

# Attendance Policy

## George Romney Junior School



Approved by:

SMSC Committee

Date: 15.01.2024

Signed:

*Jay Rawes.*

Next review due by:

January 2026

## **GEORGE ROMNEY JUNIOR SCHOOL**

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

At George Romney Junior School we believe that all pupils benefit from the education we provide and therefore, from regular school attendance. In order to achieve this, we will take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any problems which may impede full attendance are acted on as quickly as possible.

#### **AIMS**

##### ***School aims to ensure that:***

- All pupils have an equal right and access to, an education in accordance with the National Curriculum, or agreed alternative.

##### ***It is recognised that:***

- The majority of pupils want to attend school to learn to socialise with their peers and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society.
- Some pupils and their parents may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their children's attendance at school as required by law.

#### **EXPECTATIONS**

##### ***School expects that all our pupils will:***

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day as stated in our Home/School Agreement which parents are asked to sign when their child starts school

##### ***School expects that parents will:***

- Endeavour to keep health appointments out of school hours when possible.
- Inform a member of staff of any reason or problem that may hinder their child from attending school.
- Fulfil their legal responsibilities and ensure their child/ren attend school.
- Contact school, as soon as is practical and in any case before 9.30am., whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Inform the school of any leave of absence they choose to take during term time. The head teacher is legally obliged to refuse any leave of absence unless they believe there is an "exceptional circumstance" in accordance with LA guidelines.

**Parents and children can expect the following from the school:**

- regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- early contact when a pupil is absent without explanation
- action on any attendance problem notified to the school
- referral of specific attendance issues to supporting agencies where appropriate

**We encourage attendance by:**

- Consistent, clear, communication with parents and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt, attendance.
- Setting targets for improved attendance and sharing these with governors, parents and pupils.
- The accurate completion of registers at the start of each session.

**The school responds to non-attendance by:**

- Contacting parents on the first day of an absence, by telephone, email or text message if no reason has been received.
- Where a pattern of non-attendance or persistent lateness is emerging, the parent/carer will be contacted by school or Education Welfare Officer and the issues causing non-attendance or lateness will be discussed at an attendance panel meeting.
- If the action plan generated at the attendance panel meeting fails to improve the child's attendance, a full assessment of the children's needs and family circumstances will be completed using the early help assessment.

The headteacher will contact the Local Authority Inclusion Officer explaining the actions and support provided so far and will discuss the possibility of an attendance review conference.

The Local Authority will then decide on appropriate enforcement/prosecution procedures to be taken specific to the case.

*Please see the attached appendices for sample proforma letters.*

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

From September 2013 Headteachers may not grant leave of absence in term time except in exceptional circumstances. The most recent advice from the Local Authority states:

*'In considering a request, the school will consider the child's age, the time of year of the absence and the nature of the visit. The Headteacher will also consider the child's stage of education and progress and the child's overall attendance record. Headteachers will not authorise absence unless they believe your circumstances are exceptional. Case law identifies that any holiday or event that can be arranged during school holiday periods should not be authorised during the school term.'*

Fixed penalty notices may be considered by the Local Authority where there have been five days or more of unauthorised absence. This will be considered alongside the child's overall attendance on

an individual basis. The Local Authority may also consider issuing fixed penalty notices when a child is taking a second leave of absence, in the same academic year, totalling more than five days.

We do have concerns, as do other headteachers, that families may feel they cannot share with schools that they plan to take time off during term time. This could mean that children will not be able to share any experiences they may have had and it could even encourage them to lie about their absence. This is not a situation we would want any of our families or children to be in.

Not sharing planned absence from school could also lead to safeguarding issues; if families have not informed school that they are taking a break and school cannot contact them for an explanation of absence, school may need to take steps to ensure the children and family are safe and well.

Therefore, we would request that if parents/carers are intending to take time out of school during term time, they collect from the office a 'Leave of Absence' form. School will then know that parents are planning to take leave and will allow us to record the unauthorised leave in our registers. School will still acknowledge receipt of the request even though we are unable to authorise the leave.

*Please see the attached appendices for sample proforma letters.*

## ***APPENDIX 'A'***

Under normal circumstances and in accordance with our Supervision of Pupils Procedure, the expectation is that children should arrive on site in the morning no earlier than 8.40 am and ready for the bell at 8.50 am.

Registration is between 8.50 am. and 9.00 am.

Children arriving after 9.00 am. will be recorded as 'late'.

In the morning register closes at 9.30 am. and in the afternoon at 1.15 pm. Any children arriving after then will be classified as 'unauthorised late'.

## **Appendix 'B'**

### **Authorised Leave of Absence**

Dear

**(Child's Name – DOB)**

Thank you for notifying me of your intention to take your child (Name) out of school during term time.

Time lost by children and young people due to a leave of absence taken in term time can be disruptive to their education. Wherever possible, absence from school should be avoided as it can have a serious effect on your child's educational progress, and can create difficulties for them on their return to school.

