



## Barby Church of England Primary School

# Attendance Policy

### INTRODUCTION

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE).

There is a clear link between pupils' achievement and their level of attendance at school. The governors and staff, alongside the LA, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular attendance. We want all pupils to achieve the very best they can and for this they need to be in school regularly.

To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

The School will provide the attendance record of each child at parent consultation meetings during the year and include the child's attendance rate for the school academic year with each child's annual report.

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. These will reflect both national and Northamptonshire attendance targets.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it, the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

### AIMS

Our attendance policy aims to:

- support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality
- ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning
- enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets

### EXPECTATIONS

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.'

*DfE Advice on school attendance (updated November 2016)*



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### **The Government expects schools and local authorities to:**

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent lateness.
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Support parents in performing their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- Encourage all members of the school community to be punctual.
- Meet for at least 380 sessions or 190 days during any school year to educate their pupils.

### **The School expects pupils to:**

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day.

### **The School expects parents and carers to:**

- Ensure their children attend school regularly and on time.
- Ensure they contact school by 9:00am on the first day of absence whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Ensure their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework.
- Contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.
- To avoid unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.

### **The School will ensure:**

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend without providing good reason – parents will be telephoned by the school bursar by 9.30am. The school will start with the first named contact, working down the contact list until contact is made.
- If no contact can be made to explain an absence, a home visit will be made. The police will be contacted if no contact is made through the home visit.
- Immediate action is taken on any problem notified to us.
- All staff members contribute to improving and maintaining attendance and to take ownership of attendance as a whole school responsibility in a positive manner.
- Regular monitoring of attendance by the Leadership Team.
- A referral of specific issues to supporting agencies where appropriate.
- School assemblies are used to reinforce the value of education and the need for regular school attendance and punctuality.
- Every appropriate opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance including e.g. newsletters and end of term reports.



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### SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). The registration codes are available on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) as approved by the Government.

#### Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.
- Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

#### Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

#### Lateness

- Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8:50 am. The registers will remain open for 10 minutes.
- In line with safeguarding procedures, any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed.
- In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate absence code will be entered.
- The afternoon registration will be at 1:10 pm.
- Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late before registers close.
- Parents/Carers must inform the school if their child is going to be absent on or before the first day. This must be followed up in writing to explain the reason for the absence. If no reason is given within 2 weeks the absence will become unauthorised.



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- When making medical/dental appointments, every effort must be made to ensure appointments are outside school hours but we acknowledge that this is not always possible. Notification to the school of these appointments should be accompanied by an appointment card or other written confirmation.
- The school actively encourages punctuality and is alert to patterns of late arrival.
- Parents will be informed if punctuality is a problem in case they are unaware of this, having themselves left home before their child is expected to go to school.
- Parents will be written to where punctuality is a concern and reminded of their parental responsibility and the potential damage caused by lateness. Such letters will require a response from parents to explain the reasons for lateness. Parental responsibility for lateness will be stressed in the majority of cases.
- If a pupil is late due to exceptional circumstances, no action will be taken. If a pupil is frequently late with the same or similar explanation, school will speak to parents to identify any issues that are causing the pupil to arrive late at school. If the pupil still arrives late, the school may decide not to authorise the late arrival and enter an unauthorised late mark 'U'.
- In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, the school may keep the register open for a longer period.

### ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL PROCEDURE

#### First Day Absence

- Parents/carers must contact the school on the first day of any absence by 9:00am either by telephone, by email or in person, explaining the reason for absence and the likely day of return.
- If there has been no contact by the parent/carer by 9.30am, the school will telephone the named contacts on the child's registration form, starting with the first contact and working through the list. Failed attempts to speak to a parent/carer will be recorded. If no contacts can be reached, a home visit will be undertaken. The police may be contacted if no contact is made through the home visit.

#### Day 1 - Phone call

- A staff member trained to do so, telephones the child's home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent or carer that the child is safe at home.

#### Day 2 - Follow up phone call

- A subsequent telephone call will be made either from the school landline or preferably a mobile phone.



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### Day 3 – Write/email parents

We will write or email to the parent in plain English, asking for contact to be made with the school immediately. Parents/carers will be given 3 working days to make contact. Where English may not be the parent's first language, a copy the letter into a language that may be more accessible will be provided.

If a child is absent for a third consecutive day, parents/carers must telephone the school and provide information on the child's anticipated return.

