



The Importance of Good Attendance

**Absence Authorisation & Punctuality
Procedures for Parents/Carers**

Useful Contact Numbers:

Absence Line: 01375 376173

Attendance Officer: Mrs C Beck

Email: beckc@graysconvent.thurrock.sch.uk

This leaflet has been designed to support parents to understand the attendance & punctuality procedure at Grays Convent, attendance figures and the impact poor attendance has on attainment.

Every child or young person is entitled to an education. Parents who do not ensure their children receive an appropriate education put their whole future at risk. Being absent from school means a lost learning opportunity.

Why is attendance so important?

- ✓ There is a direct link between poor attendance and poor exam results.
- ✓ Your daughter's attendance and punctuality record will go on any references provided by the school.
- ✓ Students without excellent attendance and punctuality will be less successful at gaining employment as these are two qualities valued by employers
- ✓ It is important that we help our young people to get into the good habits that they will need in the work place. In many jobs good attendance is a requirement.
- ✓ Students who do not attend school regularly miss out on the social benefits of school.
- ✓ As a parent/carer you are legally responsible for ensuring that your daughter receives full time education. If you fail to ensure this you are committing an offence which could lead to a fine of up to £2500, a prison sentence or a community sentence.
- ✓ Our school will use Fixed Penalty Notices if necessary to improve attendance.

What counts as good attendance?

EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS

Days off school add up to lost learning

↑	175 NON SCHOOL DAYS A YEAR		→ 175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments.			
	190 school days in each year					
	190 school days in each year	10 days absence				
		16 days absence	20 days absence			
	190 days of education	180 days of education	174 days of education	170 days of education	160 days of education	40 days absence
↓						150 days
	100%	95%	92%	90%	85%	80%
	GOOD Best chance of successful learning		WORRYING Less chance of successful learning		PERSISTENT ABSENCE Serious concerns Limited chance of successful learning	

- ✓ We expect all our students to aim for at least 96% attendance to put them above the average national attendance level.
- ✓ A student who has 90% attendance misses almost 4 weeks of school every year. That's over 100 hours of learning missed.

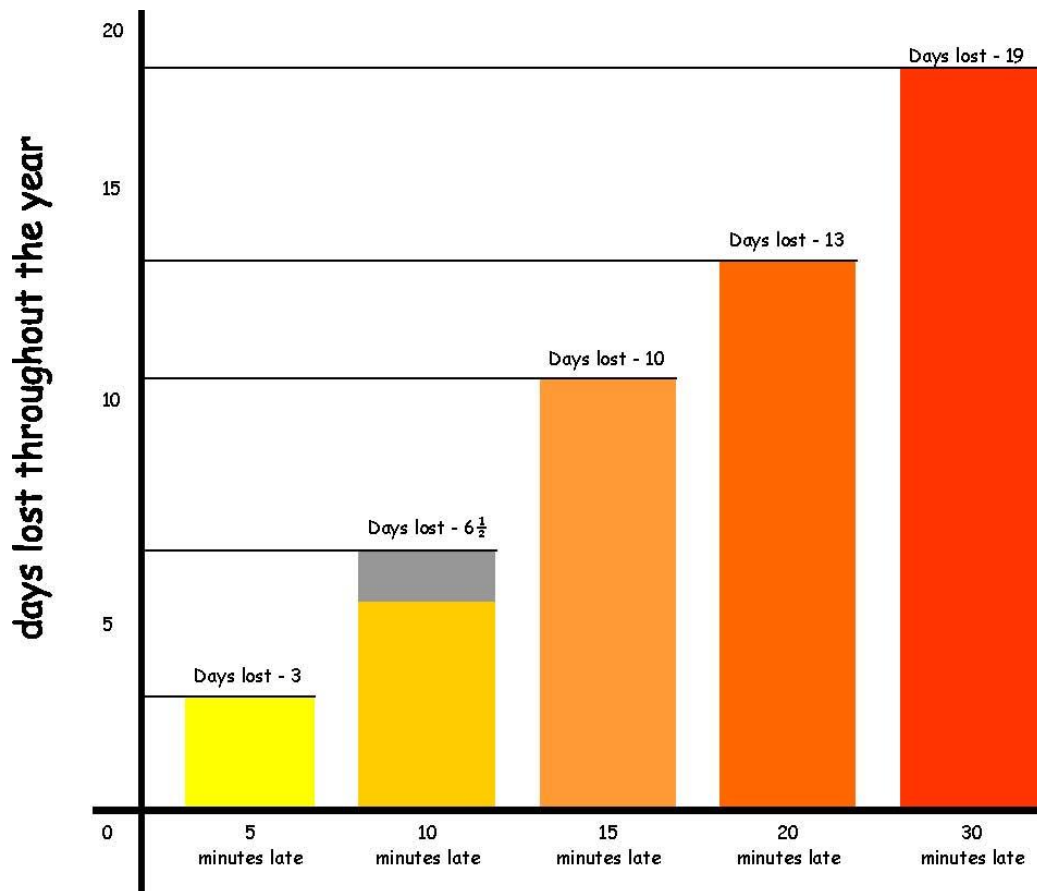
Please note that it is the responsibility of the school **not** the parent/carer to decide whether absence is authorised or not and any unauthorised absence will appear on your daughter's record.

