



Attendance overview at George Eliot Academy

At the George Eliot Academy we place an emphasis on the importance of regular and punctual academy attendance. Evidence shows, through good attendance, students will achieve higher attainment, have better opportunities, and establish good habits that will support them throughout their lives. With this in mind, our academy target is set at a minimum of 97% attendance for each student.

The Legal Framework

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a legal responsibility for parents and carers; permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

A parent is guilty of an offence if their child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly.

Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996

The law entitles **every child of compulsory school age** to an **efficient, full-time education** that is suitable for their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the **legal responsibility of every parent** to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.

It is **the law that all schools follow the most recent DFE guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'**. Previously this was 'guidance'. From the **19th of August 2024** this became law to encourage further support from parents regarding student attendance to school

- **Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act** places a duty on parents to ensure their child receives a suitable education by regular attendance
- **Section 444 of the Education Act 1996** states that local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school
- **Section 444 of the Education Act 1996** ensures that local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school

Not sending your child to school constitutes neglect and therefore becomes a Child Protection concern!



Why excellent attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of learning and therefore your child's overall life chances of success. There are many benefits of regular attendance to school:

Access to learning, leading to proven higher levels of attainment

Keeps pupils safe

Provides access to pastoral care and support for wellbeing

Gives opportunities for social interactions and development

Provides access to extracurricular and wider opportunities

Offers improved life chances

The school environment, where pupils can regularly interact with their peers and engage with supportive staff, offers the best opportunity for every child to learn and reach their full potential.

How an attendance percentage measure up

Absence = loss learning:

Attendance during one school year	Number of days absent	Approximate number of weeks absent	Approximate number of learning opportunities missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	60 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	120 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	180 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	240 lessons
75%	48 days	10 weeks	300 lessons
70%	57 days	11.5 weeks	345 lessons
65%	67 days	13.5 weeks	405 lessons

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents and carers, students, staff, local authority, and the government. At the George Eliot Academy our procedures are based on the principles of:

- Rewarding excellent attendance
- Preventing poor attendance through supporting students and their families
- Understanding barriers to individuals' attendance and agree individual plans of support.
- Formal Statutory Interventions where support has not been effective or engaged with



Illness

If your child is unable to attend the academy due to illness, the following procedure applies:

- Parents/carers should contact the academy on 02476 744000 Option 1
- Parents/carers are expected to maintain contact with the academy throughout the absence period by calling in each day.

It is the academy's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. All absences will be followed up with a call from the year team or a member of the leadership team.

Further evidence of a student's illness may be requested if their attendance is an ongoing concern.

Medical and Dental Appointments

- Where possible, such appointments should be booked outside of academy hours
- When a pupil has a medical or dental appointment, this should be confirmed with an appointment card or letter, in advance of the appointment.
- Pupils are expected to attend the academy prior to the appointment and return to the academy after the appointment.
- Any absence outside of the appointment/travel time will not be authorised.

Holidays during Term Time / Unauthorised absence

- Holidays should only be planned around school breaks.
- You are required to seek permission from school via an application of leave if taking your child out of school during term time is **absolutely unavoidable**.
- An application for leave of absence cannot be granted unless the principal is satisfied that there are **exceptional circumstances** based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which justify leave.
- In line with the law, an unauthorised holiday in term time is likely to result in Fixed Penalty Notice proceedings being issued to each parent/carer of the child and can lead to further prosecution charges such as appearance at Magistrates court, noted on parent/carers DBS record for 'educational neglect.'

Punctuality

It is important that students are punctual so that they do not miss out on the beginning of each school day:

- Your child should arrive at the academy by **8:25am** in order to be in registration and form time for a prompt **8:30am** start.
- Students arriving after 8:30am will be late.
- Where a student arrives after the register closes this will be classed as an unauthorised absence. This will impact their attendance, and sanctions will be applied in line with the academy's behaviour policy.



How parent's can support their child's attendance:

- **Be positive** about school, regardless of your own experiences of school!
- **Help your child to establish a good routine** in the morning and evening so they are prepared and ready for the day ahead
- Support your child in **arriving to school each day in good time** – establish travel routes early on
- **Talk to your child about their day.** Don't accept 'I can't remember' as an answer. Take an avid interest and ask questions
- Be **aware** of what your child's attendance is –this will be discussed a lot with your child in school
- Watch out for **broken weeks/patterns of absence.** Are they missing certain days when there are certain lessons?
- Arrange **appointments outside school hours.** Where this is unavoidable, send your child in before/after appointments
- **Do not take holidays during term time** – A 2 week holiday in term time means that the highest attendance that can be achieved is 81.00%. There is no parental right to take you out of school during term time.
- Send your child to school if they are feeling unwell. Remember in the working world we would not just take a day off because we felt under the weather. We will look after them!
- Communicate any problems! **We are here to support!**

How your child can support their own attendance:

- **Be positive** about school! Remember why school is important (you are here to learn) and how lucky you are to have access to free education in this country.
- **Establish good routines** in the morning and evening so you are prepared and ready for the day ahead. Take responsibility for this yourself! Don't simply rely on your parent/carer
- **Arrive to school each day in good time** – establish travel routes early on
- Talk to your friends and family about your day
- Be aware of what your attendance is and the implications of this– we will be discussing this a lot in school
- Talk to us if you have any problems in attending school! **We are here to support you!**

How we will support your child's attendance:

- **Listen and support** with any concerns that your child may have about coming to school
- Implement changes that can help **remove any barriers** to attending school
- **Keep you informed** of your child's attendance
- Make **referrals for support** if needed, whether that is internal or external
- **Acknowledge and Reward excellent attendance** –prizes, certificates, letters, postcards, breakfasts etc.
- Follow a **rigorous process of communication to ensure that your child is receiving a full-time education**; telephone contact any day that your child is absence (irrespective of the contact we receive from you), home visits, letters, support meetings, attendance contracts/plans, referral to the Local Authority for prosecution