



Attendance & Punctuality

Policy and Procedures

Gateways School
Independent Day School for Boys and Girls

This policy also aligns with the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) Framework 2023, particularly in relation to leadership and management, pupil wellbeing, safeguarding, and data oversight

Policy Aims

Good (>97%) attendance is essential for all pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, well-being and wider life chances.

At Gateways we aspire to good levels of attendance from all pupils.

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- To develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance and punctuality;
- To ensure, so far as possible, that every pupil in the School is able to benefit from, and make their full contribution to, the life of the School;
- To prioritise, and where possible improve, attendance and punctuality across the School, reduce absence and set out the School's approach to the management of absence/non-attendance;
- To act early to address patterns of absence;
- To recognise the links between attendance/absence and pupil wellbeing and school culture, specifically ensuring a consistent whole school approach;
- To help to promote a whole school culture of safety, equality and protection. Attendance procedures are designed to be inclusive and sensitive to the needs of pupils with protected characteristics, including those with disabilities, special educational needs, or other vulnerabilities. Adjustments and support are provided to ensure equitable access to education and fair treatment in attendance monitoring.

In order to achieve those aims, it is the view of school that it is essential that pupils are not absent from school.

Legislation and guidance

Good attendance at school is a prerequisite to pupils' growth, wellbeing and success. The pupils with the highest attainment have higher rates of attendance over the key stage as compared to those with the lowest attainment.

It is recognised that good school attendance also has a positive effect on maintaining a strong school culture.

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance 'Working together to improve Attendance from the Department for Education (DfE)' and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

This policy also aligns with the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) Framework 2023, particularly in relation to leadership and management, pupil wellbeing, safeguarding, and data oversight

These documents are drawn from the following legislation and guidance setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2024
- Working together to improve school attendance August 2024

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

The following school policies are also relevant to this policy:

- Child Protection Policy and Procedures;
- Missing Child Policy and Procedures;
- Learning Support Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- School Term's and Conditions (Parent Contract).

The risks associated with persistent absence are as defined by the DfE below:

% Attendance	Days Absent	Potential Risk
97 - 100%	Up to 5 days	The pupil should reach their full potential
95 - 96.9%	Up to 8.5 days	There is a risk of underachievement
93 - 94.9%	Up to 12 days	There is a serious risk of underachievement. Research suggest that 17 days absence over a school year causes the loss of one GCSE grade.
90 - 92.9%	Up to 17 days	There is a severe risk of underachievement
Less than 90%	18+ days	90% attendance is equivalent to missing four school weeks. 90% attendance is equivalent to missing one half-day every week. Continued 90% attendance over five years in school is the equivalent to missing one half of a school year.

The above figures are cumulative over one academic year. There are approximately 170 school days per academic year at Gateways School.

Scope and Application

This policy applies to the whole School and is designed to address the specific statutory obligations on the School to record attendance and absence.

Information sharing

Personal information on attendance will only be shared in line with legal obligations and having regard to government guidance on attendance, safeguarding and children missing education.

The School, local authorities and other local partners work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to a pupil (e.g., health services where there are medical conditions or the police where there are extrafamilial harms).

Reviewed: Autumn 2025
Next review: Autumn 2027

Where appropriate the School will attend regular targeting support meetings.

The School is legally required to share information from the registers with the local authority. As a minimum this includes:

- New pupil and deletion returns;
- Attendance returns;
- Sickness returns.

The law allows local authority officers access to the attendance and admission registers of all types of schools to carry out their functions under the Education Acts to support joint working between schools and local authorities. These officers are also permitted to take digital or physical extracts of the School's registers.

The School must provide specific pupil information on request to the Secretary of State. The School meets this requirement by having an electronic management information system containing the required information that can be accessed by the DfE. The School also uses this tool to monitor pupil level attendance and understand trends in attendance patterns.

Where appropriate, the School is expected to inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences.

