

Attendance & Punctuation Policy

Rationale

Regular attendance at school is a pre-requisite of a good education. The curriculum is carefully planned assuming full attendance. Any child who does not attend school is placed at a disadvantage and their life chances are therefore impaired. The school recognises that it is the parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school and teachers will play their part in ensuring maximum attendance of children at school. As a school we are committed to the idea that education is a life-long activity and thus the ethos of the school is that pupils should be happy to attend school.

Aims

- 1 To enable maximum pupil attendance through valuing high attendance rates.
- 2 To encourage pupils to develop habits/routines that will ensure good punctuality and attendance beyond their school days.
- 3 To encourage pupils to take good advantage of their educational opportunities by attending regularly.
- 4 To recognise the external factors which influence pupil attendance and work in partnership with parents/carers and the Educational Welfare Service (EWO)/other agencies to address any difficulties.
- 5 To provide an effective and efficient system for the monitoring of attendance.
- 6 To identify patterns of non-attendance at an early stage and work to resolve any personal/social/academic difficulties.

Practice

1 Class teachers send registers to the school office within **half an hour** of the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. Office staff then make contact with parents on the **first day** of any unexplained absence.

2 At the *Meet the Teacher* meeting held in the first half of the autumn term all parents are informed about the importance of attendance and the impact on a child's learning if a child does not attend on a regular basis.

3 Class teachers are expected to keep accurate records of attendance, and office staff follow up absences and refer concerns to the Headteacher. **All absences will be reported to the Headteacher, who will decide whether or not to authorise the absence.**

4 The Headteacher regularly analyses attendance across the school (at least half termly) and follows a clear procedure when attendance drops:

A standard letter is sent to parents when attendance falls below 94%, regardless of reason for absence. Where there is specific reason (hospital visit, bereavement) discretion may be used in not sending a letter but contact should be made via a telephone call to ensure parents are aware and to establish any support strategies that can be agreed.

A standard letter is sent to parents when the number of 'lates' to school reaches 10. If attendance falls below 90% a second letter is sent to families requesting they contact the school to discuss their child's attendance.

Where letters have been sent, and an improvement in the child's attendance is not evident, the Headteacher will discuss the matter with the Education Welfare Service (EWS -01403 229023). If the case meets the EWS threshold (minimum of 25 unauthorised absences), then a referral to the EWS is made and an Education Welfare Officer is allocated.

5 No requests for 'withdrawal from learning' for holidays, trips, visits, and other reasons except illness, will be authorised.

6 The school secretary will use the school's SIMs system to monitor unauthorised absence, patterns of absence, lateness and absence of siblings. The school secretary will manage the

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system to ensure records are up to date, correct codes are entered and first day contact made.

7 If a child is absent without authorisation for 10 days without explanation, the EWS must be informed immediately. This will be via the helpline in the first instance. If the absence is an unauthorised holiday, the EWS may be informed at the next meeting. The school will record the absence as unauthorised and monitor the attendance of that child closely. If the child's attendance is poor, the school will consider a referral to the EWS.

8 The Education and Inspection Act 2006 places a statutory duty on the local authority to establish the identities of children missing education. If a child fails to start at school, enquiries should be made with Admissions to establish whether the child will be starting. The Admissions Assistant should also attempt to contact the family. The Educational Welfare Officer should be informed by the Attendance Leader. If a Common Transfer File (CTF) has been received by the school it should be uploaded to the S2S website.

When a family disappears, or a child ceases to attend, for ten school days, without explanation, every effort will be made to trace the child by the school. Where the child's attendance is low, the absence unexplained or unusual, or the child is deemed to be 'at risk', immediate contact should be made with the EWO.

Any unexplained, continuous absence of any child who is subject to a Child Protection Plan must automatically be treated as the highest priority and the duty team of social and caring services contacted immediately.

9 Children can only be taken off roll when contact has been made by the receiving school and the CTF file transferred. All other reasons (disappearance, moving abroad/returning to home country) will necessitate contact and advice from the EWO.

10 The school will encourage good attendance by:

- Informing parents of their child's attendance at parents' evenings. Class lists will be generated and given to teachers.
- Letters will be sent to parents annually, to inform them of their child's annual record of attendance.
- Annual prizes will be given to children who have 100% attendance for the year. No discretion may be used: any absence, authorised or unauthorised, will mean the prize is not awarded.

Equal Opportunities:

The school is committed to providing equal opportunities for all in all aspects of school, regardless of race, faith, gender or capability. We promote self and mutual respect and a caring non-judgmental attitude throughout the school.

Review Framework:

The policy will be reviewed annually (or sooner in the event of revised legislation or guidance).

Issue no 3	Date July 2021	Responsible Governors Full Governing Body	Review in July 2022
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Appendix A

Leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

Headteachers may only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. The following examples of such exceptional circumstances are to be used as a guide for the Headteacher of Barns Green primary School when considering leave of absence requests.

Before deciding whether to authorise leave of absence the Headteacher will consider

- the impact for the student's academic progress of any absence
- the pupils attendance over the academic year
- Whether it falls within any key stage national tests or exams;

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – The Headteacher should use his/her discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence- up to a maximum of 3 days.
- Serious illness of a close relative – only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
- Teenage parents responsible for the care of their own child – at the Headteacher's discretion.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA – as appropriate.
- Time- off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by Education Social Work Service
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs".

This would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions. Headteachers may specify that only one day will be authorised at a time.

- Weddings of parents and siblings – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when the Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave, for example where natural parents are separated, and in new relationships and it may cause a child further difficulties if he/she is excluded from a wedding. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.

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- Pilgrimages by parents (eg. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). They are not regarded as exceptional as children themselves do not perform Hajj, but tend to travel with their parents when they go.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.

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