils leave our School the DSL will ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible.

We monitor pupils' attendance through the daily register. We will inform local authorities of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly or have missed **10 school days** or more without permission. We monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance by working with parents and carers. In extreme cases a pupil's poor attendance will be referred to the local authority. If a pupil is missing from school and the child is subject to a child protection plan and/or is a looked after child, the school will notify the key worker within the first 24 hours of the unauthorised absence if no home contact can be made.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for **10 days** after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for **20 consecutive school days** the pupil can be removed from our admission register when the School and the local authority have located the pupil and agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend school again, taking into account any reasonable steps they could make to secure the pupil's attendance. This only applies if we do not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause. The school has a legal duty to inform the local authority when a pupil is unable to attend, or is expected to be unable to attend, for 15 days because of sickness (whether consecutive or not)

Where a parent notifies the school that a pupil will live at another address, we are required to record the following in the admission register:

- the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live.
- the new address of the child.
- the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.

Where a parent of a pupil notifies the school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school in future, we are required to record in the admission register:

- the name of the new school;
- the date on which the pupil first attended or is due to start attending that school
- the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives;
- at least one telephone number of any parent with whom the pupil lives;
- the full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable;
- the ground prescribed in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register.



Pupils at risk of harm/neglect – Children may be absent from education because they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Where this is suspected, Gosfield School will follow local child protection procedures. However, if a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made immediately to Children’s Social Care (and the police if appropriate). Local authority officers responsible for CME should check that a referral has been made and, if not, they should alert Children’s Social Care.

As an independent school we have a safeguarding duty (Part 3 of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2019) in respect of our pupils, and as part of this we will investigate any unexplained absences. Further information about schools’ safeguarding responsibilities can be found in the *Keeping children safe in education 2024* statutory guidance.

**Statutory guidance:**

The guidance relies on safeguarding powers for its legal force, i.e. paragraph 7(b) of the Independent School Standards for the independent sector.

Working together to improve school attendance is also referenced in the KCSIE 2024

**Further guidance:**

New guidelines are given legal effect by the **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024**

*The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and their associated amendment regulations will be revoked in their entirety when the new regulations take effect.*

*The new regulations also amend the Independent School Standards to refer to the new regulations in place of the old.*

Ratified by the Governing Council of Gosfield School

*Jon Corrall.*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Chairman of Governors)

Date: 7 October 2024

Date of next review – September 2025

Principal’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 7/10/24