



St Bartholomew's C of E Primary School

Attendance Policy for the Authorisation of Absence from School

Start date: September 1st 2020

Review date: September 1st 2021

1. Aim

This document is a statement of the policy for authorising absence from St Bartholomew's C of E Primary School. The implementation of this policy is the shared responsibility of all parents and the administration team and senior leadership team of the school. At St Bartholomew's Primary School to promote and support our children's learning and enable each one of them to achieve their full potential. We endeavour to provide a school day that excites challenges and motivates each child, and allows them to develop as independent learners. Our organisation of their learning promotes enjoyment, perseverance and self-discipline. We encourage the children to achieve personal excellence in all aspects of work and behaviour.

The aim of St Bartholomew's Primary School's attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to as much as is possible.

St Bartholomew's Primary School's takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support. Pupils are expected to attend 100% of the time unless authorized by the Headteacher (or a delegated member of staff). The Government is also firmly of the view that absence from school is unacceptable and all unnecessary absence must be prevented and tackled by schools. Parents and carers should be aware that the Education Act 1996 "places a duty upon parents of a child of compulsory school age to cause that child to receive full-time education and failure to do so may lead to legal action being taken."

What does 90% attendance look like?

- One full day off school every fortnight
- Nearly 20 days absence a year, i.e.: a whole month off school
 - When compared with attendance of 95%, children with 90% attendance will, on average, achieve one grade less in all their GCSEs
- If sustained over 5 years 90% is more than ½ a year of school missed - your child will be ½ a year behind their peers

What does just 5 minutes late look like?

- Equivalent to missing a whole lesson every fortnight
- This adds up to 3 days absence a year

2. Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

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

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age —

- (a) when he attains the age of five, if he attains that age on a prescribed day, and
- (b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his attaining that age.

Prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March

A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year (the last Friday in June) —

- (a) if he attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- (b) if he attains that age on that day, or
- (c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his attaining that age.

St Bartholomew's Primary school is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this document accordingly.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Governing body

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff
- annually review the school's attendance rules and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents and children to implement the rules effectively
- nominate or identify a member of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children and staff
- work out appropriate and accurate annual attendance numbers and future attendance targets, and submit these to the LA within an agreed timescale each year
- take time at governors' meetings to regularly review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site
- ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff
- ensure that senior leaders make the necessary referrals to the local authority and other relevant agencies in individual cases of non-attendance
- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future.

School leadership team

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement

- coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full review
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- ensure that legislation and government guidance on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislative changes and how to implement them
- nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job
- report to the governing body each term on attendance records, data and provision
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop and engage with multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.

Teachers and support staff

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- encourage and support their children's aspirations
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school (**see section 4**), and include an expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as making medical and dental appointments outside school hours
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the Headteacher (**see section 4.5**)
- sign a home-school agreement
- lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable
- bring a note of explanation from their parents or carers to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen

- follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late (**see section 4.7**). Pupils are held responsible for this and it is made clear to all pupils what this procedure is by their form tutors. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

4. Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences.

Staff should make it clear on the school register when taking attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised. Where staff have concerns regarding absences they should follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return. For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a written note from the parent/carer of the child. Alternative arrangements will be made individually with non-English speaking parents or carers.

4.1 Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents will need to make a phone call to alert the school each day of absence by 10am. When the child returns to school they should bring a note from their parent explaining the absence – this is for the school records. For prolonged absence due to illness (5 or more days), parents are required to provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

In the event that a parent/carer has not made contact with the school to report a child's illness or absence by 10am, the school will call the child's first point of contact. If the first point of contact does not respond or is unavailable, the school will contact the child's second point of contact. In the event that both points of contact do not respond or are unavailable, the school are '*within their right*' to contact the police to carry out a welfare check if the school is concerned that the parent/ carer has not made contact and the absence is unexplained.

4.2 Medical or dental appointments

Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

4.3 Authorised absences

There may be some instances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement.

4.4 Exclusion

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. The head teacher/class teacher will arrange for work to be sent home.

4.5 Leave absences and extended leave

Parents should make every effort to ensure that leave absences and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. Parents may request a leave of absence during term time. Requests for leave of this type must be made in writing to the Headteacher at least 4 weeks in advance of the leave being taken. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration.

Retrospective applications will not be considered and this time taken will be processed as unauthorised absence. The Headteacher may only grant such requests in exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher's decision is final on whether the request is approved and the length of absence approved.

All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing, and will outline the details of when the child is expected to return to school. Parents should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

It remains the Headteacher's decision whether to authorise any request for absence during term time.

If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents may be subject to further action by the school or prosecution by the local authority.

Persistent Absence:

If a child's attendance falls below 85%, the school may refer to the Inclusion Officer to support with the child's attendance (see below).

Penalty Notices:

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

- Pupils identified by police and inclusion officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. (The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.)
- Where a child is taken out of school for 5 sessions or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child** who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.
- The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 7 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Inclusion service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Advice and Support:

Advice and support is available by making an appointment with the Headteacher. Alternatively, advice is available from an Inclusion Officer by contacting the local Education Office on 01483 517179.

4.6 Religious observance

St Bartholomew's Primary School recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times.

Parents will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

4.7 Late arrival

From September 2020 (until further notice) there will be staggered drop off and pick up times. To help with social distancing, it is essential that all parents and carers adhere to the new times.

For KS2 children, the gate closes at 8:45. Pupils who arrive late must sign in at the office and give their reason for their lateness. Pupils arriving after 8:55 will be marked as late. Parents must only enter the school by appointment only. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorized after 9:15. It is vital that pupils sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for.

For KS1 children, the gate closes at 9:00. Pupils who arrive late must sign in at the office and give their reason for their lateness. Pupils arriving after 9:10 will be marked as late. Parents must only enter the school by appointment only. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorized after 9:30. It is vital that pupils sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for.

For reception children, the gate closes at 9:15. Pupils who arrive late must sign in at the office and give their reason for their lateness. Pupils arriving after 9:25 will be marked as late. Parents must only enter the school by appointment only. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorized after 9:45. It is vital that pupils sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for.

A register is also taken at the start of afternoon lessons, and any unexplained absences reported back to the school office. If a student is late to the lesson this will be recorded on the register.

Persistent lateness may result in a meeting being called to address the lateness and advice may be sort from the inclusion office.

5. School action: following up absences

Class registers are passed to the school office at the end of the registration period. Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the deputy head/attendance officer/form teacher will contact the parent or carer to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

Where pupils have been away for either short or long term, the school will support that child when they re-enter school to help them catch up on any work that they have missed.

Where a child has been absent from school for a period of more than 20 school days, and where the absence was unauthorised and both the school and LA have been unable to contact the parents, the school may remove the child from the school roll. The school will notify the local authority when such action is taken.

The school will take disciplinary action against any pupils who are discovered to be persistently truanting and parents or carers will be contacted to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help. The school may take further action against the parents, including referral to the local authority to begin criminal proceedings against the parents.

6. Changing School

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform school staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- the address of the new school;
- the new home address (if appropriate and known).

The pupils' school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Inclusion Service.

7. Covid-19

In the event of a future rise in local infections, parents must contact specialist health professionals to discuss their care and provide the school with evidence should their child need to shield or self-isolate for any period of time. Where a child does not attend school because their parents are following clinical and/ or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

If parents of children with significant risks factors are concerned about returning to school, they are urged to make contact with the school to discuss their concerns and the measures the school has put into place to help reduce the risk of infection.

This document will be reviewed annually