Gateway Federation

Gorsley Goffs Primary, Lea Church of England Primary, Gateway Lodge Nursery

Attendance Policy

Written by:	Herefordshire Council Model Policy and adapted by SLT
Date	November 2026
Date for review	November 2029

1. Aims

At The Gateway Federation we are committed to promoting excellent attendance and ensuring that every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled. We recognise that regular attendance means attending all sessions, for the full duration of those sessions, except where there is a statutory reason not to attend, and we work in partnership with pupils, parents/carers and wider agencies to remove barriers to attendance and support every child to achieve their full potential.

This policy supports a whole-school approach to attendance, recognising that excellent attendance, punctuality and engagement are essential to pupils' wellbeing, safeguarding, attainment and future success. The aims of this policy are to:

- Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality for all pupils.
- Promote the importance and benefits of regular attendance.
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensure every pupil can access the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Identify and address attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- Work collaboratively with families and other agencies to remove barriers to attendance.
- Support pupil wellbeing and safeguarding through effective attendance practices.
- Promote punctuality and ensure pupils arrive ready to learn.

This policy reflects the expectation that attendance is everyone's responsibility and that schools, families, pupils and partner agencies work together to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance and School attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Maintained schools: Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- The Equality Act 2010
- It also refers to:
- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
- Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Detailed responsibilities sit with governors, headteacher, attendance lead, attendance officer, teachers, administration staff, parents and pupils. Attendance is a whole-school responsibility with regular monitoring and challenge.

The governing board – The Gateway Federation

The Executive Headteacher – Mr Simon Manning

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance (Senior Attendance Champion) – Mr Simon Manning

Senior Leaders also responsible for attendance – Mr Simon Pascoe (Head of School at Gorsley Goffs Primary School) and Miss Julie Sullivan (Head of School at Lea C of E Primary School)

4. Recording Attendance

Registers must be taken morning and afternoon, corrections audited, attendance codes used correctly, and statutory retention requirements followed. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending a place other than school
- Absent
- Absent – unable to attend due to unavoidable causes
- 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

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8:40 and ends at 15:15

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:40 on each school day.

Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U)

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:40 and will be kept open 8:45. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:00 and will be kept open until 13:05.

5. Unplanned Absence

Parents must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:30, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office staff, who can be contacted via

Gorsley Goffs - 01989 720321 admin@gorsleygoffs.hereford.sch.uk

Lea C of E - 01989 750296 parents@lea-primary.hereford.sch.uk

Schools will follow up with unexplained absence on the first day and take safeguarding action where appropriate

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are ***not*** permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting for a delivery.
- Parents or other siblings illness.
- Vehicle break down.
- Going shopping or for a haircut.
- Going for a family day out.
- Because it is your child's birthday.
- Sleeping in after a late night.
- Absence to take cheaper holidays.
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory.
- Unauthorised Absences have to be reported to the Local Authority.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for 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.

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may conduct a home visit or contact police to complete a welfare check.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: issue a notice to improve, refer for a penalty notice or other legal intervention, as appropriate

6. Planned Absence and Leave

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

Parents should either contact the school via:

Gorsley Goffs - 01989 720321 admin@gorsleygoffs.hereford.sch.uk

Lea C of E - 01989 750296 parents@lea-primary.hereford.sch.uk

Or complete a 'Request for leave of absence during term time' form (see Appendix 1)

Where possible, the pupil should:

- Be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary, and attend school before/after their appointment
- Wear school uniform to their appointment, to make it easier to return to school afterwards

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as:

Rare and unexpected circumstances which are unlikely to reoccur. Examples include:

- Medical emergencies
- Family emergencies (e.g. death of a relative)

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

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

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via Appendix 1. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

7. Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)

8. Supporting Attendance

- The school aims to communicate and support parents to improve attendance.
- Additional support may be provided where appropriate, including ELSA support, meetings with parents/carers, Early Help assessments, play therapy, referrals to CAMHS and other targeted interventions.
- Support from our SENDCo can be provided if relevant.

9. CME

Children Missing Education procedures must be followed when pupils cannot be located, fail to attend regularly or are removed from roll. Schools must notify the Local Authority where required and complete appropriate safeguarding enquiries.

