

Grange Primary School



Attendance Policy

Adopted: Autumn 2021
To be reviewed: Autumn 2023

Statement of Intent

At Grange Primary School we expect pupils to achieve at least 96% attendance. The school is aiming to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent (which is less than 90% attendance).

Regular school attendance is important for pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Grange Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all its students. Being absent from school means lost learning opportunities. It is vital that pupils, parents and families, staff and governors recognise the importance that good attendance plays in the life of all students. Without a high level of attendance, the standard of attainment is likely to drop and pupils cannot benefit fully from all that the school is able to provide.

Problems which affect a pupil's attendance will be identified, investigated and in partnership with parents and pupils, a resolution will be attempted as soon as possible. Parents are expected to attend meetings with the School /Essex Local Authority where attendance is of concern. Intervention letters will be sent to parents when attendance falls below 95% as part of the school's attendance procedure.

Grange Primary School aim to:

- Ensure that the majority of pupils achieve 96% or better attendance to ensure access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Ensure continuity and progression in learning to enable pupils to meet age related standards and make good progress in all subjects.
- Improve pupils' ability to work as part of a team and foster good relationships in the community.
- Monitor and support pupils where attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents/carers to resolve any barriers to learning due to poor attendance.
- Involve outside agencies as and when necessary.
- Encourage and reward good attendance and punctuality.

Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures

School

- The session times for Grange Primary School are:

KS1 morning session	:	8.40 am – 12.00pm
KS1 afternoon session	:	1.00 pm – 3.10 pm

KS2 Morning session	:	8.40 am – 12.15pm
KS2 Afternoon session	:	1.15 pm – 3.10 pm

Pupils must be in class ready to learn before 9.00 am when registration closes. Pupils arriving after 9.00 am will be registered as late. If a pupil arrives after 9:20 am, they will be registered as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

- The school will inform parents of any changes in the school's routine on our website and in our newsletter.
- The school will consider all leave of absence requests. The decision will be made by the Headteacher. Leave of absence will only be granted if it is believed to be an exceptional circumstance. If not granted, and the leave is still taken, it will be classed as an unauthorised absence.
- We will ensure teachers and support staff are available for informal contact and by appointment for more lengthy discussions.
- The school will ensure concerns regarding attendance are brought to the attention of parents. Attendance may be discussed at parents' evenings.
- We will always offer parent/carers and children support and guidance to address any barriers to attendance. When a child's attendance is causing concern, parents/carers are contacted by the school and invited to a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the issues preventing regular attendance. An action plan will be made at the meeting to help improve attendance in the future.
- Attendance is the responsibility of the allocated governor for Safeguarding.

Pupils

- Pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Pupils must be in class and ready to learn by 9.00 am.
- Late arrivals must inform the office or pupil services of their arrival.

Parents and Families

- Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence by 9.15am to provide a reason for the absence. Parents/carers are also asked to inform the school of an expected return date.
- If the school are unable to contact the parents/carers, a home visit may be arranged. If there is no response, the school may ask for a police welfare check.
- If parents/carers are unsure on how long their child should be absent due to illness, please contact the school office. They have guidelines provided by the Health Protection Agency.
- Where possible, parents/carers are encouraged to book medical or dentist appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, children are expected to attend before and after appointments.
- Leave for medical or dental appointments may be authorised where confirmation has been received from the parents. This can be in person, in writing by telephone or an appointment card.
- An appointment card will only be accepted as authorisation for the session the appointment falls in. Any further absences will need evidence such as medication or a doctor's note.
- In some cases of absence due to medical reasons, the school may request that medical evidence (such as appointment cards or prescribed medication) is provided. Failure on the part of the parent to provide such medical evidence will result in absences being recorded as unauthorised.
- Unexplained absences or continued absence will be reported to Missing Education Child Employment Service (MECES) for assistance. **If school does not have any contact to explain an absence, the child will be reported missing on the tenth day of absence.** Prior to this, a member of staff will conduct a home visit / welfare check.
- Parents/carers are expected to work alongside the school and the MECES to help resolve any attendance issues.

Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES) previously known as Education Welfare Service

- MECES carries out statutory duties on behalf of the Local Authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance.
- The school may refer a pupil to MECES where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. MECES will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/carers and could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

Rewards/Celebrations

Grange Primary School has a wide range of initiatives to reward those with good attendance:

- Attendance is linked into the school's behaviour system. Attendance is celebrated in the weekly newsletter and a class attendance competition runs each half term.
- Pupils who may need extra encouragement to improve their attendance, may be set attendance targets. If the targets are met, they will receive an "Improved Attendance" certificate.
- Pupils at the end of the academic year with 100% attendance, will be entered into a prize draw. Pupils with 99% or above attendance, will be entered into a separate prize draw.

Application for Leave of Absence

There is no automatic entitlement in law to a leave of absence during term time.

Leave of absence is not a legal right. The school strongly discourages parents from taking their children out of school in term time. If, under exceptional circumstances, parents/carers wish to request a leave of absence, they should write to the head teacher at least four school weeks in advance of the proposed date, stating the circumstances of the request.

Whilst the head teacher is able to authorise requests which are deemed 'exceptional', please be aware that the vast majority of time taken out of school will be classified as unauthorised. Should a parent/carer wilfully remove their child from school after the head teacher's refusal to authorise the absences, the head teacher will refer the case to Essex Local Authority – Missing Education and Child Employment Services (MECES) who will decide whether to issue a Penalty Notice of £120. If the leave of absence is then taken with disregard to the outcome of the application, the school will seek to apply for a Penalty Notice in accordance with Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004.

Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued

Penalty notices apply to pupils of statutory school age and may be issued where there has been unauthorised absence. Parent/carers will receive a warning letter at least ten days prior to the issue of a penalty notice. If the law continues to be broken around school attendance, the legal intervention process will be used. The penalty for each parent is £60 for each child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to ensure that the child attends school punctually and regularly could lead to legal action being taken against the parent. This could result in each parent/carer receiving a fine of up to £2,500 or up to 3 months imprisonment.

Appendix 1 - School Attendance and the Law – Roles of External Agencies and Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES)

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the *Education (Student Registration) Regulations 2006*, take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes.

Under the *Education (Student Registration) Regulations 2006*, **only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence**. Where the reason for a student's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carers, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

- Penalty notices (a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of issues, or £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days of issue) may be issued by the Local Authority or accredited persons.
- Parents who are found guilty of being in breach of the Education Act with regards to attendance may be taken to court and face fines of up to £2500 and, in some cases, imprisonment.
- MECES can also use court proceedings to seek an Education Supervision Order to be placed on the child.
- During these court proceedings, the magistrates may consider issuing a Parenting Order, which would include parents attending mandatory parenting skills session.