

GRACEHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL



Caring, Learning, Achieving Together

ATTENDANCE POLICY

JANUARY 2024

Gracehill Primary School

‘Caring, Learning, Achieving Together’

Gracehill Primary School is a happy, caring school, where children are inspired to be curious, active and full of hope. We aim to nurture pupils to become resilient and motivated lifelong learners, who can take responsibility for their personal development. We will ensure every pupil is given support to thrive and develop their emotional intelligence. We will work with families to provide a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for each child’s holistic growth.

Gracehill Primary School recognises that punctual and regular attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning and is, therefore, committed to maintaining high levels of attendance and punctuality. We also believe that encouraging good attendance will help children to develop self-confidence, independence, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility for themselves. Good attendance habits established at a young age will prepare our pupils for the future opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Our Attendance Policy is part of our collective pastoral care policies, led by our Pastoral Care Co-ordinator Mrs Cousley.

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Gracehill Primary school.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
4. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

School Responsibility

Gracehill Primary School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance. We will:

- Make daily, accurate recordings of attendance.
- Analyse attendance trends monthly.
- Correspond with parents if there is a concern.
- Provide the Educational Welfare Officer with termly updates of all children who have an attendance percentage of 85% or below.
- Complete a Referral to the E.W.O. if deemed necessary.
- Provide an annual attendance figure on each School Report in June.

To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2020/08, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202008-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools>

Governors Responsibility

The Board of Governors has overall responsibility for pupil attendance, but on a day-to-day basis, this responsibility is delegated to the Principal. The Board of Governors has a responsibility to monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school Attendance Policy. The Principal reports regularly to the governors on these matters

Parent/Guardian Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

If a child is registered in school, their parent/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

It is a parent's/guardian's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. This notification is by email to the school office and should include an estimated return to school date. A follow-up email is only required if the reason for absence changes, such as diagnosis from the GP. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required. The parent/guardian may also see the class teacher regarding the pupil's absence.

Pupils are expected to be in Gracehill Primary School at 8.45am for registration and the beginning of class. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on the child's attendance record.

If your child appears reluctant to attend school please discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Mrs Cousley, our Pastoral Care Co-ordinator, the SENCO or the Principal, to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

Pupil Responsibility

At Gracehill Primary School we encourage children to take increasing responsibility for themselves. We expect the following from all our pupils:

- That they attend school regularly and punctually.
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

Monitoring Attendance

The daily register is completed by the class teacher at the beginning of the session. This information is then recorded electronically on the Department of Education's system. Attendance levels are monitored on an individual and a whole school basis.

100% Attendance	0 days missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 days of absence 1 week and 4 days of learning missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 days of absence 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 days of absence 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed	Very poor

Authorised Absences

Authorised Absence - where the school has been consulted and can approve the absence.

Examples of authorised absences are:

- Illness
- Bereavement
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments during school hours
- Exceptional family circumstances

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Unexplained absences i.e. the absence has never been properly explained to school
- Day trips or holidays in term time

Family holidays during Term Time

Gracehill Primary School discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised. Schoolwork/homework will not be provided for unauthorised holidays. If you plan to take your child out of school for a break/holiday during term time, the principal and class teacher should be informed.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

The school will continuously monitor each child's attendance record. The school follows a two-step process for any children who are persistently absent for any reason:

1) Each month Mrs Cousley will review all absences and the reasons given for children whose attendance falls below 85% as a cumulative percentage. It is noted if attendance is improving or deteriorating within the previous month.

Following this analysis a range of actions may result:

- School may contact parents to discuss the matter and offer support.
- During parent/teacher interviews, pupils' whose attendance is below 85% will be addressed.
- School may send a letter to the parents/guardians of specific children whose attendance is causing concern. This will inform parents of their child's attendance, school's concerns and invite parents to contact school to avail of assistance in effecting improvement.

Very often these early interventions are successful in effecting improved attendance.

2) The list of children whose attendance is below 85% is also discussed with the Educational Welfare Officer on a termly basis and where school's action has not resulted in improved attendance, formal referral to the Educational Welfare Service will be discussed/agreed.

The Principal will liaise with the class teacher, SENCO and, when necessary, other professionals, if the need for support is identified.

Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to the individuals learning and to that of the other pupils in the class.

It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupts lessons. This can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence. If work is missed there is an expectation that this will be 'made-up' by the child throughout the school day.

Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) have a legal duty to make sure that parents/guardians meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85% and there is also a concern, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

Gracehill Nursery Unit

The Nursery year is a pre-school year and it is not a legal duty for the child to go to school. If a parent chooses to take a place at our Nursery, we would expect that all efforts would be made to achieve a high level of attendance. The children's attendance will be recorded and monitored in the same way as the school.

Principal: Mr R McCombe

Chair of Board of Governors: Bishop S Groves

Ratified by BOG: January 2024

Review Date: January 2027 (unless new advice is forwarded by DE/EA)