Categorisation of Absence

When a student is absent from school, the law categorises that as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

The law states that it is for the school to determine into which category any absence fits, it is for the school to decide whether any absence is 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

The Need for Parental Explanation

All absences must be explained in communication by a parent or guardian. However, this in itself does not automatically authorise the absence. Where a parent / guardian anticipates in advance that his or her child will be absent then as much advance notice as possible should be given.

It is for the school to decide whether or not to accept the explanation offered.

Parents/Guardians may be asked to provide evidence of a doctor's visit (eg appointment card or prescription).

The School will identify children missing education and work to get these children back into education.

Authorised Absence

Examples of the type of absences which may be authorised:

- Sickness

- Unavoidable medical / dental appointments (although these should be made wherever possible out of school hours.)
- Religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances (at the discretion of the school)

Leaving school early during the day

Pupils are not normally allowed to leave the site during the school day (Sixth Formers are the exception to this rule), unless accompanied by a member of staff, for a trip, a visit or a sporting fixture.

If a pupil has to leave the school during the day for illness or are being collected by a parent for a medical appointment, they are required to sign out at Reception.

Unauthorised Absence

Examples of the type of absences which will not be authorised are:

- Shopping
- Looking after family members
- Birthdays
- Holidays

Holidays during term time

Gateways School is of the view that taking a pupil on holiday in term time inevitably conveys to the pupil the unspoken message that school is not important.

Parents and Guardians are reminded that there is no right to take their child out of school for holidays.

The law states that even if a written application is submitted as required, authorised leave for holidays will only be granted if school considers that there are special circumstances.

It is up to school to decide what amounts to special circumstances.

In considering whether there are special circumstances, school will look at each case upon its own individual merits.

In order for school to properly consider an application, it should be made to the Head in writing, at least two weeks before the start of the proposed period of absence. Reasons for the absence must be detailed, with evidence provided. Retrospective requests will not be authorised.

The following examples will not be considered extenuating circumstances and, therefore, will not be authorised:

- To fit in with parental working patterns.
- Economic reasons, such as cheap flights and / or accommodation.
- To overlap with beginning or end of term.
- To overlap days either side of a day of religious observance.

Reporting and data sharing requirements

Gateways is required to report pupil attendance data to the local authority Attendance Team where the following absence thresholds for that pupil have been breached:

- 5 consecutive days of absence, authorised or not;
- 15 cumulative days of absence across the academic year, authorised or not.

Punctuality

Students should be in the building at 8.35 am every day and in their form room ready to learn by 8.40 am. If they are late, the time will be recorded. Parents should always notify main school Reception if they know their child is going to be late that morning because of appointments or transport problems.

Appendix 1: Attendance Procedure

Absence is rigorously monitored by form tutors on a daily basis during registration. Form Tutors are vigilant in identifying patterns of absence in addition to monitoring incidences of absence in a given period. This is supported by the school Reception team (absence@gatewaysschool.co.uk) as they receive information from parents regarding reasons for absence.

Form tutors and/or Reception staff who are concerned about a child's absence will raise this via the Wellbeing module in ISAMS. Such concerns will be discussed at weekly SMT meetings. In addition to flagged concerns, attendance data for the school will be discussed as a standing item at SMT on a fortnightly basis. This will ensure that potential concerns have not slipped through the net. The Attendance Administrator will provide attendance data to SMT's in order to support discussion and intervention.

The Attendance Champions at Gateways are the Deputy Head of the Senior School and the Deputy Head of the Prep School. They are responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school;
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement;
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes;
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of data analysis;
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data;
- Overseeing, in conjunction with the pastoral team, calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues;
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families;
- Working with education welfare officers/external agencies to tackle persistent absence.

Where an absent child is deemed a concern, the following steps apply:

STEP 1

The Attendance Administrator will contact home to raise an initial concern about attendance. They will listen to, and attempt to understand, any barriers to attendance and will facilitate support to get the child into school. The discussion will be recorded on Wellbeing so that the relevant SMT can track action. Concerns regarding attendance will be discussed with parents as early as possible to prevent the situation becoming entrenched.

STEP 2

If attendance does not improve a further call will be made by the Form Tutor, and records kept on Wellbeing. At this stage parents will be invited into school for a meeting with the Form Tutor.

The information and associated actions will be recorded on Wellbeing. Actions will focus on increasing attendance over the remaining weeks of the half term. Parents will be made aware that at this stage their child is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee.

The DSL will also be informed at this stage and a member of the Safeguarding Team may attend the meeting.

STEP 3

If attendance does not improve over the half term, the case will be referred to the relevant Pastoral and Discipline Lead. At this stage, parents will be invited into school for a more formal meeting to gain further information regarding the nature, duration, and severity of any attendance problems. As part of the meeting the Pastoral and Discipline Lead may wish to ask parents about:

- the child's developmental and educational history;
- reported friendship groups (both in and out of school);
- concerns about academic progress;
- emergence of difficulties and any potential changes or losses within the family or child's life;
- what the child says about school and any specific fears or difficulties that they have reported;
- the typical morning and evening routine;
- behaviour and symptoms of anxiety or poor mental health;
- what the child does when they are absent from school;
- the impact on various family members;
- other aspects of family life that are being affected;
- differing views and ideas within the family regarding the problem and possible ways forward.

Note: Sometimes it will be obvious from a pupil's presentation and chronic non-attendance that they are experiencing significant difficulties. However, there will be other pupils experiencing anxiety around going to school who may be harder for school staff to identify. These young people may have sporadic non-attendance or a pattern of absence corresponding to a particular lesson or day. When these children are in school they may complain about feeling unwell or make frequent requests to leave the classroom.

While it is important to talk about the problem and the child's presentation it can be helpful to balance this with a more solution-based approach. This might include:

- inviting parents to reflect on things that have been helpful in the past or current situation;
- asking the child to highlight their timetable using a traffic light system or complete a school refusal assessment scale.

Note: Whatever the age of the child it is important to provide them with the opportunity to express their views and ideas about the difficulties that they are experiencing and what they feel would be helpful.

Having identified concerns regarding a pupil's attendance it may be helpful for the Pastoral and Discipline Lead to consider the following indicators or triggers:

- Child determined not to leave home and stays away from school with the knowledge of the parent/guardian;
- Patterns in absences, for example, particular days and / or subjects;
- A history of anxiety in the family;
- Reluctance to attend school trips;
- Frequent absences for minor illnesses;
- Anxiety on separation and inappropriate dependence on family members e.g. anxiety expressed about the safety of those at home;
- Evidence of under-achievement of learning potential;
- Social isolation and avoidance of classmates or peer group;

- Regular absence without indication of anti-social behaviours;
- Challenging behaviours, particularly in relation to specific situations at school;
- The pupil expresses a desire to attend classes but is unable to do so;
- Severe emotional upset with excessive fearfulness, outbursts of temper and complaints of feeling ill on school days;
- Depression and sense of isolation resulting in, low self-esteem and lack of confidence;
- Confusion or extreme absent mindedness shown in school due to lack of concentration resulting in, lower attainment;
- Physical changes i.e. sweating, sickness, aching limbs, headaches, panic attacks, abdominal pain, rapid weight loss or gain.
- Disruption of day-to-day activities that affect the family and put parents / guardians under a great deal of pressure.

During the meeting a return to school plan will be drawn up in consultation with parents, the Pastoral and Discipline Lead, and the pupil. The pupil's views will be included in the planning even if they do not feel that they are able to attend the meeting. Any phased return will take account of the academic commitments of the individual student in addition to their anxieties and reported trigger points.

Pupil voice is central to our attendance strategy. The school actively seeks pupil feedback through wellbeing check-ins and anonymous surveys. Insights from pupils are used to tailor interventions and improve attendance-related practices.

STEP 4

The plan will be reviewed every 2-3 weeks by the Pastoral and Discipline Lead and adjusted in relation to practical arrangements, how the pupil appears to be reacting and coping, and feedback from parents.

If attendance does not improve following two review cycles, a meeting with the relevant Deputy Head will be arranged to discuss ongoing concerns, next steps and additional intervention. In a minority of cases the child may need to be or might have already been referred to external service such as O-19 or CAMHS. At this point, parents will need to be reminded of their legal responsibilities and the impact the child's poor attendance is likely to have on their attainment and academic progress.

Note: The evidence shows that children with poor attendance are less likely to succeed academically and that they are more likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) when they leave school. In addition, sustained patterns of non-attendance over a period of time can also impact on an individual's opportunity for social interaction with peers, their self-esteem and mental health.

STEP 5

If reintegration has been unsuccessful for more than two terms and the pupil's attendance is below 75% a meeting with the Head will be arranged to discuss a final outcome which may include, but is not limited to, repeating the year.

Appendix 2: Punctuality Procedure

Where a child is identified as frequently late to morning and/or afternoon registration by the Attendance Administrator, the following steps apply:

STEP 1

The Form Tutor will make contact with the pupil's Parent(s) or Guardian(s) via an iSAMS email, in an attempt to find out the reasons for reoccurring late marks and where possible, support the child in getting to Registration on time. The Attendance Administrator will be copied into this communication by the Form Tutor in order to ensure they are aware of the steps being taken.

STEP 2

Punctuality will continue to be monitored by the Attendance Administrator. Should a pupil's punctuality not improve, the Attendance Administrator will highlight this as part of their biweekly meetings with the Senior School SMT and the Prep School SMT. As a group, the relevant SMT will discuss the child's punctuality and any possible barriers. Depending on who is deemed most appropriate, the Attendance Administrator or a member of SMT will then make a phone call home to highlight the persisting punctuality issue and outline the school's expectations. Where possible, support will be offered to aid improvement.

STEP 3

The Attendance Administrator will further monitor the pupil's punctuality. If there is no notable improvement in the following weeks, Parents or Guardians will be invited into school for a meeting with the Deputy Head of the Senior School or the Deputy Head of the Prep School to address the issue.

Appendix 3: Attendance Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (AM)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (PM)	Pupil is present at lunchtime registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late but before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school - authorised		
B	Educated off-site	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
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
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
Absent - leave of absence - authorised		
C	Other authorised circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances not described by C1 or C2
C1	Regulated performance	Under a performance licence
C2	Temporary reduced timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
F	Extended Family holiday (authorised)	Usually restricted to holidays that unavoidably extend into term time due to flights / other circumstances
H	Family holiday (authorised)	Usually restricted to holidays arranged prior to admission
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
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
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
J1	Employment/Educational Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
M	Medical	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
S	Study Leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination

T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Other exceptional circumstances	Exceptional circumstances not described by any of the Y codes below
Y1	Normal transport unavailable	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 travel disruption	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school out of use	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Session cancelled – school closed	Every pupil is absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Subject to sentence of detention	Pupil is unable to attend because they are subject to a criminal justice detention
Y6	Public Health guidance	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Other unavoidable absence	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent - unauthorised absence		
G	Family holiday (unauthorised)	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 1 of the codes for authorised absence
U	Late	Pupil arrives late, after the register has closed
Administrative Codes		
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	School closed to pupils	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 4: Example communications

Example attendance concern email

Dear [Parent's Name],

I trust you're well. I am writing to inform you that your child's school attendance so far for this academic year is [...%]. This could put your child at risk of underachievement.

Research indicates that students with attendance rates below 85% often struggle to achieve satisfactory school outcomes. Irregular attendance can impact understanding of key concepts, result in missed learning opportunities, and hinders exam preparation.

We are committed to supporting your child's success and are keen to support you in addressing any challenges impacting school attendance. If there are specific concerns or circumstances that we need to be aware of, please share them with us. Otherwise, we look forward to seeing improved attendance moving forwards.

Kind regards,

Example punctuality concern email

Dear [Parent's Name],

I trust you're well. I am writing to inform you that your child's has been late for school on X occasions so far this academic year. This could put your child at risk of underachievement.

We are committed to supporting your child's success and are keen to support you in addressing any challenges impacting punctuality. If there are specific concerns or circumstances that we need to be aware of, please share them with us. Otherwise, we look forward to seeing an improvement moving forwards.

Kind regards,