10. Mental Health, SEND and Vulnerable Pupils

Attendance barriers should be assessed individually with reasonable adjustments and coordinated support where required. Schools should follow the Herefordshire graduated approach to attendance.

11. Attendance Contracts and Notice to Improve

Attendance contracts may be used. Notices to Improve may be issued where support has not led to sufficient improvement and statutory criteria are met.

Notice to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

A notice to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the Herefordshire.

It will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued, or prosecution considered, if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

12. Penalty Notices

The Local Authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

Before referring for a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)

  If in an individual case Herefordshire Council believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. Circumstances where this may apply include (not exhaustive): Several term time holidays below the threshold and repeated absence for birthdays or family events
  When a parent purposefully tries to avoid a penalty notice by taking their child out of school when the school is open for four days for pupils and closed on the fifth day due to a bank holiday or training day.
  Penalty Notice - Local Code of Conduct 2024

- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil

- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution

- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

13. Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education

- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
- Discuss attendance and engagement at school
    - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
    - Explain the help that is available
    - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
    - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see sections 12 and 13, above)
- Students Missing Education (also known as children missing education or **CME**) When students leave the school and no information has been received regarding their new placement and parents/carers are unable to be contacted, the school has a duty of care regarding safeguarding and must contact the Local Authority. The student will be deemed to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to investigate, which will include liaising with Social Services, the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate the child. By giving the school details of the students' new school and location, unnecessary investigations can be avoided. Children missing education - Herefordshire Council
- Children Missing in Education (CMIE) Where children are missing considerable amounts of their education despite high levels of intervention and support, then we may refer the student's case into the Child Missing in Education (CMIE) panel at the Local Authority

14. Reintegration Following Absence

Individual reintegration plans will be considered following lengthy or unavoidable absence.

15. Monitoring and Governance

Attendance data is reviewed weekly, termly and annually and reported to governors.

Appendix

Appendix 1:

THE GATEWAY FEDERATION
Gorsley Goffs Primary School
Lea Church of England Primary School and Gateway Lodge Nursery

Request for a leave of absence during term time

Dear Parent/Carer

When children are taken out of school in term time, it can seriously affect their education. Absence disrupts the continuity of a child's learning. Children miss the teaching that takes place on the days that they are away and they may find it difficult to understand lessons when they return. Children need to attend school regularly in order to make good progress and achieve all that they can.

The attached form is a request to take your child out of school during term time. Please read the following guidance points before completing the form.

No holidays taken in term time can be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. This ruling has not been made by our governing body or Herefordshire County Council but applies, by law, to all schools in England.

If holidays are taken in circumstances that do not meet these criteria they will not be authorised and parents or carers may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or other legal action. This is where 10 or more sessions have been unauthorised. A session is a morning or afternoon e.g. 5 days equals 10 sessions. Where a fine is issued it is to each parent for each child taken out of school and that this is a fine of **£160 per child/per parent** if paid within the 28 days which reduces to £80 per child/per parent if paid within 21 days.

Yours sincerely

S. Manning

Simon Manning, Executive Head Teacher

Please note:
When children do not attend lessons we cannot send the work home, as they will have missed the teaching that is needed for them to complete it with understanding. You will need to consider how you will ensure that your child does not fall behind with their learning and have gaps in their education due to this absence

Exceptional leave of absence request

Leave request details			
Child's name :			
DOB:		**Year group/Class:**	
Date From/To :		**Total Days :**	
Destination:		**Total Sessions (2 per day):**	
Please detail below your EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES for this request:			
BOTH PARENTS MUST SIGN AND COMPLETE BELOW			
Signature:		Date:	
Signature:		Date:	

	Parent/carer	Parent/carer
Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss)		
Surname		
Forename		
Date of Birth		
Relationship to pupil		
Address		
Telephone number:		
Email address:		
Pupil resides with:		

Dear Parent/Carer

Further to your recent request for absence during term time:

☐ Leave of absence authorised between …….. and ……

☐ I am unable to authorise this absence, therefore this will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Signed by……..Headteacher Date ……..

Appendix 2

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
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a ‘mobile child’ who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil’s travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school

N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays