



# Godalming Junior School

*This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. If you have any concerns you should contact our Designated Safeguard Leads, Adam Samson, Erin Coleman, Louise Munz, Kate Wilkinson and Andrea Crook*

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**This policy was reviewed: Spring 2026**

**This policy will be reviewed next: Spring 2027**

**This policy was reviewed by: The Full Governing Body**

**The school Attendance Lead is: Adam Samson - Headteacher**

**The school Attendance Governor is: James Hazeldine**

**The school Attendance Deputy Lead is: Andrea Crook - (Temp) Home School Link Worker**

*“Every child has a right to an education” - Article 28*

*“Improving attendance is everyone’s business” - DfE 2024*

**School Gates Open (Beginning of the day): 8.25am**  
Marshall Road and Hallam Road gates only

**Registers Taken: 8.35am**

**School Gates Open (end of the day): 2.55pm**  
Marshall Road, Hallam Road and Meadow

**End of school day: 3.05pm**

Godalming Junior School promotes and supports every child’s learning to enable each one of them to achieve their full potential. We endeavour to provide a school day that **excites, challenges and motivates** each child, and allows them to develop as independent learners. We aim to inspire the individual, forge successful learning and create responsible citizens of the world. We know that attendance is never ‘solved’ and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies.

The school leadership, staff, including the Home School Link Worker (HSLW), alongside the Local Authority (LA) and parents, firmly believes that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. There are termly meetings between the LA inclusion service and school staff to discuss general attendance and absence matters as well as highlighting child attendance concerns. We know that every day lost to education can have a serious impact on children’s academic attainment and overall progress in school, including social and emotional development. As a staff we do all we can to encourage parents and carers to ensure that the children have the highest possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. This policy is aligned to the school’s Children With Medical Needs Who Cannot Attend School policy and DfE’s [Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance \(2024\)](#)

We know that the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 have higher rates of attendance during their time at Godalming Junior School compared to those with the lowest attainment.

Nationally at key stage 2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths have a greater absence rate, compared to those meeting the expected standard.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and is key for their social, emotional and academic success at GJS.

### Key Objectives

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school regularly; - (100% of sessions attended for the year)
- attend school punctually; - (Arriving before 8.35am)
- attend school appropriately prepared for the school day

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that the child in their care arrives at school punctually, prepared for the school day in the correct uniform;
- contact the school on the first day of the child's absence and subsequent days until the child returns as prompted by the school
- discuss promptly with their child's class teacher or senior staff, any problems that deter their child from attending school;
- not to take children out of school during term time for unnecessary or extended leave of absences.
- Follow school Administration of First Aid Policy, such as keeping children off school for 48hrs due to sickness.

We expect that the school will:

- provide a welcoming and **safe, calm and orderly** learning environment for children;
- encourage and celebrate good and improving attendance and punctuality;
- **monitor** and keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily;
- contact parents as soon as possible when unexplained and/or prolonged absence occurs and obtain notes authorising the absence.
- meet with the parents of children whose attendance causes concern and attempt to **listen** and **understand** their own challenges;
- **facilitate support** in an attempt to remove barriers and with the help of the school HSLW, access support outside of school
- monitor every child's attendance using SIMS and CPOMS
- **formalise support** by meeting with the school's Attendance Advice and Intervention Officer (AAIO) regularly to discuss any new concerns and report on the progress of existing cases;
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Inclusion Service and **enforce** attendance through statutory intervention with their support.

*“The most effective schools consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at school, set high expectations for EVERY pupil, and communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents”.*

(WTtISA 2022)

### Leave of Absence

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and we expect that parents/carers book their family holidays for those times. Leave of absence for holidays taken in term time will NOT be authorised except in exceptional circumstances. If leave in term time is unavoidable, a NOTIFICATION OF CHILD'S ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME FORM (appendix a) must be completed and returned to school prior to the start of the leave. This can be obtained from the school office or it can be downloaded from the school website. No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for their child as a right.

The Headteacher will decide whether to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances having considered:

- The context of the application;
- The child's record of attendance;
- previous absence in term time;
- The time of the absence, ensuring that it would not prevent the child from missing any important assessments.

The [School Attendance Regulations \(2024\)](#) state that headteachers may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The headteacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. We do ask that all medical appointments for children be made outside school hours.

### **Penalty Notices**

In the event of an unauthorised absence taken in term time, the Headteacher may request the LA to issue a Penalty Notice. The amount payable on issue of a penalty notice is £160, reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. **Each parent will be liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent.** For example, a family consisting of 2 parents and 2 children will incur the Penalty Notice of £640 or £320 if paid within 21 days of the receipt of the notice.

The Surrey Attendance Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and require the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

On the advice of the Inclusion Service if any parent requests extended leave of absence of more than 4 weeks to visit their home country then the school may take their name off roll and the parent may have to re-apply for a place when they return.

## Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

1. Pupils identified by police and Surrey Attendance Advice Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
2. **The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions (5 days) or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

3. The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 days) during the preceding 10 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.
4. Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents **to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school.** This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient may be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

## Amount Payable Under a Penalty Notice: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

1. If a parent/carer has not incurred a penalty notice relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, the rolling 3 year period will be activated from the date of the first penalty notice and the second penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the

Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

3. If you have incurred 2 penalty notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third penalty notice - Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, **per parent/carer per child**, in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.

### Responding to Non-Attendance

Parents/carers are responsible for informing the school when a pupil is unable to attend school (by 9.00am). When a pupil does not attend school, we will respond in the following manner:

- Parents that phone the school to report their child being too poorly to attend school will be issued with a 'I' (authorised absence) A GP note should also be sent into school if possible
- on the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer, the school will endeavour to contact them that day via telephone;
- if there is no response to the telephone call or the absence remains unexplained or is still a concern, the office will inform the Home School Link Worker and member of Senior Leadership Team and further investigation and action will be made accordingly;
- if there is persistent non-attendance, the school's Home School Link Worker will keep records of the contact with home during the period of absence and this will be discussed with the local authority AAIO when a formal referral can be made. Leading up to this concern there may be reasonable adjustments made at the discretion of the class teacher, attendance lead or home school link worker, which prevents the pupil's attendance worsening
- if a pupil's level of attendance falls below 90% or a pupil is identified on a truancy patrol and meets the criteria for a penalty notice to be issued or has been taken out of school without the school's permission for five or more days, the school will liaise with the AAIO and LA to decide whether a Penalty Notice should be issued; This may be a point of discussion with the School Inclusion Officer (meetings with this member of the LA team and School carried out each term)
- To inform parents of school concerns regarding attendance, letters are sent out to ALL parents whose attendance has fallen below 90% during the autumn term. A phone call by the HSLW will precede the letter at half term to seek more information and request an improvement in attendance.
- Teachers will also raise attendance issues at parent-teacher meetings during the autumn/spring term as this is likely to adversely affect progress and attainment
- If there is no significant improvement a further letter may be sent out the following half term - this is likely to raise the prospect of a penalty notice if the attendance does not significantly improve

***“At GJS we aim to...listen, understand, empathise and support - but do not tolerate - when it comes to school attendance”***

***Ofsted 2022***

*Failure to comply with the expectations set by the Information System may result in further action, an application for an Educational Supervision Order, or court prosecution. Those who are regularly absent or have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation may be at risk of becoming [‘children missing education’](#).*

### **Responding to lateness**

When a pupil is late for school, they should enter the building via the front office so that they can be recorded as being present. Registers are taken promptly at 8.35am. After 9.05am, when the registers have closed, they will be recorded as late and arrived after the register has closed (U). This denotes an unauthorised absence.

If there is no contact from the parent, the child will go down in the register as ‘O’ (unauthorised) and will be considered absent. Persistent lateness will be monitored and letters sent to parents to inform them. If lateness remains a problem and this lateness is after close of register a referral may be made to the Inclusion Service.

### **Changing School**

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform school staff as soon as possible. **A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:**

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- the address of the new school;
- the new home address (if appropriate and known)

The pupil’s school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Inclusion Service.

### **Deletions from registers**

GJS is aware there is legislation around taking children off roll (Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and 2013).

- If a child moves schools during the year, they come off roll on the day they start the new provision.
- If the parent puts in writing that they intend to home educate, the matter should be referred to LA and a copy of the letter attached. If the case is open to Inclusion a copy of the letter should be provided to the IO. The child can only be taken off roll if the parent specifies in writing that they intend to home educate.
- If the parent advises that they are moving abroad and school have any reason to suppose that this might not be true they should refer the matter to the Inclusion Service to investigate. Otherwise, it is good practice to request this advice in writing from the parent so that this letter can be placed on the school file in explanation for taking the child off roll.

Pupils may be at risk of losing a school place in cases of unauthorised absence



## Godalming Junior School

### Application for leave of absence for exceptional circumstances

Please read the following guidance carefully.

As parents, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school. During the academic year, pupils are at school for 190 days and at home for 175 days.

Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Please complete and submit this form if you want the Headteacher to consider your request for your child's leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. We may ask for proof to validate your request.

**Unauthorised absence of 5 days or more will result in the following action being taken:**

1. If you have not incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.



<b>To be completed by the Headteacher</b>		
Having considered your request carefully, my decision is that leave of absence is:		
Approved		The absence will be recorded as authorised.
Not approved		The absence will be recorded as unauthorised and we will be requesting the Surrey County Council to issue a penalty notice per parent/carer per child.
Explanatory notes:		
Signed:	(Headteacher)	Date:

