The Gem Federation
Attendance Policy

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

> Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence

> Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled

> Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

> Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

> Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

> Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

> The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

> The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The Executive Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

> Implementation of this policy at the Federation

> Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

> Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

> Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The Designated Lead for Attendance

The designated lead for attendance:

> Monitors attendance data across the Federation and at an individual pupil level

> Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher

> Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

> Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

> Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. They are expected to ascertain the reasons for any absence from school each day (by contacting parents/carers via phone, text or email) and record it on the school system.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and after the start of the first afternoon session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.55am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.05am. The register for the afternoon will be taken when lessons resume after lunch, dependent on each phases timetable.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.45am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Notification of absence should be via voicemail/phone call to the main school office, or in some circumstances by emailing the main school office.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, or if a child's attendance is already below 90%.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If a child's attendance is below 90% (persistently absent), the school will ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence (see above) in order to authorise the absence.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Notification of appointments should be done in person at the main school office in order to provide an appointment card/letter as evidence, or in some circumstances by emailing the main school office.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

> Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

> After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

If a child is persistently late to arrive at school, parents/carers may be asked to attend a punctuality meeting with senior leaders.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the Federation will:

> Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by contacting parents/carers via phone, text or email, and record it on the school system

> Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary

> Identify whether the absence is approved or not

> Identify the correct attendance code to use

4.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance is reported to parents on their child's end of year report. Additionally, attendance may be reported verbally during parent's evenings and tutorial days.

Parents/carers may request a copy of their child's attendance grid at any time by contacting the main school office.

When a child's attendance is below 90%, our persistent absence procedure will be followed. See section 5.2 for more information.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as circumstances where:

> The leave would be of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child
> The benefit of the leave would outweigh the loss of teaching time
> The leave would be for a one-off, never-to-be-repeated experience.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Pupil's previous attendance, attainment and progress, and any impending exams or significant school events will always be considered when making a decision.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

> Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

> Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

> Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Possible reasons for granting leave for 'exceptional circumstances' may include:

> A major family event such as the wedding of a close relative
> Serious or terminal illness of a close relative
> Significant family trauma has occurred and it is believed that a break is in the child's best interests.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

Persistent Absence is defined as any pupil whose attendance is below 90%.

When a pupil is persistently absent the following procedures will be followed:

a) Parents will be notified by letter if their child's attendance is below 90%, and notified that attendance will be monitored to ensure improvement over a set period of time (for example over the next half term).

b) When any absence has been unauthorised, parents will also be notified that if attendance does not improve they must attend an Attendance Panel with senior leaders.

c) Attendance Panels will be held with parents when absence has not improved over time, and a plan of actions will be agreed to ensure improvement.

d) Referrals to the Southwark Education Inclusion Team will be made when, despite the procedures above being followed, attendance has not improved over time. A referral may also be considered if attendance is extremely poor over a shorter period of time.

e) When a persistently absent child's attendance improves, parents/carers will receive an 'Improved Attendance' notification from the school to thank them for their efforts.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The Federation or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

> The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

> One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

> Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The Federation implements many strategies for promoting good attendance, including but not limited to:

- Attendance tips in the school newsletters
- 'Attendance Winners' class of the week
- 100% weekly attendance certificates
- Awards for 100% attendance over 1/2/3 terms
- Robust persistent absence procedures
- Regular attendance monitoring and sharing with the Federation community

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance lead at our Federation monitors pupil absence on a half termly basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

The parent/carer is expected to call the school each subsequent morning that their child remains absent, unless evidence has been provided explaining the reason for the entire period of absence.

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days without reasonable evidence provided, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continue to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving Southwark's Education Inclusion Team. The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Attendance data is collected and stored in order to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils

- Identify particular groups of children whose absences may be a concern (for example vulnerable groups)

- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as needing intervention and support

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment

P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason

		for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day