A secondary school child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school.

Why is punctuality to school & lessons important?

Being late adds up to loss of learning.

- ✓ If your child is five minutes late every day that adds up to over 3 days lost each year.
- ✓ Being 15 minutes late is the same as being absent for 2 weeks a year.



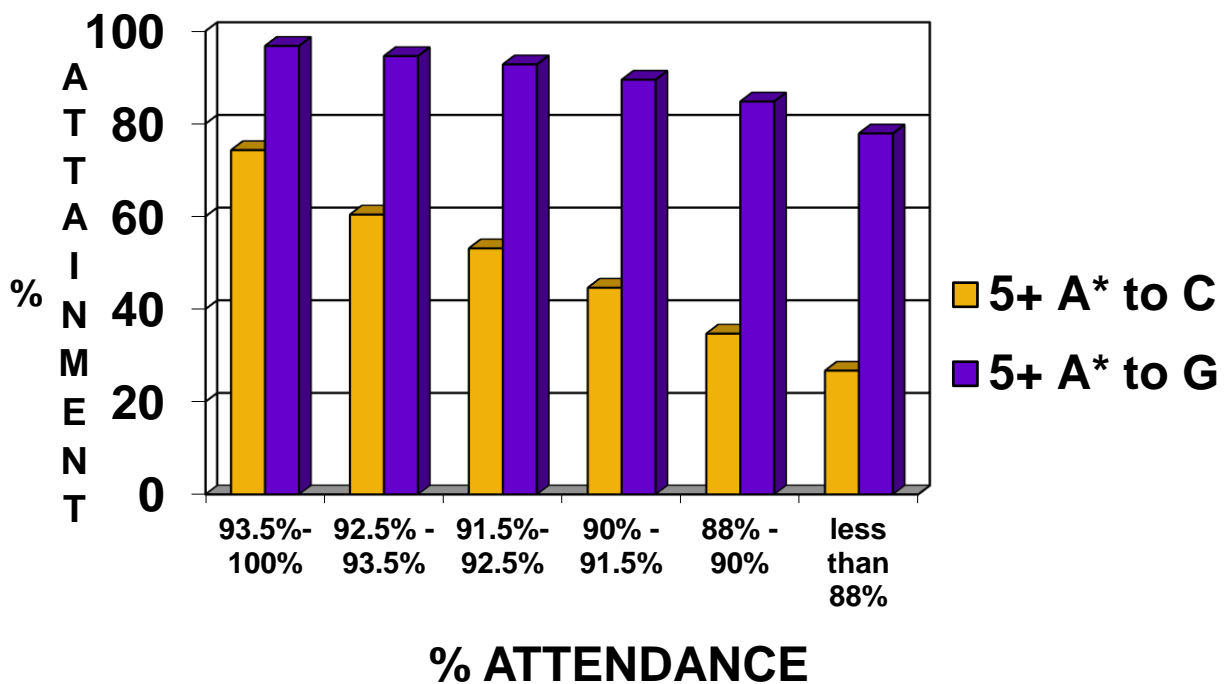
- It is really important that students arrive in school on time each day. Students who arrive late not only miss valuable information but can also feel embarrassed to enter a lesson late.
- Arriving persistently late to lessons can also have a negative impact on a student's progress.

What impact might this have on your child's life?

Research suggests that 17 missed school days a year is equal to a GCSE grade DROP in achievement. (DFE)

The greater the attendance the greater the achievement

	Termly		Yearly
■ 90%	= 1 week 2 days	=	4 weeks
■ 80%	= 2 weeks 4 days	=	8 weeks
■ 70%	= 4 weeks 1 day	=	12 weeks
■ 60%	= 5 weeks 3 days	=	16 weeks
■ 50%	= 7 weeks	=	20 weeks
■ 40%	= 8 weeks 2 days	=	24 weeks
■ 30%	= 9 weeks 1 day	=	28 weeks



A parent/carers responsibilities - Reporting Absence

- To have your daughter in school by **8.25am**.
- To report all absences before 9am on the first day of your daughter's absence. This can be done by telephone on **01375 376173** (The absence line is automated and available 24 hours a day) or e-mail beckc@graysconvent.thurrock.sch.uk stating your daughter's full name, year group and an explanation for her absence.
- To update us every 2 days if your daughter is seriously unwell.
- If you know your child is going to be absent to let us know in advance contact the Attendance Officer.

OR

- make an application for leave in writing on the school's '**Leave Of Absence Form**', giving the reason for the request at least two weeks prior to the event.
- If you have not informed the school of an absence – please ensure that you reply to the message sent on each day of un-reported absence (please ensure we have up-to-date mobile phone information in order to receive this message). This is our way of ensuring your daughter is safe and that her whereabouts is known.
- To supply any written notification, giving details of absence, to Student Reception or to the Form Tutor on return to school.
- To work with the school and SAST (School Attendance Support Team) to improve lateness & attendance.
- To avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day but to provide an appointment card or letter when unavoidable.

What responsibilities do we ask our students to undertake?

- To aim for attendance above 96%.
- To be punctual to all lessons & registration periods.
- To be in school for 8:25am.
- To visit the toilets at breaks and lunchtimes, not during lessons.

Consequences of lateness

- Students who arrive after the gates have closed at 8:30am will receive a 10-minute break time detention on that day.
- Students who have three or more lates to school in a two-week period will serve a 1-hour after school detention starting at 3:25pm.
- Students who have 3 or more lates to lessons in a day will go on attendance/punctuality report for 1 week and will serve a 1-hour after school detention starting at 3:25pm.
- Students who arrive after 9am, without any legitimate reason for doing so, will automatically receive a 1 hour after school detention and the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Punctuality

- The school opens at 7:55am for breakfast club and then at 8:20am it closes for students go to registration.
- As per Essex County Guidelines a student will be marked as late if they arrive after 8.30am and as unauthorised after 9.00am.
- If there is a reason why your daughter is going to be late then you must contact the school to alert them.
- **Please note that the school reserves the right to unauthorise periods of lateness and that persistent lateness can incur a Penalty Notice being issued.**

Did you know:

- Arriving 5 minutes late every day = almost 3.5 days of school a year missed
- Arriving 10 minutes late every day = almost 7 days of school a year missed
- Arriving 15 minutes late every day = Just over 10 days of school a year missed
- Arriving 20 minutes late every day = almost 14 days of school a year missed
- Arriving 30 minutes late every day = nearly 21 days of school a year missed

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school you should:

- Talk to your daughter; it may be something simple that needs your help in resolving.
- Talk to your daughter's form tutor, in the first instance, or their HOY, the Pastoral Manager or Attendance Officer.

Absence Authorisation

- Achievement predicted by teaching staff is based on an expected attendance level of 96%. Students with poor attendance rarely achieve their potential grades.
- Absence of 5 or more days must be supported by a medical certificate or a Home Visit.
- Absence of 5 or more days without supporting medical evidence will not be authorised.
- Unauthorised Absence may be subject to a Penalty Notice.

