



## GATEHOUSE SCHOOL

### School Policy and procedures in the event of UNEXPLAINED PUPIL ABSENCE

December 2005

#### **Definition:**

An **unexplained absence** is a child's absence from school for which no explanation (written *or* given in person *or* by email *or* telephone) has been received by the school from the parent / carer. Verbal explanations from other pupils – including siblings - cannot be accepted.

#### **Introduction:**

There are many reasons why children may not be attending school at any given time – holidays, sickness, transport problems, hospital or dental appointments - are just some. However, as safety of children is of such importance, it is vital that, during the school day, the school is aware of the reasons for **all** absence/s.

Recent national tragic events have highlighted the need to be aware of children's whereabouts *at all times* –

- (a) **parents** should be aware of where their children are **at all times** – and
- (b) the **school** needs to be aware **during the school day**.

We have drawn up these guidelines to ensure that, *during the school day*, parents and school do not have concerns as to the whereabouts of the children. If they are implemented properly, they should do much to reassure everyone. It is important that parents, staff – *and pupils* – are aware of these procedures – and implement them fully - in order to ensure the safety of the children in as efficient, practical and unobtrusive a way as possible.

#### **Procedures:**

**In-school procedures are co-ordinated by the school secretary and headteacher.**

**Level 1 (high) importance:**

1: Where parents/carers know their child will be absent from school *in advance* (e.g. a dental or medical appointment), then *written* notification of this should be given to the school in good time beforehand, indicating relevant date/s and time/s of the expected absence. If such notes/letters are handed by pupils (e.g. siblings) to teachers, then these will be sent to the school secretary immediately upon receipt, in order that the on-going position can be continuously monitored, any inconsistencies identified, and that routine and any emergency procedures can be implemented as speedily as possible.

2: In the event of an **unexpected** absence (such as illness), **a parent/carer MUST telephone the school – preferably by 9.00am** on the day of absence to let the school know.

3: Our normal daily school procedures ensure that we identify any absent pupils **by 9.15am** each morning, and we can check these against any known absence reasons.

4: If an absence remains unexplained by 9.15am, we will follow this up. This will consist of a 'phone call to the **parent/carer** or, if s/he cannot be contacted, to the **designated emergency contact**. *These efforts will continue until contact with someone, who can provide a satisfactory explanation of the absence, is made.*

**Level 2 (medium) importance:**

5: If the absence continues beyond a day, parents should 'phone the school by 9.00am *each day*. Continued absence will be checked daily and, where no explanation exists for the continued absence, followed up by the school, as above.

6: Parents should keep the school informed of the progress of an absence, and of the likely return-to-school date.

7: If no prior written note/letter has been sent beforehand, one should be sent to explain/confirm the absence when the pupil returns to school. We require written evidence from the parent/carer about the absence. This applies even though telephone contact has been made. We need the written evidence to be able to confirm absences when we submit returns to the Scottish Executive Education Department in Edinburgh.

**General:**

Parents should please ensure that contact numbers – home, work, mobile, family - are kept **up-to-date** and that they are genuinely numbers at one of which a response can be obtained in all normal circumstances.

**Conclusion:**

It is important for parents to understand that the **school** will, at all times, do all it can to safeguard the children. The system will only work, however, if **parents** fulfil their responsibilities with equal rigour. You, as parents, are of critical importance in this matter.

These guidelines are not intended to cause undue alarm, but, hopefully, they will raise awareness of the need to ensure the safety and welfare of the children as much as possible. We all hope, and try to ensure that, our children are safe at all times. If we work together, we can ensure their safety and security is assured as much as it can be.

HTMcL  
12.12.05