

Attendance Statement	
Last updated:	September 2023
Date of next review:	Updated August 2024
Member of staff responsible for the policy:	Beth Warren
Dissemination of the policy:	Management Committee, staff, parents

GHES is committed to providing the best possible education to our students that we can. Our students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers due to their medical illness, but their right to education is the same as any other student. Therefore, the attendance ambition for our students is such, that alongside medical advice and an improvement in health, the ambition is always to return to full-time attendance in their main school or other provision.

It is recognised that continuing to engage with education as far as possible is of great benefit to children and young people, even when ill and unable to attend their main school. Maintaining learning can provide a focus for the young person and thereby improve emotional well-being, promote a positive mental attitude, reduce anxiety about the return to school, and so facilitate a successful reintegration when appropriate.

Attendance in education remains a legal requirement for all students dual-registered with GHES; children must be provided with an education between the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday in June in the year they turn 16. It is important that they receive the entitlement for their present and future lives.

Provision details and timetable are discussed with parents/carers¹ at our initial home visit to put in place an agreed educational support package and timetable, tailored to each child's needs. This is reviewed as a minimum every term, or more frequently if required, with parents/carers and child to ensure engagement with the agreed provision is working.

As in their mainstream school, whilst students are at GHES, it remains the legal duty of the parents/carers to ensure their child attends and is able to access the agreed educational support package and timetable, unless the student is too ill to do so on a particular occasion.

One of our core purposes is to facilitate the transition of children back into their mainstream settings as soon as their health allows. We aim to help ensure that the reintegration process encourages maximum attendance to be resumed as quickly as possible. This includes working with families, ensuring that they understand how important regular attendance is to their child's development and health, and to remain positive and ambitious about returning back to their mainstream school as quickly as the child's medical condition allows.

Parents/carers have a vital role to play in ensuring their child can access the lessons and other support put in place by GHES. We strive to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever

there are concerns about attendance. Each student has a designated Link Tutor who can work with students and their families to help them overcome any barriers to learning and good attendance. If there are problems which affect a student's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents/carers and students to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parent/Carer

All parents / carers are to ensure that their child is able to access and attend their agreed educational support package and timetable.

Contact GHES, **by calling 01242 532363** if their child is too unwell to access their lesson(s) - Given that every child has a bespoke timetable, we do not assume a child is too ill to attend all of their lessons on any given day. Therefore we expect parents to keep in close contact with us, so that lesson absence is kept to a minimum. If it is clear their child is going to be too unwell for the whole day parents should contact the main office before **8.15am** to avoid any unnecessary travel to the home by teaching staff. GHES staff may be able to offer the student a shorter session or may offer to send work remotely for them to do later in the day (via email or Showbie), if this would enable them to access some education rather than miss out on their learning for that day.

Contact must be made **every day** there is absence that was not known in advance (e.g. we would expect to be notified of medical appointments in advance).

To request a leave of absence in advance there is a form for parents/carers to complete. This is available on request from our Admin Team or Link Tutor.

There will be times during the normal school day when their child is not timetabled for any GHES lessons. At these times it is the parents/ carers responsibility to ensure that their child is safe and that they know their whereabouts. It is assumed that given the nature of their medical condition that during those hours they may need to attend medical appointments, or therapy sessions, but otherwise would be at home.

GHES

The Head of Service, alongside the Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for ensuring the attendance and engagement with timetabled lessons is looked at on a daily, weekly and termly basis to identify any times/days/subjects where engagement or attendance at the agreed timetabled sessions is a concern, and to ensure the deployment of teaching staff is as effective as possible.

This is carried out through the various roles of other staff at GHES:

- All teaching staff are expected to record attendance or non-attendance within the first 10 minutes of every lesson. Non-attendance in a group lesson gets passed immediately to our administrative team to follow up, non-attendance in a 1:1 lesson remains with the teacher to follow up, until the end of the timetabled lesson. If contact has not been made in that hour it gets passed to the administrative team to follow up. Teaching staff are expected to raise a concern with the students' Link Tutor if lessons are missed on consecutive weeks for absence other than illness.

- The administrative team have the responsibility of contacting parents, taking absence phone-call messages, and informing teaching staff of any absences that have been reported in.
- Link Tutors often have the closest working relationship with the student and their parents. Link Tutors are asked to make contact with the family if within a week, a number of lessons have been missed and we have not heard from the parent/carer or have identified a pattern of missed lessons. (e.g. missing morning lessons)
- GHES has a Senior Attendance Champion, Mel Booth (mel.booth@gloucestershire.gov.uk) who is our designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing attendance. The role is to ensure systems are in place to secure good attendance, and to regularly monitor and evaluate progress towards improved attendance for any student. The role is to provide support, advice and guidance around attendance to our Case Managers and Link Tutors, and to provide support and challenge where required, with our parents/carers and students, when attendance is a cause for concern for reasons other than their child's health. The role ensures GHES attends Targeted Support Meetings led by the Local Authority, to identify from the earliest possible outset when reasons for not being able to attend the agreed timetabled lessons, is not caused by the child's illness.
- The Senior Attendance champion reviews attendance on a weekly basis. Where absence has meant lessons were missed for a whole week, the Link Tutor is informed to consider whether a home visit is required or a safe & well check should be carried out.
- Each term, all students' attendance is reviewed by the Senior Attendance Champion, Link Tutors and Case Managers, alongside any available medical updates, to ensure the timetabled provision is increased or decreased according to the change in medical condition, and to make changes where necessary. (Changes to any student's timetable may happen at any point, not just as a result of these review meetings). The review also considers whether to move, remove or add timetabled lessons to ensure teaching staff time and contact is maximised.
- In addition to attendance figures being monitored, they are also reported to the Local Authority where appropriate. Students' attendance figures are included in the interim and discharge reports which go to parents/carers, main school and the child's health care coordinator (if they have one).

Attendance and Safeguarding

Keeping children and young people safe is a primary responsibility for GHES, as for all schools. It is a core tenet of the GHES Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures that we must know where a child or young person is, if he or she is absent from one of our scheduled lessons. If we do not receive this notification from the parent/carer as outlined above, GHES staff will telephone them to ascertain why the child has not attended.

All our students are vulnerable as a result of their individual health conditions and so, if we are unable to contact the parent/carer, and we have received no notification or explanation for the absence by the end of the school day at 4.00pm, this is escalated:

- The Link Tutor will make a priority phone call or unannounced visit the next day. This is to understand and check that the student is safe and well, to identify reason for absence, to identify reason for not contacting us and how we can prevent this in the future.
- The Senior Attendance Champion will contact any parent/carer if absence without contact occurs frequently to remind parents/carers of their obligation to ensure their child attends the agreed educational provision put in place by GHES, and to foster positive relationships around good communication and working together.

Completing the Attendance Register: Main school and GHES

A student open to GHES will be dual registered with both GHES and their main school. The student's main school will D code students up until the point of reintegration. (D code - Dual registration student attending other establishment)

Like all schools, GHES has a statutory duty to record student attendance. Registers are taken at the beginning of each session and any unexplained absence will be followed up by appropriate staff and appropriate codes recorded. See below (this is not the complete list of codes from the statutory guidance):

Present	
Code	Meaning
/ \	Present (/ am \ pm)
L	Late arrival (student)
B	Offsite approved educational activity put in place by GHES
D	Dual-registered. We only use this once we can confirm the child missed one of our timetabled lessons to attend their main school – usually during reintegration.
K	Attending an unregistered alternative provision provider put in place by the LA
V	Educational trip or visit organised by GHES
W	To attend work experience
Absent – authorised leave of absence	
Code	Meaning
I	Illness
M	Medical or dental appointment
J1	Attending an interview for employment or to attend a new provision (interview or taster sessions)
S	Studying for a public exam
C2	Part-time timetable as agreed to meet individual needs
C	Authorised absence not covered by any other code
Absent - Unable to attend because of unavoidable cause	
Code	Meaning
Y1	The transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption caused by a local, national emergency
Y3	Part of GHES premises is unavoidably out of use and a different lesson offer cannot be provided
Y4	The whole site is unexpectedly closed and a different lesson offer cannot be provided
Y7	Other unavoidable cause, in the nature of an emergency, that affects the pupil, not the parent
Absent - Unauthorised absence	
Code	Meaning
G	Absent for the purpose of a holiday
N	No reason established
O	Unauthorised absence – no other appropriate code

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered at the time, or immediately afterwards, as justification for absence.

This might include the student being too ill to attend a lesson or having a medical appointment at the time of the lesson or there may have been exceptional circumstances that have prevented the student from attending. It is the decision of the Head Teacher to authorise an absence because of exceptional circumstances.

All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority must do so. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- Other exceptional circumstances

Unauthorised absence is where a school has not been given a reason for the absence or is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Unreported absences are automatically unauthorised. If there is a pattern of absences, and no medical or other satisfactory reason for the repeated absence the link tutor will put in place, in discussion with the parent/carers, an individualised attendance strategy to provide the necessary support. If attendance does not improve it may be necessary for GHES to withdraw support. The issue of any legal proceedings for unauthorised non-school attendance will be addressed by the main school that the student is registered at.

Requests for holidays in term time will always be treated as unauthorised unless they have been recommended by the child's medical professional and they can provide a supporting letter. Guidance from the DfE states that 'a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance'. When any child is absent for the purpose of a known holiday it will be recorded as Code G: Holiday not granted by the school. GHES will always include the main school in requests for holidays in term-time, and it remains the responsibility of the main school to determine whether a penalty notice would be issued if the holiday is taken when unauthorised.

Review of timetable provision – when there is a change required inline with medical condition

Where there is a pattern of absence, and if the parent/carers, or GHES staff, suspect that the scheduled timetable is no longer appropriate to the student's changed medical needs (a decline), staff at GHES will contact the referring consultant (if available) to request a medical update. This is to ensure that we are always providing the right amount of tuition and appropriate challenge for each student.

Following any medical update, we may revise the provision offered or discuss other strategies in partnership with our parents/carers to support attendance. This will involve the student's main school and, where appropriate and agreed, other agencies. Our Link Tutors will work in partnership with parents/carers to support any needs that may be impacting on their child's attendance.

Review of timetable provision –absence due to reasons other than child's medical condition

Where there is a pattern of absence for other reasons, the Link Tutor alongside Case Managers will always seek to support the student and parents/carers to identify the barriers and provide support to overcome them where possible. Where barriers are outside of GHES's control we would expect all partners to work together to access any

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support voluntarily – this could be from the main school, medical professional, other professionals involved or a referral to other services for support in the first instance. Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary Early Help assessment.

Review of educational provision from GHES due to persistent and severe absence

- GHES may cease to provide education for a child due to the child's medical condition. There are **rare** occasions where despite best efforts from GHES, medical professionals, parents and other agencies, that the medical condition is such they cannot access education. At this point GHES would cease input and request a new referral is made when the child is able to access education. This is often identified through an inability to engage with our teaching staff, engage in any meetings, despite extensive reviews and changes offered to support engagement.
- When there is persistent absence or non-engagement for reasons not related to the child's medical condition, and wider issues within a family are seemingly the main barriers to attendance, GHES's approach is to always work in partnership to understand the barriers and help parents to access services of their own accord to tackle those barriers to attendance. However, where a voluntary Early Help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting would take place involving all professionals involved with the child, including the main school. A member of the Attendance Team from the Local Authority would also be included. Those meetings would be held to clearly explain the consequences of persistent absence or non-engagement to the student and family, and to identify whether an attendance contract² (a formal written agreement between parents/carers and GHES) would provide the support required to improve attendance, reducing the possible withdrawal of educational provision from GHES, and the potential need for legal intervention/prosecutions in the future. It would also remain an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance, and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences. [Refer to Appendix 1 for details of an Attendance Contract]

Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service (GHES) have an obligation to provide education for any student who they accept through their admission policy. However, they also reserve the right to withdraw the offer of tuition when it is not being accessed, to enable them to reallocate their staff teaching to other students.

Legal sanctions

Whilst GHES is unlikely to be the school issuing proceedings for non-attendance, below are the legal sanctions available to a school and Local Authority:

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. GHES understands that the students it teaches often find it very difficult to go to school and will work closely with the enrolled school and Local Authority to support students appropriately.

The Local Authority has their own advice and guidance pages about attendance, which can be found here:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-attendance-and-exclusions-and-welfare/>

The Local Authority does have the power to prosecute:

- Parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order issued by the local authority to require a parent to get their child registered at a named school (under section 443 of the Education Act 1996). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
- Parents who fail to secure their child's regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences:

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section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence may result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.

- Parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision (under sections 444 and 444ZA). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000), or if the parent is found to have known the child was not attending regularly and failed to ensure that they did so, a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who persistently fail to comply with directions under an Education Supervision Order (under Schedule 3 to the Children Act 1989) or breach a Parenting Order or directions under the order (under section 375 of the Sentencing Act 2020). These may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).

Key Legislation

- The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/38/contents>
- The Education Act 1996 and subsequent updates <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, and subsequent Amendment Regulations <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contents/made>
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, and subsequent Amendment Regulations <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/1867/contents/made>

Links to other policies

- DfE policy – Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>

- DfE policy – Working together to improve school attendance, August 2024

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

- DfE policy – Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance, August 2024

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073619/Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073619/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance.pdf)

- GHES Admissions policy

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Appendix 1 – Attendance Contract

The details below come from the DfE ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ Statutory Guidance from 19 August 2024.

Contents of an attendance contract

All attendance contracts should contain:

- Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
- A statement from the school and/or local authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
- A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.

The requirements specified, and the support provided, will depend on the individual case, and should be tailored to the needs of the individual parent and family. There is not, therefore, a prescribed list, but requirements may include:

- Measures to ensure the pupil attends school or alternative provision punctually and regularly
- Requiring the parent to attend meetings with the school and/or local authority
- Accessing or partaking in the support or programmes offered
- Working with or accessing other separate support provided to the pupil at school level (e.g. being on report)

The support provided to help the parent satisfy those requirements may include:

- Provision of a lead practitioner to support the family
- Signposting or referrals to wider local authority or health services that might support the family (e.g. housing needs, drug and alcohol support)
- Signposting or referrals to voluntary and community sector programmes or support (e.g. foodbanks or community support groups)
- Formal interventions such as family group conferencing, peer mentoring or literacy classes
- Support and advisory services (e.g. benefit support)
- Formal parenting programmes (e.g. a course with a specified number of sessions)

Attendance contracts do not have a minimum or maximum duration. Each individual attendance contract should set out the duration it will be in place, and most are for between 3 and 12 months but can be longer if needed.

Once the requirements and support elements of the attendance contract have been agreed, the school and/or local authority and the parent should write up the contract together and sign it. The attendance contract should be written in language that the parent can easily understand (including a translation where necessary). All parties, including other partners working with the family, should be given a copy.

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