Returning to School

On returning to school, following 5 or more days of absence, medical evidence must be handed in at Reception. If evidence is not received after one week, the period of absence will not be authorised.

Alternatively, students can bring medical evidence up to the Attendance Officer in the general office

A 'Return to School' meeting may be arranged in order to ensure your daughter is aware of the support available in school to help them reduce the impact absence can have on their learning.

Escalation Process

When preparing this escalation process we have considered the new DfE guidance for maintained Schools, Academies, Independent Schools and Local Authorities: [Working Together to Improve School Attendance, May 2022](#).

As a school we will “Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families. This will look at individual pupils, cohorts and groups (including their punctuality) across the school to help schools achieve their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.”

With this in mind, our attendance management processes will begin when attendance falls below 96%. The process below is not rigid and is intended to offer a guide on what steps could be taken for us to work with families to improve attendance before consideration is given to referring to the local authority for statutory action. Where appropriate, additional steps will be taken to work with pupils in school to identify the barriers to attendance and to offer support. We will allow a period of time between each stage for the intervention to be effective.

Stage 1
Attendance drops below 96% - letter to Parent/Carer informing of below 96% attendance – opportunity to discuss barriers to attendance with Attendance Officer.
3 week monitoring period and review



Stage 2
No improvement or further drop in attendance – Attendance Officer letter to Parents/Carers and in school attendance meeting to be held with Attendance Officer / Head of Year / Pastoral Manager. Barriers to attendance discussion and CAF (common assessment framework) discussed as way to secure further support. Any further medical/illness absences will require medical evidence (if not – then unauthorised) If Parents/Carers do not attend meeting or fail to engage then meeting will still be held – absence recorded on the minutes Action plan agreed and review meeting arranged. Parents/Carers given copy of action plan.
4 week monitoring and review



Stage 3
No improvement or drop in attendance – Designated Senior Leader for Attendance sends letter to parents

In school meeting with Designated Senior Leader for Attendance / Attendance Officer / Head of Year. Formal warning of the risk of statutory action given at this meeting. Parenting contract drawn up and shared. Parents/Carers to sign and given a copy including date for review meeting. **6 week monitoring and review**
If no improvement or parenting contract breached – statutory action considered – application for a penalty notice or referral made for prosecution – letter sent.



Stage 4
Designated Senior Leader for Attendance makes referral to Local Authority for **Penalty Notice or Prosecution** - evidence from actions at stage 1-3 submitted for assessment –

Examples of Authorised Absence

This is when the school accepts that there is a genuine reason for absence which has been supported by a note from the parent. Examples might include:

- Hospital or Orthodontist appointment (evidence required). **Whole days off for appointments will be unauthorised if it is possible to attend school before and/or after the appointment time.**
- College/Connexions/Employment Interview (evidence required).
- Funeral (1 day only).
- Reported Illness of less than 4 days (unless medical evidence has been requested).
- Illness (including of 5 or more days WITH medical evidence).
- Emergency Doctor or Dental appointments (evidence required) *Please aim to make routine appointments outside of school hours.
- Dual registration.
- Approved educational off-site activities.
- Representation in sport or other areas (for example Next Top Boss).
- Public performances (but licences must be obtained from the Local Authority).

Please Note: Students, who accumulate 2 or more episodes of illness in any half term, may be asked to provide medical evidence for ALL subsequent absences.

Absences for religious observance

The Department for Education (DfE) states:

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance.

It explains that the day being taken as absence must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong and that, where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parent's religious body about whether this is the case.

- Where an absence is authorised due to religious observance the absence code R will be used.
- Where the school is not satisfied that the absence was for the purposes of religious observance, the code O will be used.
- **Only days officially set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body can be granted as authorised due to religious observance.**

- Approval for any additional requests for leave are at the discretion of the school and will be processed in the same way as any ordinary leave of absence request. This absence will not be recorded as absence for religious observance.

Leave of Absence requests

Leave of absence request forms are available from the school and should be submitted with a covering letter explaining the request for absence at least two weeks prior to the event.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and extended leave shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the Head teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence.

What are “exceptional circumstances”?

As the DfE have not provided guidelines as to what they would consider to be exceptional circumstances the decision is made solely at the discretion of the Headteacher.

An exceptional circumstance likely to be a one-off, unique situation e.g. a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill, performing in a show, sporting representation, carers leave etc.

Leave of absence requests for funerals. For funerals in England a one day absence will be authorised. If the funeral is abroad/further afield the Headteacher would usually allow the absence but only 3 days would be granted as authorised; a day to travel, a day for the funeral and a day to return. Other absence associated with this event will not be granted as authorised.

Whilst the Headteacher will not accept the fact that a holiday is less expensive during term time as an exceptional circumstance we would still ask that a leave of absence form is completed so that the whereabouts of the student is known.

The Headteacher will also look very carefully at your daughter's previous attendance record and should she have concerns, for example should the student's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that she will agree to authorise any further absence.

Penalty Notices

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised holiday and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absence are recorded as a result).

If a leave of absence is taken without a request having been agreed, the absence will also be recorded as unauthorised and may result in the School Attendance Support Team issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with the Essex Code of Conduct.

It is your legal responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to ensure that your daughter attends school regularly and punctually and failure to do so may result in a referral to the School Attendance Support Team for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

As a school we will usually issue a Penalty Notice Warning letter after 8-10 periods of unauthorised absence. At this time, we will give a period of 15 school days during which a parent must evidence their commitment by ensuring their daughter's regular attendance &/or punctuality.

If there are further unauthorised absences during this period then this may result in a request for the Penalty Notice to be issued by the local authority without any further reference to the parents.

If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

As a school we must record absence as unauthorised when there is no satisfactory reason for absence provided or when the school does not accept there is a genuine reason for absence - even if it has been supported by a note from the parent.

If an absence has been supported by a note from the parent and the absence is recorded as unauthorised the parent will be informed. Examples of unauthorised absence include:

- Requests for Leave of Absence NOT approved by school;
- Absence NOT reported on the day or supported by written explanation upon return to school;
- Absence of 5 or more school days WITHOUT medical evidence (this is also true of cases where there is an ongoing medical condition with evidence already provided);
- Absences which have been parentally condoned (for example for the reason of illness) if the school believes that the information given has not been truthfully presented or where the school does not agree there is a satisfactory reason for absence;
- Routine Doctor/Dental appointments;
- Arriving late after registers have closed;
- Truancy (both internal & external) with or without the knowledge of the parent;
- Working;
- Time off for birthdays, family celebrations;
- Looking after siblings;
- Errands for parents (e.g. shopping);
- During disputes, such as relating to the return of a pupil after an exclusion.

All other unexplained absence is recorded as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation is subsequently provided. The school reserves the right to implement Penalty Notices if unauthorised absences are taken.

Examples of Medical Evidence

- Medical Appointment Card confirming attendance
- Medical Appointment Letter
- Copy of Prescription showing name and date
- Prescribed medication with Pharmacist label showing name and date
- Unfit for School declaration from GP

- Hospital discharge letter

Absence of 5 or more days or unexplained absence may be followed up with a Home Visit in order to ensure the safeguarding of students absent from school. Authorisation of absence will then be at the discretion of the visiting officer.

Support is Available

Special arrangements can be made to help your daughter remain in school during periods of illness or injury:

- Medication can be held and administered in school. A letter of authorisation will be required from the parent/carer.
- 'Leave Lesson Early' Passes are available for students with mobility difficulties i.e. plaster casts, crutches etc.
- It may be that, in the short term, transport can be arranged to escort students with temporary mobility difficulties into school.
- The school nurse is available by appointment.
- A 'Back to School' meeting can be arranged to discuss concerns or support.

Please contact the Attendance Officer or your daughter's Head of Year to discuss any concerns you may have or support you may require.

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**'If schooling is to be effective, regular attendance is a prerequisite, hence securing it must be a high priority for all.'
(DES 1989)**

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