



ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR GREAT MARSDEN ST. JOHN'S PRIMARY – A Church of England Academy

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Vision

Our children will experience love, respect, faith and success as unique individuals within our school community and the wider world, now and in the future.

Our Mission

“We ask that Christ will live in our hearts through faith making us rooted and grounded in LOVE.”

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Schools

1 Introduction

At Great Marsden St John's we recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for children. We will encourage good attendance for all pupils, by offering an environment in which pupils feel valued and part of the school community.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance states that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.

Absence or late arrival also disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Government research shows a direct link between attendance and attainment and good attendees also make better progress socially, learn to work with others, and are better prepared for the transition to secondary school and, eventually, higher education, training and employment.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Our attendance target this year is 96%, but all pupils should strive to achieve 100% attendance if they can.

2 Responsibilities and roles

2.1 Families

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly, if they are of compulsory school age and registered at a school (see appendix for details of how the law applies to school attendance and how "parent" is defined in law).

Parents and carers must also ensure that school has up-to-date contact information for themselves and emergency contacts.

If your child is going to be absent, parents must inform school as soon as possible and at the latest by 9.15 am on the first day of absence.

Pupils' responsibilities depend upon their age, maturity and capability but they too must do their best to attend school regularly and punctually.

2.2 School

Head Teacher

- Lead on giving attendance a high profile.
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters and protected time allocated to discharge those responsibilities.



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- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to statutory requirements regarding attendance.
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some, all, or none of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision.
- Where there is uncertainty regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence, or to request further evidence to support the decision-making process.
- Provide regular reports to the governing body on school attendance, including persistent absence and vulnerable groups.

Attendance lead and other staff with designated responsibilities for attendance

- ◆ First day response: contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided and record this information accordingly. Contact emergency contacts if parents cannot be reached.
- ◆ Update attendance registers.
- ◆ Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups.
- ◆ Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents.
- ◆ Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, using parenting contracts where appropriate.
- ◆ Involve external agencies to support children and parents as appropriate to better understand and address the issues causing attendance concerns.
- ◆ Promote regular attendance through the school newsletter, website and displays and ensure the school's attendance policy is readily accessible.
- ◆ Use projects and strategies to improve attendance and punctuality for groups, classes or the whole school (e.g. incentive and reward schemes, certificates, traffic light letters).

All school staff

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and a safe learning environment.
- Be aware of factors that can contribute to poor attendance and punctuality.
- Adhere to the procedures in place within school to promote good attendance.
- Promote the link between attendance and educational attainment to pupils and parents.
- Complete attendance registers in accordance with the legislation and under the direction of the head teacher.
- Discuss attendance concerns at an early stage with children and parents.
- Raise any concerns about attendance with the attendance lead and/or head teacher.

LGC and The Trust

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended.
- Agree an attendance policy and review it annually.
- Agree targets for attendance at Great Marsden St. John's
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance targets, or when the governors believe there is cause for concern, instigate a review of the school's attendance procedures.
- Authorise the head teacher (or other designated person) to make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the head teacher in establishing equitable and consistent criteria against which leave



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requests will be considered.

Schools are bound by a range of attendance legislation and guidance; please see the appendix for further details.

2.3 Lancashire County Council (the local authority)

Although GMSJ is part of Cidari MAT, we look to the LA for support with all matters relating to attendance.

School Attendance Consultants (SACs) SACs are in contact for attendance advice regarding individual pupils and the whole school.

Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST) Pupil Attendance Support Workers undertake direct work with primary pupils and parents/carers, support attendance projects in school, and can provide supplementary evidence for legal interventions initiated by school.

School Attendance Legal Team (SALT) Following requests from schools for legal interventions in the event of failure to attend school regularly, SALT undertakes enforcement processes, including penalty notices, prosecutions, parenting orders, education supervision orders and school attendance orders.

Children Missing Education (CME) Team. The CME team ensures the local authority fulfils its statutory duty to identify children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. For further information see section 7, below, regarding notifications schools must submit.

3 Types of absence

Every half-day absence from school is classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required from parents/carers. As a school, we will always work with parents (and other agencies, as appropriate) to understand the reasons underlying absence.

3.1 Authorised absences Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

3.2 Unauthorised absences Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. If a pupil continues to have unauthorised absences, the school may refer to the Pupil Attendance Support Team or request legal interventions from the School Attendance Legal Team. Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences which are not explained satisfactorily.
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed.
- Days off for shopping, birthdays or looking after other children.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed by the head teacher.
- Days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the head teacher.