### Day 5/6 - Home visit

A visit to the home address will be arranged.

### Continuing Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation after 10 consecutive school days and the school are unable to contact the family, school must report the child as missing from education.

### Absence Notes

Absence notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

### Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of the School Administration Officer to be aware of and bring attention to any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve any concerns with parent/s. The Headteacher or SENCO will liaise with the County Attendance Officer to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and/or punctuality are identified.

Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward. An attendance contract will be offered by the school, giving an attendance target for the child. Support strategies to implement this will be agreed.

## PENALTY NOTICES AND LEGAL ACTION

### The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

*"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:*

- 1. To his age, ability and aptitude and*
- 2. To any special needs he may have.*

*either by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise."*



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For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/444>

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the school reserves the right to ask the County Attendance Team to issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a fine or further legal action through the courts.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and a parenting contract meeting will be offered between parent, pupil and school to try and help resolve any issues. All PA cases will be referred to the County Attendance Team who, if necessary, have a range of legal powers open to them to enforce attendance including parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecutions.

A Penalty Notice is a fine that the County Attendance Team may decide to issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates' Court system.

A Parent/Carer can be issued with a penalty notice if:

- they fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as six or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six week period;
- they allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation;
- they fail to return their child to school on the agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence;
- their child persistently arrives late for school after registration is closed.

If convicted of an offence a parent could face a penalty notice of up to £2,500 per parent and/or 3 months imprisonment.

## PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

### Attendance Targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and a senior school manager will be responsible for overseeing this work.



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Our school's target for this academic year is: 98%

### A Welcome Back

It is important that if arriving late to school or on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to other pupils.

### Promoting Attendance

Attendance will be promoted in a range of sensitive and inclusive manners. For example, the school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education.

### Leave of Absence

As of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, the Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Parents/Carers should seek permission from the Headteacher prior to the leave of absence period in question.

The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school **if** the leave is granted. Parents/carers who remove their children from school without authorisation or do not return their child to school on the agreed date following an authorised period of leave of absence, may face a Penalty Notice Warning which could lead to a fine/prosecution (see Penalty Notices and Legal Action above).

### Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

School attendance regulations were revised on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013. Under **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013** it states that Headteachers cannot sanction holidays in term time. Any holiday in term time will be treated as unauthorised absence and will be taken into account when referring parents and families to the Education Welfare Services.

Instead, Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

Please find below a list of allowable absences. This policy has been written following national guidelines.

#### Allowed absence

- Sickness
- Emergency medical appointments
- Day/s for specific religious observance
- School is closed due to unforeseen circumstances
- Hospital appointments

#### Allowed absence in exceptional circumstances (at the discretion of the headteacher)

- Family bereavement or close friend bereavement
- Other compassionate grounds
- Immediate family wedding taking place on school day – not travelling to a wedding unless it is abroad in which case one day either side of the wedding will be authorized.



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- Family crisis
- Examinations off site
- Attendance at an event at the request of a public organisation
- Where parents request leave of absence for religious observance, this would normally be granted for the day of the celebration
- Visit to new school if family is relocating

All requests for absence due to exceptional circumstances must be placed in writing prior to the event. The headteacher will then review each request and decide if it meets the criteria. Parents will then be informed of the outcome.

Where parents take children out of school without authorisation the absence will be coded as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences of five or more days may result in a fixed penalty notice for parents from the Local Authority.

Please refer to PDET's Guiding Principles for Authorising Term Time Absence for more details

We believe that the majority of our parents realise that 'every lesson counts' and encourage regular attendance at school. We have high expectations of our children. You have high expectations of us. These expectations cannot be met if your child is absent.

### **Reporting Attendance**

Attendance will be reported to parents at each parents' evening and at the end of the school year.

### **REGISTER AND ADMISSION ROLL KEEPING**

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00 and by 1.10pm. These registers are then returned to the school office.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

The legal requirements regarding register and admission roll keeping can be found in The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/introduction/made>

### **Categorisation of Absence**

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school at the time of registration must be recorded within one of these categories:

1. Unauthorised Absence;
2. Authorised Absence;
3. Approved Educational Activity.



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### 1. Unauthorised Absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without a valid reason.

### 2. Authorised Absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/regulation/6/made>

### 3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits;
- Sporting activities;
- Link courses or approved education off site;
- Most types of dual registration.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

### REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually.