



# Birchington Church of England Primary School

## Attendance Policy

### PHILOSOPHY

**Birchington Church of England Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that, if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance is crucial.**

As a school, we will do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible. It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils. Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance. If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

### PRINCIPLES

The school will:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures when necessary and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session
- stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence
- display attendance rates in our newsletter and reward good or improved behaviour for pupils
- promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence
- consult with all members of the school community and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by Senior Leaders who will report to Governors
- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed
- monitor and investigate any patterns of lateness or absence
- office staff will check absence at the end of each term and send attendance figures to the DfES

### PROCEDURES

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil by the first day of absence we will:

- contact parent/carer by telephone or text, or if parent is unavailable send a standard letter requesting information
- send a second letter if an explanation has still not been received after five days of unexplained absence
- refer to the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if no response is received after 5 days of absence
- invite the parents into school after a maximum of 10 days absence, unless other action is planned. This meeting will include a senior member of staff, parent, pupil and the EWO. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties, which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parents/ carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance
- help the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks

- notes, records of telephone calls, and medical certificates should be dated, named and initialled by the office staff, Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher.

**In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of the school staff will convey to the pupils that attendance is a crucial part of their education.**

## **PERFORMANCE**

We will review our progress against our LA target. It is important to set realistic targets. The school will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

When evaluating success the school will consider whether or not:

- attendance has improved
- punctuality has improved
- parental response to absences has improved
- the school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, Governing Body and the local community
- pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within school
- attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons, or as a theme for any other lessons

## **PRACTICE**

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- keeping and maintaining registers accurately (see Attendance Codes)
- maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- carefully and accurately inputting data into the SIMs Attendance module
- regularly analysing attendance data
- ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- liaising closely with the school's EWO
- rewarding excellent attendance – 100% every two terms and for whole academic year

## **KEEPING THE REGISTERS**

### **THE STATUS OF THE REGISTER**

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately, neatly and marked in ink. The register (from SIMS Attendance) may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute data to pupils' end of term reports, to records of achievement, and to leavers' references. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day. We will ensure that all staff involved with the registration process are aware that the law is very specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping the register is of the utmost importance.

### **MARKING THE REGISTER**

- no pupil will be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is called or unless he or she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher

- ❑ registers are finally closed at an agreed time each day 9.30am and 1.15pm
- ❑ where a pupil misses registration but arrives at 9.00 – 9:30am with an adequate explanation s/he should be marked as late – late = unauthorised after 9:30am
- ❑ between 9.00-9.30am lateness must be explained by a parent/carer
- ❑ pupils must not mark the register under any circumstances
- ❑ spaces must not be left on the register
- ❑ the data from the registers will be input to SIMs Attendance at the end of each week and a percentage attendance report produced and monitored
- ❑ the decision to authorise an absence will be made within a maximum of two weeks from the date of the absence

### **REMOVAL FROM ROLE**

Pupils will only be removed from the school roll and class registers under the following circumstances:

- ❑ where a parent informs the school that they are moving abroad and give a new address and school where they intend to register the child
- ❑ when a school has actually admitted a pupil to their school roll, a date for the transfer should be requested and can the pupil be removed from the school roll
- ❑ where a parent informs the school **in writing** that they intend to teach the child at home. The school must inform the LA who will arrange for the educational provision to be checked by an appropriate adviser
- ❑ where a pupil has been continuously absent for not less than 4 weeks and both the school and the EWO after extensive enquiries have failed to locate the pupil. In such cases the EWO will make home visits and other enquiries to ascertain that the family are no longer living at their last known address. Removal of a pupil from the class register should only be undertaken when authorised by the head teacher after these enquiries have taken place. The school must notify the LA in all cases of a pupil being removed from the school roll where a family has moved and cannot be traced
- ❑ where a pupil is registered in accordance with a school attendance order and the LA substitutes another school
- ❑ where a pupil has been granted leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but has failed to attend school within the ten days immediately following the expiry of the leave (except by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause). Extensive enquiries by the school and EWO must be made in these circumstances to trace the pupil, prior to removal from the school roll. The school must notify the LA in all cases of a pupil being removed from the school roll owing to non-return from leave of absence for a holiday
- ❑ where a pupil is certified by the School Medical Officer as unlikely to be in a state of health to attend before ceasing to be of compulsory school age
- ❑ where the pupil has been permanently excluded. The Pupil Discipline Committee must have met. 15 school days will then be allowed for a possible independent appeal panel hearing before the pupil is removed from the school roll

**It is not lawful to remove a pupil from a school roll simply because the pupil has a poor attendance record.**

### **ANALYSIS OF ATTENDANCE DATA**

Analysis will help to draw attention to deterioration or improvement and target intervention more selectively and help to establish the cause of an absence. Whole school attendance figures produced weekly and analysed termly and yearly, this process will indicate factors such as the effect of seasonal attendance e.g. attendance may decline in the colder months and preceding school holidays.