It is the head teacher's responsibility to decide if an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence is authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription, appointment card or similar. Parents should not ask their doctor (GP) to provide "sick notes" to excuse absence.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school for other reasons. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school as soon as possible to resolve the



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issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. As a school, we will always work with parents (and external agencies as appropriate) to understand and address the reasons behind absence.

3.3 Persistent Absence (PA) Persistent absence is when a child misses 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason, authorised and unauthorised (including illness, exclusion, holiday, etc). Absence at this level will damage any child's educational prospects and we expect parents' fullest support and cooperation to address this.

At GMSJ, we monitor all absences thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be prioritised and parents will be informed of this promptly. Pupils who are persistent absentees are tracked and monitored carefully and the attendance procedures below (section 5) will be followed.

3.4 Leave during term time

By law, maintained schools cannot authorise any leave in term time other than in exceptional circumstances. Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their education and progress as much as any other absence. If leave is being requested for a holiday or extended leave abroad, approval should be obtained from the head teacher before making any bookings.

Leave of absence in term time **will not** be granted unless

- a request for leave has been made **in advance** by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides (using the form available from the school office), and
- the head teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **exceptional circumstances** relating to the request.

At Great Marsden St John's, an exceptional circumstance is defined as 'the death, traumatic accident or life threatening/serious illness of an immediate family member (extended to Grandparents) who do not live in the local area. The Head Teacher will make a professional judgement with regard to the specifications (e.g. time frame) following a conversation with the parent requesting the absence. Proof may be asked for in support of the request. In Great Marsden St John's the Head Teacher is the person authorised by the 'proprietor' i.e. the local governing committee, to make this decision. If the leave is being requested for a holiday, approval should be obtained prior to making any bookings. Due to the need to evidence exceptional circumstances, parents are advised to provide school with any relevant information regarding their request at the point of application if they believe the circumstances are exceptional.

In considering the request school will also consider other factors such as:

- The timing of the requested leave, e.g. when a pupil is just starting at school or during assessment periods, such as SATs.
- A pupil's attendance record already includes unauthorised absence.
- Attendance is already a concern, or could become a concern, as a result of taking leave.
- Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and will attract legal sanctions such as a penalty notice.

In certain circumstances, as outlined in regulation, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if leave is taken and the criteria governing removal from roll are met (see appendix).

Use of Penalty Notices

The school takes unauthorised absence seriously and, particularly in the case of repeated unauthorised absences,



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will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate. Furthermore Great Marsden St John's will request that the local authority issue penalty notices in respect of unauthorised absence. This includes leave which is taken without a prior request being made; and leave taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of this advice Great Marsden St John's will also request that the local authority issue a penalty notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason. Parents also risk losing their child's school place if they do not return from leave, as agreed, and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

The school office is responsible for recording leave requests in the electronic register and will retain copies of correspondence regarding requested leave of absence for 3 years. They will also be responsible for highlighting to the Headteacher if absence continues after the notified period. In this instance the Head Teacher will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil, the School Attendance Consultant, Inclusion Manager and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate and a Penalty Notice will be considered.

3.5 Religious absence

School will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, eg Eid, and this will be marked as code R in the register. The day authorised will be that set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member. Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if the head teacher agrees that exceptional circumstances apply; this would be marked in the register as code C.

3.6 Participation in sporting events

Parents can request leave of absence for their child to take part in regional, national and international sporting events. However, as always, granting leave is at the head teacher's discretion and she/he will need to discuss with you the length and frequency of the absence(s) requested and how learning will continue if absence occurs, eg the sports club or association providing an approved education tutor.

Leave for a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school can be marked in the register as code P.

Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late in order to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the head teacher and is unlikely to be approved if it would occur regularly.

3.7 Participation in performances (eg theatre, television, modelling)

Parents of a child performer can request leave from school for their child to take part in a performance. A local authority licence must be obtained before a child can take part in a performance. Before a licence is granted, school will be consulted and head teachers must be satisfied that the leave will not have a negative effect on the child's education.

Where the licence specifies the dates that the child is to be away from school, the head teacher should authorise those days. However, where the licence does not specify dates, it is at the discretion of the head teacher to authorise the leave request.

Any absence authorised for the child to take part in a performance will be recorded as code C.

Parents wishing to apply for a performance licence should go to the Lancashire County Council [Child performance licences webpage](#).

4 Registration

4.1 Attendance registration

Morning Registration is between 08.50am and 08:55am

Afternoon Registration is between 1.00pm and 1.05pm



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Each class teacher or their nominated representative is responsible for marking children present or absent in the register at morning and afternoon registration. on the electronic register, The registers must be completed promptly to avoid discrepancies between classes. The school office is responsible for inputting absence codes on a daily basis.

