



# Godmanchester Bridge Academy

Attendance Policy 2021

Together We

Inspire    Enjoy    Achieve

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## Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Godmanchester Bridge Academy fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at our schools and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils via our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the staff and Governors at our schools work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

## Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our schools are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

**We expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.**

### Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

### **We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:**

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences reported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## **Procedures**

Our schools will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorized and unauthorized absence.

- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during termtime. A Penalty Notice may be issued in this event.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the DfE where requested.

## Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Senior Leadership team / Attendance officer where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

### Head of School and Family Liaison Officer

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the EWO service
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

### Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence comment is completed

- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the EHT and/or ISM.

## Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist.  
(Appointment card/letter, copy of prescription or medication packaging with child's name)
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

## Registration

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The electronic attendance register must be completed by the class teacher (or cover person taking the class).

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## Lateness

	Godmanchester Bridge Academy
Arrival at School	08.45am
Registration Close (use of 'L' code starts)	09.00am
'U' code starts	09.15am

A record is also kept of the amount of minutes a pupil is late, this is documented on SIMS. On entry to the school, it is the responsibility of the parent to sign the child in using the electronic sign-in system at the front desk, giving a reason for the child arriving late to school.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first (and each subsequent) day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised electronically using SIMS software. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head of School has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence, we will seek an explanation from parents/carers. If an explanation is not forthcoming then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

## First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions

when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. This is to ensure school knows where the child and that they are safe.

## Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services for advice.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

## Parental Request for Absence from School during term time

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of headteachers to authorise absence of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional and unavoidable circumstances exist. Parents must complete an application for 'leave of absence form- exceptional circumstances' if their child is to be absent from school for any other reason than illness. Please refer to this form for further information.

## Penalty Notice

If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school you may be issued with a Penalty Notice, or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices may only be served in accordance with the County Council's code of conduct.

The amount of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 per parent per child if paid after 21 days and before 28 days. Should a parent or carer on whom a notice is served fail to pay the fine in full within the specified time he/she will be liable to prosecution in a Magistrates court where on conviction a sentence of a fine up to £2,500 or up to three months in prison may be imposed.

## Addressing Attendance Concerns

**The schools expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.**

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Head of school and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns

regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

The Education Welfare Service has the power to issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

The Education Welfare Officer visits once a term to check and monitor attendance. They carry out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance and work with the school to improve.

## Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Head of school and attendance officer to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

### **Absence Letters - informing parents of a child's poor attendance.**

**Absence Letter 1** – will be sent to the parents/ carers of any child who has recorded an absence rate of less than 91%, since the beginning of the Autumn Term.

**Absence Letter 2** – will be sent when attendance has not improved satisfactorily in the six weeks after letter 1.

*A meeting will be held to discuss the child's poor attendance and a further target will be set to be monitored weekly. If the target is not met satisfactorily, the school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Office.*

**Absence Letter 3** – will be sent out if during the monitoring period there is still poor attendance. The Education Welfare Office may become involved.

**Letter 3**- referral to Education Welfare Officer.

**Late Letter** – lateness will be monitored alongside attendance and where a child is deemed to be missing a significant amount of learning time due to lateness, a late letter will be issued to parents/carers.

### **Non-statutory Age Letter**



## ***Suspected Holiday Letter***

<b>Policy Details</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature and Name</b>
Policy approved by Senior Management:	January 2021	Claire Pirrie
Policy approved by Senior Governor	January 2021	Caroline Crowther-Light
Date of next review:	January 2023	

## **Policy Section: Section 1B – School Management Policies (Pupils)**

### **Appendices:**

1. Absence - Letter 1
2. Absence – Letter 2
3. Absence - Letter 3
4. Letter 3- referral to Education Welfare Officer
5. Late Letter
6. Non-Statutory Age Letter
7. Suspected Holiday Letter
8. Attendance Record
9. Lates Record
10. Leave of Absence Request Form- Exceptional Circumstances

# Godmanchester Bridge Academy

Tel: 01480 276599 Website: [www.godmanchesterbridge.co.uk](http://www.godmanchesterbridge.co.uk)

Email: [office@godmanchesterbridge.co.uk](mailto:office@godmanchesterbridge.co.uk)

Head of School: Claire Pirrie

Date

Name &  
address of parent

Dear Parent

Re: Name of pupil Dob: School:

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to «percentage\_attendance»% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

I will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If possible, and again if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me. However, it does no harm in speaking with the teacher or attendance team, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Pirrie  
Head of School

cc Education Welfare Officer



Godmanchester Bridge Academy is a part of ACES Academies Trust.

ACES Academies Trust is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with registered number 07732319.  
Registered Office is Hinchbrooke School, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 3BN.

VAT Number: 121271560; ACES Academies has exempt charity status.

# Godmanchester Bridge Academy

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Email: [office@godmanchesterbridge.co.uk](mailto:office@godmanchesterbridge.co.uk)

Head of School: Claire Pirrie

Date

Name &  
address of parent

Re: Name of pupil                      Dob:                      School:

Dear Parent

I am writing to inform you that «forename»'s Attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting «forename»'s progress and we need to meet with you urgently.

You are required to attend a meeting with a member of the Attendance Team to discuss this matter further at the date and time below.

Date:

Time:

Should «forename»'s attendance remain irregular; the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under **Section 444 Education Act 1996**, and a fine of up to **£2500 and/or 3 months in prison**.

Medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support our students in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve «forename»'s attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Claire Pirrie  
Head of School

cc Education Welfare Officer



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Email: [office@godmanchesterbridge.co.uk](mailto:office@godmanchesterbridge.co.uk)

Head of School: Claire Pirrie

Date

Name &  
address of parent

Dear xxx

Re: Child Name: xxx DOB: xxx School:

As the Attendance Officer for xxx, it has been brought to my attention that xxx has been absent from school for xxx sessions this school year/over the previous xxx weeks. I enclose a record of XXX's attendance.

As parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually.

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

I am therefore writing to inform you that if attendance fails to improve during the next (6) weeks, the case may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for possible legal intervention.

Yours sincerely

Claire Pirrie  
Head of School

cc Education Welfare Officer



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Head of School: Claire Pirrie

Date

Name &  
address of parent

School ref

Re: Name of pupil                      Dob:                      School:

Dear Parent

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance has not significantly improved since I last contacted you.

I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised.

I am now formally requesting the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer who will contact you in due course to arrange a meeting.

I will continue to be available to discuss this matter with you. Please telephone me on the number above should you require an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Claire Pirrie  
Head of School

cc      Education Welfare Officer



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Head of School: Claire Pirrie

Date

Name &  
address of parent

Dear Parent

**Re: Child Name:** xxx **DOB:** xxx **School:**

I have noted during a recent attendance review that your child is beginning to show a pattern of persistent lateness.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption

If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's education, I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss this.

Please note that if your child arrives after registers close this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. I must remind you that as parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may result in a Penalty Notice being issued against you and/or legal proceedings being considered.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Pirrie  
Head of School

cc Education Welfare Officer



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Head of School: Claire Pirrie

Date

Name &  
Address of parent

Dear Parent

**Re: Child Name:** xxx **DOB:** xxx **School:**

I am writing about «forename»'s absence from school from <<date>> to <<date>>.

From information received from other sources we believe that this was due to a family holiday. You have not followed the correct procedure for requesting leave of absence during term time.

We would be grateful if you could confirm the reason for the absence within 7 days of the date of this letter so this period can be recorded appropriately on the attendance register. However, if the absence was not due to a family holiday and it was due to illness, please provide medical evidence to support this.

If we do not hear from you within the next 7 days, «forename»'s absence will be recorded as 'G' denoting an unauthorised family holiday.

If unauthorised absences are recorded a Penalty Notice can be issued by the Local Authority to each parent/care in respect of each child who is absent from school.

However, if a Penalty Notice is not issued, your child's attendance will be monitored and this, along with any further unauthorised absences, would be discussed with you which may lead to legal action being taken under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 if the attendance fails to improve.

Yours sincerely

Claire Pirrie  
Head of School

cc Education Welfare Officer



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Head of School: Claire Pirrie

Date

Name &  
Address of parent

Dear Parent

**Re: Child Name:** xxx **DOB:** xxx **School:**

This letter is for your information so you do not need to take any action.

I would like to thank you for following the school procedure regarding Attendance. We understand that «forename» has had authorised absence recently and that you called the school every day to keep us informed. We would just like to let you know how this has affected «forename»'s attendance which is currently at «percentage\_attendance»%. As you know, if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

*School share a vital part in ensuring that children who are absent from school because of their medical needs maintain their education.*

*If your child is absent from school for over 10 days it may be necessary for school to seek support for your child.*

*Please ensure that school is fully aware of any medical issues that may affect your child's attendance.*

Please continue to work with us. You are more than welcome to contact *school* to discuss any queries or concerns you may have.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

Yours sincerely

Claire Pirrie  
Head of School

cc Education Welfare Officer



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## LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM – exceptional circumstances

The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. Permission must be sought in advance. Recent government regulations have removed the discretion on head teachers agreeing to term time holiday requests except in exceptional circumstances, considered on a case by case basis. You are advised not to make arrangements until your request has been considered by the school.

If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absence may make you liable for a Penalty Notice (fine). Failure to settle a Penalty Notice may lead to prosecution by the local authority.

**To: The Attendance Officer, Godmanchester Bridge Academy**

I wish to have an absence of ..... days authorised due to exceptional circumstances, for:

Child's Name ..... Class .....

Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s).....

First day of absence..... Last day of absence .....

**Please fully explain the exceptional circumstances that you would like the school to consider. *Before completing this section please read the guidance overleaf.* Please continue on a separate sheet if needed.**

Signature of  
Parent(s)/Carer(s).....Date.....

### Office use only

Date form received	No of school days absence requested	Current % attendance	Authorised	Attendance Code	Date entered onto SIMS
			Yes / No		

Signature of Attendance  
Officer.....Date.....

## ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL IN TERM TIME

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives an education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special needs. Receiving a good full-time education will give your child the best possible start in life. Attending school regularly and punctually is essential if children are to make the most of the opportunities available to them. Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed, and younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.

As a parent/carer you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.

The law allows schools to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient information/evidence in order to establish this fact. Application must be made in advance, as schools do not have the power to authorise absence retrospectively.

### Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these outside school hours if at all possible)
- Days of religious observance
- Forces personnel on leave from a foreign posting
- External examinations
- Exceptional significant family events or circumstances

### Other examples of absence from school that will not be authorised:

- Shopping during school hours
- Family day trips
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives
- Holidays which have not been agreed
- Cheaper holidays in England and abroad

### **WARNING**

If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school you may be issued with a Penalty Notice, or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices may only be served in accordance with the County Council's code of conduct.

The amount of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 per parent per child if paid after 21 days and before 28 days. Should a parent or carer on whom a notice is served fail to pay the fine in full within the specified time he/she will be liable to prosecution in a Magistrates court where on conviction a sentence of a fine up to £2,500 or up to three months in prison may be imposed.