You may or may not be aware but changes to legislation have removed the discretionary 10-day period of absence which covered family holidays. Schools are now required to refuse requests for a leave of absence in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Case law identifies that any holiday or event that can be arranged during school holiday periods should not be authorised during the school term unless there are exceptional circumstances. In accordance with Cumbria County Council's School Absence Enforcement Policy, parents may be issued with a penalty notice if a leave of absence is taken without permission.

You have requested that your circumstances be considered exceptional. In considering this request, I have to take into account your children's age, the time of year of the leave of absence, the nature of the event and parental wishes. I also have to consider (Name) stage of education and progress and (Name) overall attendance record. On this occasion, I am able to authorise the leave of absence you have requested as exceptional.

Yours sincerely,

## **Appendix 'C'**

### **Unauthorised Leave of Absence**

Dear

#### **School Attendance**

Thank you for notifying me of your intention to take (name) out of school during term time.

Time lost by children and young people due to a leave of absence taken in term time can be disruptive to their education. Wherever possible, absence from school should be avoided as it can have a serious effect on your child's educational progress, and can create difficulties for them on their return to school.

You may or may not be aware but changes to legislation have removed the discretionary 10-day period of absence which covered family holidays. Schools are now required to refuse requests for a leave of absence in term time. Case law identifies that **any** holiday or event that **can** be arranged during school holiday periods should not be authorised during the school term. In accordance with Westmorland and Furness County Council's School Absence Enforcement Policy, parents may be issued with a penalty notice if a leave of absence is taken without permission.

In considering this request, I have to take into account your child's age, the time of year of the leave of absence, the nature of the visit and parental wishes. I also have to consider Olly's stage of education and progress and his overall attendance record.

Unfortunately, I am unable to authorise the circumstances as exceptional. This means that should you choose to take your child out of school as planned then (Name) absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Yours sincerely,

## **Appendix 'D'**

### **Punctuality**

Dear

As you will know, we have been working hard to encourage children and families to attend school as much as possible and ensure they are fit and well to do so. We have been delighted with the response and support from parents and families with this.

Punctuality is just as important as regular attendance. Recently your child has been late on .....occasions before the register closes and ..... after the register closes as well as having had .....days absence. We wanted to bring this matter to your attention in order to ensure your child is "in the line by ten to nine" ready for a good day's learning. We will continue to monitor your child's punctuality closely and will review this again during the next half-term when we would hope to see an improvement.

We would like to invite you to attend a meeting with myself on date/time) to discuss strategies to help with this.

Yours sincerely,

## Appendix E

### Attendance below 95%

To the parents of

As I am sure you are aware it is the duty and responsibility for all schools to closely monitor all children's attendance.

**We don't want your child to be missing out on any of the fantastic opportunities we plan and provide for them at any time of the year!** As you will know, there are strong links between how much learning and progress children make and their attendance. It is simple common sense - children who attend school regularly stand a better chance of understanding their learning; feeling more confident in class and often have the chance to develop better friendships. We also know that from time to time children are unwell and they need to be at home in order to get fully better.

Following a recent attendance review, your child's attendance was noted as being **below 95%** which is our first level of concern for attendance. At this point, we use this a threshold to simply inform and make you aware that their attendance has fallen to this level. Please find enclosed a copy of your child's attendance history and our simple guide to attendance percentages and our expectations...

Although we fully understand children can be poorly and need to rest and recover before returning to school, we are asking for you to make every effort with your child's attendance between now and the next checkpoint at the half-term holiday in an attempt to bring their attendance above 95% and closer to our school target of 97%. Please discuss this letter with your child as they need to be aware about how important you know this issue is. If you would like to talk to either myself or your child's class teacher about attendance and any issues linked to it, please contact school at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your support.

## **Appendix F**

### **Low Attendance – below 90%**

To the parents of

As I am sure you are aware it is the duty and responsibility for all schools to closely monitor all children's attendance.

**We don't want your child to be missing out on any of the fantastic opportunities we plan and provide for them at any time of the year!** As you will know, there are strong links between how much learning and progress children make and their attendance. It is simple common sense - children who attend school regularly stand a better chance of understanding their learning; feeling more confident in class and often have the chance to develop better friendships. We also know that from time to time children are unwell and they need to be at home in order to get fully better.

Following a recent attendance review, your child's attendance was noted as being **below 90%** which is a significant level of concern for attendance. Attendance below 90% is considered 'persistent absence' by the DfE and Ofsted. If any child continues to have attendance below this level, we may contact families to offer advice and support and invite parents to an Attendance and Punctuality Panel series of meetings to discuss how we can work together to improve your child's attendance. Please find enclosed a copy of your child's attendance history so far this year and our simple guide to attendance percentages and our expectations...

Although we fully understand children can be poorly and need to rest and recover before returning to school, we are asking for you to make every effort with your child's attendance between now and the next checkpoint at the half-term holiday in an attempt to bring their attendance above 90% and closer to our target of 97%.

Please discuss this letter with your child as they need to be aware about how important you know this issue is. If you would like to talk to either myself or your child's class teacher about attendance and any issues linked to it, please contact school at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your support.

