

Attendance Policy

September 2026



*With kindness we care, with respect we grow
and with perseverance we succeed.*

DRAFT FOR GOVERNOR REVIEW

This policy sets out Gateford Park Primary School's approach to promoting regular attendance, supporting pupils and families where barriers arise, and using formal attendance procedures where appropriate. Approval details should be completed before publication.

Document control

Policy status	Draft for governor review
Policy owner	Headteacher / Senior Attendance Champion
Headteacher	Mrs Joanna Green
Senior Attendance Champion	Mrs Joanna Green
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Approved by Governing Body	
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Review date	September 2027, or sooner if legislation, guidance or local procedures change

1. Our attendance commitment

At Gateford Park Primary School, attendance is everybody's responsibility. We want every child to feel that they belong, are safe, are known and are able to learn. We combine high expectations for attendance with a supportive, individualised response when difficulties arise.

Our core approach

EXPECT high attendance; MONITOR patterns early; LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND barriers; FACILITATE SUPPORT; FORMALISE SUPPORT where needed; and use ENFORCEMENT only where appropriate after support has not worked, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate.

2. Aims

- Build a positive culture in which good attendance is expected and valued.
- Identify emerging patterns of absence early rather than waiting for attendance to become entrenched.
- Understand the individual child, family context and barriers behind absence.
- Provide or coordinate practical support, including Early Help and other services where appropriate.
- Use attendance information intelligently, looking at patterns, groups, days, reasons and individual circumstances rather than relying on a percentage alone.
- Work in partnership with parents while being clear about parental legal responsibilities.
- Apply attendance law, registration requirements and Nottinghamshire processes fairly and consistently.

3. Legal and guidance framework

This policy reflects the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance (updated July 2026), the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the Education Act 1996, Nottinghamshire County Council's local arrangements and code of conduct for penalty notices, and relevant safeguarding and equality duties.

The school will have regard to current guidance and will update practice if national or local requirements change.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher / Senior Attendance Champion

- Sets the strategic direction for attendance and ensures a whole-school culture of belonging and high expectations.
- Oversees attendance data, vulnerable groups, persistent and severe absence, and the impact of interventions.
- Decides whether leave of absence is authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- Ensures support and legal intervention are considered in the correct sequence and that decisions are evidence-based.
- Reports to governors and works with the local authority and partner services.

Office / attendance administration

- Maintains accurate registers and first-day absence procedures.
- Follows up unexplained absence promptly and records reasons/evidence.
- Produces regular attendance information and supports letters, monitoring and referrals.
- Checks contact details and ensures communications reach the correct parent/carers and address.

Teachers and wider staff

- Take accurate registers and flag emerging concerns, changes in presentation or barriers to attendance.
- Create an inclusive, safe and welcoming classroom culture.
- Share relevant information promptly with safeguarding/SEND/attendance leads.

Parents and carers

- Ensure children of compulsory school age attend regularly and on time.
- Contact school on the first day of absence and provide a clear reason; keep school updated during continuing absence.
- Arrange routine appointments outside school hours where possible and provide appointment information when requested.
- Request any leave of absence in advance and understand that term-time leave can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- Work with school and partner services where attendance support is needed.

Governors

Governors take an active role in attendance improvement. They review recent and historic trends, benchmarking and the attendance of groups facing greater barriers; support and challenge leaders; and monitor the impact of the school's strategy.

5. Registration, punctuality and absence reporting

The morning register is taken at 8:50am. Pupils arriving after 8:50am but before the register closes at 9:20am will be recorded as late (L). Pupils arriving after the register closes without an authorised reason will be recorded using the appropriate unauthorised late code (U). Afternoon registration is taken at the start of the afternoon session.

Parents should report absence on the first day, giving the child's name, class and specific reason. Where the reason has not been established, the school will follow up. The Headteacher decides whether an absence is authorised in accordance with the national attendance codes and guidance.

6. Illness and medical absence

We do not expect children to attend when they are genuinely too unwell for school. Equally, minor illness should not routinely prevent attendance. We use NHS and public-health guidance when considering illness-related absence. For example, children with a minor cough or cold can usually attend if otherwise well and without a high temperature; vomiting or diarrhoea requires 48 hours after the last episode before return.

Where illness absence becomes frequent, prolonged or forms a concerning pattern, school will discuss this with the family and may seek reasonable evidence or, where appropriate and lawful, work with health professionals. Evidence is considered proportionately: a parent reporting illness is not automatically disbelieved, and medical evidence is not routinely required for every short illness.

For pupils with long-term medical conditions, SEND, anxiety-related non-attendance or other additional needs, attendance support will be coordinated with appropriate plans and reasonable adjustments. A reduced timetable will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for a defined period, with a clear plan to return to full-time education.

7. Monitoring attendance: more than a percentage

Attendance is reviewed regularly at individual, class, group and whole-school level. The school looks at the percentage alongside the number of days missed, reasons, patterns, day-of-week trends, unauthorised sessions, lateness, sibling patterns, previous attendance and known barriers.

Key national definitions

Persistent absence means missing 10% or more of possible sessions (attendance of 90% or below across the relevant period). Severe absence means missing 50% or more of possible sessions. These definitions trigger additional attention but do not replace individual professional judgement.

As an early-warning measure, families whose child's attendance falls below 95% may receive information or contact each half term. This is not an automatic sanction. The purpose is to make families aware of days missed, identify patterns early and offer support where needed.

8. Gateford Park graduated response

Stage	What we notice	Our response	Possible evidence
1. Universal	All pupils / first signs	Clear expectations; welcoming provision; accurate registers; first-day contact; positive communication; NHS illness guidance; celebrate improvement.	Registers; parent communication; class/whole-school data.
2. Early concern	Attendance below 95%, repeated lateness, emerging pattern or concerning change	Personalised contact; share days/sessions missed; listen to pupil/parent; identify barriers; agree simple actions; consider SEND, wellbeing, bullying, medical or family factors.	Contact note; pattern analysis; agreed actions.
3. Targeted support	Pattern persists, attendance approaches/below 90%, or needs are more complex	Attendance meeting; targeted support plan; named lead; Early Help/family support or relevant service; reasonable adjustments; defined review period, normally up to 10 school weeks where appropriate.	Meeting record; support plan; referrals; review notes; attendance data.
4. Formalise support	Support has not improved attendance or is not engaged with; unauthorised absence is accumulating	Formal attendance contract/plan where appropriate; Notice to Improve where national threshold is met and Nottinghamshire criteria apply; clear warning of possible legal action; continue support.	Chronology; letters; offers of support; evidence of engagement/non-engagement; review data.
5. Enforcement	Legal threshold met and enforcement is appropriate	Consider referral to Nottinghamshire for a penalty notice or prosecution, in line with the national framework and local code. Enforcement is not a substitute for appropriate support.	Full referral evidence and chronology.

9. Support available

Support is matched to the barrier. It may include a trusted adult/check-in, pastoral or wellbeing support, SEND review and adaptations, support with routines or punctuality, reintegration planning, friendship/bullying work, family support, Early Help, school nurse/health liaison where appropriate, or coordination with other professionals.

The school will ask: What is making attendance difficult? What can school change? What can the family do? What additional help is needed? How will we know whether the plan is working?

10. Leave of absence in term time

Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Requests must be made in advance. Each request is considered individually, taking account of the specific facts and circumstances. Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.

A family holiday, lower cost or availability of travel is not in itself an exceptional circumstance. Where leave is unauthorised, the absence will be recorded using the appropriate national code and may contribute to the national penalty-notice threshold.

Early collection for travel, weekends or holidays

Children are expected to remain in school for the full school day. Where a parent wishes to collect a child early in order to travel for a weekend, holiday or other planned trip, the request must be made to school in advance. Making a request does not mean that the absence will be authorised. Unless the Headteacher considers that exceptional circumstances apply, the session missed will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Where a family nevertheless intends to collect a child early for travel, we ask that collection takes place at lunchtime rather than at different times during the afternoon. This reduces disruption to teaching and avoids repeated requests for office staff to locate and collect children from classrooms across the school. A child collected at lunchtime for unauthorised travel will therefore be recorded as absent for the afternoon session - equivalent to an unauthorised half-day.

This arrangement is an administrative collection procedure only; it does not constitute permission for term-time leave or change the way the absence is recorded. Families are encouraged, wherever possible, to arrange travel outside school hours so that children can complete the full school day.

11. Penalty notices and legal intervention

The national threshold is met when a pupil records 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions can be a combination of relevant unauthorised absence codes and the 10-week period can span terms or school years. When the threshold is met, school must consider whether a penalty notice can and should be requested.

In Nottinghamshire, a first penalty notice is £160 per parent, per child, reduced to £80 if paid in full within 21 days. A second notice for the same child within a rolling three-year period is £160 with no reduced rate. A third offence within that period may lead to prosecution rather than a further penalty notice. National/local rules may change, so the current Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct will always be followed.

A Notice to Improve is normally a final opportunity to engage with support before a penalty notice where support is appropriate and the threshold has been met. It is not required in every case, for example where support is not appropriate such as some unauthorised term-time leave cases.

The school will keep clear evidence of the attendance concern, communication, support offered, reviews and reasons for escalation. Legal intervention is considered when support has not worked, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate, and where it is judged an appropriate tool to improve attendance.

12. Safeguarding and children missing education

Absence can be a safeguarding indicator. Unexplained, repeated or prolonged absence will be considered alongside the school's safeguarding procedures. Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, school will act promptly and share information with relevant agencies in line with safeguarding duties. Children missing education procedures will be followed where applicable.

13. Equality, SEND and vulnerable pupils

We recognise that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance, including pupils with SEND, long-term health conditions, social care involvement or challenging family circumstances. Expectations remain ambitious, but responses will be individualised, reasonable adjustments considered, and attendance action will not discriminate unlawfully. The school will analyse attendance for relevant groups and address any emerging inequalities.

14. Reviewing impact

The Senior Attendance Champion will review whether interventions are being implemented as intended and whether attendance is improving. Plans will be continued, adapted or stopped based on evidence. Governors will receive attendance information at appropriate intervals, including persistent/severe absence and key vulnerable groups.

15. Key references

DfE - Working together to improve school attendance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Nottinghamshire - School attendance and the law: <https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/education/school-discipline-and-exclusions/attendance-absence/school-attendance-and-the-law>

Nottinghamshire - Holidays during term time: <https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/education/school-holidays-and-closures/holidays-during-term-time>

NHS - Is my child too ill for school?: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

EEF - Supporting school attendance: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/leadership-and-planning/supporting-attendance>