4.2 Late arrival.

Late Registration

Pupils requiring admittance to school after the class doors are closed at 8.50am must use the Y3/4 entrance which will remain open until 8.55am. After this time, they must go to the main entrance and request entry via the school office. Staff in the office will note the child's name, class and time of entry to school up until 09:30am in the Absence/Late book. After this time the school office is responsible for maintaining the signing in/out book. This must contain details of name, class, time admitted/time released, reason for lateness/early departure and name of supervising adult.

In accordance with current guidance, the attendance registers are closed at 9.30am/1.15pm. This means that any pupil who arrives after the registration period (8.50 to 08:55am/1.00 to 1.05pm) but before the registers are closed (9.30am/1.15pm) will be given a late mark (L) in the register. This code is classed as a present mark, but displays that the pupil arrived late for school. Any pupil who arrives after the registers have closed (9.30am/1.15pm) will be given a "late after registers closed" mark (U) in the register. This code is classed as an unauthorised absence but displays that the pupil was physically present in school for part of the day.

In addition to using the L and U codes, office staff may also use the facility within the Progresso attendance module to record the number of minutes late for each pupil, on each occasion. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of lateness more effectively and make a clear link between lateness and missed curriculum; and share such information with parents.

The fact that the U code is classed as an unauthorised absence means that when it is used pupils are likely to be missing significant amounts of schooling, putting their educational progress at risk. For this reason the use of this code will be considered as serious as any other unauthorised absence and will attract the interest of external agencies, including referral to the local authority attendance team and consideration of the use of legal measures, in just the same way.

4.3 Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting important news and information for the day. Pupils arriving late also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

If your child is often late you will be asked to meet with the head teacher and/or the attendance lead to discuss ways to improve punctuality, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Persistent lateness after the register has closed may result in further action, as outlined below, under section 5.

5 School attendance procedures

5.1 First day of absence

If your child is absent and we have not heard from you, we will telephone/text you on the first day of absence to find out what the reason is and when your child is expected to return. If we are unable to contact you, we will approach your emergency contacts and, if necessary, make a home visit.

5.2 Attendance concerns

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with us in resolving any attendance problems together; this is nearly always successful. However, if concerns persist, school will use the following procedures



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and interventions, as required, to support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

- Telephone calls and/or letters to make parents aware of school's concern about their child's attendance.
- Invitation to meetings to discuss concerns with our attendance lead and/or head teacher.
- Use parenting contracts to identify barriers to regular attendance, ways to overcome these and agree targets for improvement.
- Use incentive and reward schemes for individual pupils, if appropriate.
- Use of the common assessment framework (CAF) and/or referral to other agencies and services. Request support from the local authority Pupil Attendance Support Team.
- For unauthorised absences, request legal interventions by the local authority, such as penalty notices, prosecution or other attendance-related court orders.

At any stage, we may seek advice from our School Attendance Consultant.

5.3 Pupils with medical needs who have difficulty attending school

Government guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (see appendix) emphasises the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils, whether their condition is short or long term.

School will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be in the form of specific support or resources used within school or by sourcing appropriate provision at another establishment. When education is to be provided at an alternative location, this should always be done via the use of a direction (please see section 6, below).

When a pupil has been absent from school for an extended period, the head teacher, the class teacher and other support services will work with the family to ensure that a smooth reintegration is achieved.

5.4 Pupils refusing to attend school

At GMSJ, we believe that every child has a right to a full-time education, and we would not accept "school refusal" as a reason for non-attendance. In such cases, we will work with parents to identify the reasons why a child may be reluctant to attend school. We may request support from the Pupil Attendance Support Team and, with consent, make referrals to external partners such as the Children and Family Wellbeing Service, Primary Mental Health Workers, etc, as appropriate to try to ensure the correct support is secured for the child and their family.

6 Alternative provision and use of directions

There is a range of circumstances when pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are:

- Pupils who have been excluded, either for a fixed period of more than 5 days or permanently.
- Pupils unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons.
- Pupils are required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour, either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (via a managed move).

When a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for the purposes of improving behaviour, the Headteacher of the main school must issue a written direction or notice informing all parents of the alternative provision which their child is required to attend. Where a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for other reasons, the issuing of a written direction is considered best practice.



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7 Notifications school must submit to the local authority

7.1 Admissions

All schools must notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register and must provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil. This duty does not apply to pupils who are added to the admission register at the start of the school's youngest year unless the local authority also requests for such information to be provided (Lancashire currently does not).