Weekly figures may illustrate:

- the fall in attendance preceding staff development days, half terms, end of terms
- the effect of ending terms on a Monday or Tuesday
- the effect of activity days, day trips, or residential trips
- the effect of the timing of the school day
- the effect of pupil holidays in term time

Reports from SIMs Attendance will indicate these and other patterns of absence.

## **TYPES OF ABSENCE**

### *Authorised absences*

**Only a school** can authorise an absence. Parents and the LA do not have the power to authorise absences.

### **THE KEY POINTS THAT WE CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING TO AUTHORISE ABSENCE ARE:**

- it is a legal requirement that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually
- schools are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence where there is doubt as to the validity of that explanation
- parents should be aware that only the school has the right to agree family holidays in term time; each application for leave should be considered in view of the specific circumstances of the family.
- schools should always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the school is aware of family difficulties
- minding the house, looking after siblings or a sick parent, shopping or going on a trip will not normally be acceptable reasons for absence
- an explanation for every absence is required; if one is not forthcoming the absence should be treated as unauthorised
- where absence is authorised, schools should remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance
- lateness should be actively discouraged and persistent lateness treated in the same way as irregular attendance
- schools should develop a close working relationship with the Attendance and Behaviour Service in order to promote regular school attendance

### *Unauthorised absences*

Unauthorised absence is absence without approval from an authorised representative of the school and includes all unexplained absences.

If a child is absent with the approval of the school, for whatever reason, no offence is deemed to have been committed. Thus, the decision taken by the school to give, or withhold, authorisation for an absence, is a critical factor in determining the LA's decision to prosecute parents.

We will need to exercise caution in the authorisation of absence. If we are suspicious of the explanation given by parents, the absence should be further investigated and left unauthorised until the matter has been clarified to the satisfaction of the school. The decision taken by the school to authorise absence or not, is of critical importance in determining the level of involvement of the Attendance and Behaviour Service. If the school has authorised a pupil's absence we have, in effect, given *leave*, **therefore there is no case in law for the parents to answer.**

### Parentally condoned absence

This form of absence is equally as damaging to the pupil's educational experience as any other form of absence. It is essential that, when school staff feel that a worrying pattern of non-attendance is emerging they inform the Headteacher who will work closely with other staff and the educational, social and health support services to ensure that the most appropriate and effective intervention is available to the pupil and parents. A range of specialist support services, which will assist and advise schools and parents on ways forward when these difficulties arise.

#### **Factors which may contribute to condoned absence:**

- separation anxiety: the parent and/or child may be frightened of separation from each other: domestic violence may be a factor
- the child may be the only significant carer within the family
- the parent may be physically or psychologically ill
- there may be social issues which parents may feel are of more importance than educational issues
- the parent may not value education and prevent the child from attending school because of this belief
- the parent may be unwilling or unable to provide appropriate clothing (uniform, shoes, coats)

#### **Possible reasons why absence might not be granted include:**

- previous pupil absence rate
- the dates that absence has been applied for
- pupil educational needs

### LATENESS

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parents/carers of a pupil who is persistently late are guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if late arrival is not resolved. Pupils who arrive late disrupt not only their own education but that of others and being persistently late may also lead to truancy. Poor punctuality may indicate problems within the pupil's home which the pupil may need help to deal with. For some pupils, arriving punctually may be beyond their control. There needs to be a careful balance struck between being too punitive and too accepting of a pupil's lateness. Once the reasons for lateness have been established, the parents, pupil and school need to work in partnership to resolve the difficulties.

The register closes at 9.00am, if a child arrives between 9.00am and 9.30am they are marked in as 'late'. If they arrive after this time they are marked in as having an 'unauthorised absence' although marked on the register as being present in school on the system.

### FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE

All pupil absence will be followed up as soon as possible. The action taken, and the responses received, will always be recorded. Parents are informed through the school prospectus, and in newsletters that a text will be sent, whenever possible, on the morning of the child's first day of absence. This will immediately be recorded in the office.

Where a child returns and a reason for absence has not been provided by the parent either by telephone or written note the school will send a standard letter (**see APPENDIX 1**)

## **THE ROLE OF THE HEADTEACHER**

The headteacher is responsible for following up absences.