7.2 Leavers

All schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply where the pupil's name is removed after they have completed the school's final year, unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided (Lancashire currently does not).

Where a school notifies a local authority that a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register, the school must provide the local authority with the required information as laid out in regulation.

In addition to submitting a notification about removal from roll, some circumstances also require school to make referrals to other local authority teams such as the Elective Home Education team or the Children Missing Education team. Schools may also contact their School Attendance Consultant for advice on removing children from roll.

7.3 Pupils who fail to attend

All schools (including academies) must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. In Lancashire primary schools, this can be done via a variety of means and school can contact their School Attendance Consultant for further advice.

7.4 Children missing education (CME)

Local authorities have a duty to put in place arrangements for identifying (as far as possible) those children of compulsory school age in their area who are not school registered or receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Local authorities should trace those children and ensure they receive a full-time education.

If a pupil has stopped attending and her or his location is unknown, schools must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the local authority, before deleting the pupil's name from the register. In such cases, school should undertake a home visit themselves, or request a home visit from the Pupil Attendance Support Team, prior to a referral being made to the local authority Children Missing Education team.

Appendix: School attendance and the law

There are many pieces of legislation and government regulations and guidance that are relevant to school attendance and to children and their parents and carers. The list below relates to this policy but is not exhaustive.

Parents and carers

Government expectations

The Department for Education's [School attendance guidance](#) states that the government expects:

- *Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.*
- *All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.*

Duty to ensure children receive education

[Section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#) covers the duty of parents to secure the education of children in their care who



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are of compulsory school age and states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and*
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have,*
either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Offence if a child does not attend regularly

[Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996](#), if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly, their parent is guilty of an offence.

The offence is absolute as the only defences available to the parent are those statutory defences listed within that section of the Act, ie:

- the child was absent with leave granted by the school;
- the child was prevented from attending by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause;
- absence was on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which their parent belongs;
- that the school is not within statutory walking distance and that the local education authority has made no suitable transport arrangements or enabled the pupil to become registered at an alternative nearer school.

Compulsory school age

[Section 8 of the Education Act 1996](#) establishes that a child becomes of compulsory school age on the start date of the term following her/his fifth birthday, or that day if her/his fifth birthday falls on the day term starts.

A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which he/she reaches the age of 16 or if he/she reaches 16 after the last Friday in June but before the start of the new school year.

Legal definition of "parent" in relation to attendance

The law requires that all "parents" are held responsible for their child's attendance. This definition can include any person who has care of the child. [Section 576 of the Education Act 1996](#) states:

Meaning of "parent".

(1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person—

- (a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or*
- (b) who has care of him.*

Thus, the definition of "parent" means all natural parents, whether they are married or not, and includes any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility and/or care for a child or young person.

Schools

Attendance and absence registration codes

[School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities](#), DfE, regularly updated

This guidance also states that the government expects *schools and local authorities to:*

- *Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;*
- *Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,*
- *act early to address patterns of absence.*

Data protection

Schools must ensure that personal data is handled in accordance with the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). See Privacy



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Notice for information about how personal data will be used.

Duty for schools to include attendance information in reports for parents

[The Education \(Pupil Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2005](#)

Duty for schools to notify the local authority when pupils join or leave school

[Regulation 12 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Duty for maintained schools to publish attendance data

[What maintained schools must publish online, DfE guidance](#)

Duty for schools to report attendance concerns about individual pupils to the local authority

[Regulation 12 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Duty for schools to report attendance data to Government

[Section 537A of the Education Act 1996](#) and

[Complete the school census, DfE guidance for schools and local authorities on what data government requires](#)

Duty for schools to safeguard and promote welfare of children

[Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges, DfE, regularly updated](#)

Leave in term time *

[September 2013 amendment to The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Legal interventions

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child who is on a school roll fails to attend regularly and those absences are recorded by the school as unauthorised.

Legal interventions are available under the following Acts, Guidance and Regulations:

- [Section 444 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- [Section 36 of the Children Act 1989](#)
- [Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [School attendance parental responsibility measures 2015](#)

Pupils with health needs who cannot attend school

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions: Statutory guidance, DfE, 2015](#)

Regulations regarding participation in performances

[The Children \(Performances and Activities\) \(England\) Regulations 2014](#)

Regulations regarding removal from roll

[Regulation 8 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Regulations regarding the school day and number of sessions.

[The Education \(School Day and School Year\) \(England\) Regulations 1999](#)