The Headteacher:

- delegates the maintenance of weekly running totals to the school secretary but mentions them weekly
- checks attendance reports regularly
- reports issues regarding absence, including trends of attendance to Governing Body through Headteacher reports/Governor meetings
- reports to other stakeholders and outside agencies when necessary

## **FAMILY HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME**

Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (amended) gives schools discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of an annual family holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and, in law, have to apply for permission in advance. Such permission is granted in accordance with arrangements made by the Governing Body of the school. DFE guidelines clearly state that the reference to exceptional circumstances means that the parent must make a strong case for taking the child away for more than two weeks (10 days) in an academic year. Parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that schools will agree to family holidays during term time.

**(see APPENDIX 2).**

**The Headteacher will consider each request individually – Birchington CE Primary School does not operate a 'blanket approval' policy for requests. The following factors should be considered when assessing requests - no one factor should be regarded as conclusive:**

- **the time of year of proposed trip**
- **the length and purpose of the holiday**
- **the duration of the holiday and its impact on continuity of learning**
- **the circumstances of the family and the wishes of parents**
- **the overall attendance pattern of the child**
- **the overall attendance pattern of a child (a 10 day holiday in term time reduces overall attendance to 94.7%. This is without taking into account any absence through illness)**

Leave of absence for more than two weeks is seen as exceptional. We will carefully explore with parents why such leave of absence is necessary. Where such absences are sanctioned, they will be counted as an **authorised** absence.

Where parents fail to abide by the agreement reached with the school and keep a child away from school in excess of the period agreed or, where parents fail to apply for permission, the extra time taken should be treated as an **unauthorised** absence.

## **REFERRAL TO THE EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICE**

The vast majority of referrals to the Service are made on the basis of non-attendance and are made when:

- a) a pattern of irregular attendance has developed
- b) a period of non-attendance has been established
- c) letters sent by the school have met with little or no response
- d) there is a lack of co-operation in ensuring the child's regular attendance
- e) a parent/carer withdraws a pupil having expressed an intention to educate the child other than at school
- f) a pattern of persistent lateness develops
- g) there are child protection concerns

h) there are specific welfare issues which are preventing a pupil from accessing education a pupil is withdrawn from school by parents/carers who are moving to a new area and the school does not receive a request for the pupil's records from a school in the area

### **TIMING OF THE SCHOOL DAY**

<b>Start of school day</b>	8.55am
<u>Morning Break</u>	
FS/KS 1	10.40am to 11.00am
KS 2	10.45am to 11.00am
<u>Lunchtime</u>	
FS/KS 1	12.00am to 1.05pm
KS 2	12.10pm to 1.05pm
<u>Afternoon Break</u>	
FS as required	
KS 1	10 minutes taken between 2.15pm to 2.45pm
<b>End of school day</b>	3.20pm

If the school wishes to change the timing of the school day the Headteacher will seek and follow guidance given by the LA.

### **Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence**

Penalty Notices for absence from school can be issued from April 2005. Following consultation on a Code of Conduct, it was agreed that penalty notices would be issued by the Attendance and Behaviour Service based on requests from the school or police.

The following circumstances will be considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of penalty notices:

- truancy including truancy sweeps
- parentally-condoned absence
- excessive holidays in term time
- excessive delayed return from extended holidays
- persistent lateness after the register has closed

A pupil has to be absent from school in one, or a combination of these circumstances for at least ten sessions in any term before the issuing of a penalty notice can be considered. (10 sessions is equivalent to 5 days)

Following a request for the issuing of a penalty notice a check is made that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct. A warning letter will then be sent to the parents/carers explaining that unless their child attends full time for the next 15 days a penalty notice will be issued.

As a school we will warn individual parents, where attendance is a concern that they are at risk of a referral for a penalty notice.

*KB/CM September 2011*

*To be reviewed: September 2012*

## Appendix 2

«address\_block»  
«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

I have previously written to you to request the reason for «forename»'s absence(s) shown below and to date have received no reply. If you have already notified the School I apologise for troubling you again, but would ask that you still return this absence letter with the reason so that our attendance records may be brought up to date. If I do not receive a reply by return, a mark of unauthorised absence will be recorded as this absence has been outstanding for some considerable time and all absences will be shown on «forename»'s report.

Thank you for your co-operation, which is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Ms K Barham  
Headteacher

## **REPLY**

«reg»  
«periods\_of\_absence»

**Appendix 1**

«address\_block»  
«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**CAUSE OF ABSENCE – ENQUIRY TO PARENT/GUARDIAN**

«forename» has been absent from school since/on «periods\_of\_absence»  
I shall be glad if you will let me know the reason for the absence by replying on this letter and returning it to me as soon as possible. If a reply is not received by return, an unauthorised mark will be recorded.

In case of illness, please state the nature of the illness, the name of the doctor (if any) in attendance and the probable period of absence, and attach any medical certificate that has been obtained.

Kind regards

Ms K Barham  
Headteacher

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**REPLY - «year\_reg»**

«periods\_of\_absence»