



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

September 2020

To be reviewed September 2023

Rationale

We recognise that a high level of school attendance is essential for a child to reach their full educational achievement. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children and we endeavour to provide an environment in which all pupils feel valued, safe and welcome. Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

Aims

We aim to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to children and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that parents ensure that their child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Statistics show a direct link between underachievement and absence below 95%.

Our procedures

In order to meet our aims we will:

- Develop a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child
- provide information on all matters related to attendance
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- celebrate good attendance

Roles and responsibilities

The senior leadership team will:

- oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance
- ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school
- ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed
- ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties

Classroom teachers will:

- ensure that all students are registered accurately
- promote good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities
- liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality
- communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- support students with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Students will:

- attend every day unless they are too ill to do so
- arrive in school on time if they are independent travellers

Parents/carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law. A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

We request that all parents/carers:

- inform the school on the first day of absence. This must be in addition to contacting the transport service as information does not always get relayed
- discuss with the class teacher any unavoidable planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

On the first day of your child's absence the school will:

- contact you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries emergency numbers
- If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carer or emergency contact details, the school will contact the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) to undertake a home visit. A decision may be made to contact the police to request they undertake a welfare check
- It is really important that parents/carers make sure that the school always have an up-to-date contact numbers. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child's attendance dips below 90% in a half term for whatever reason, they are defined as a persistent absentee. All absence data is thoroughly monitored and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

If a medical condition prevents a child of statutory school age from attending school for 15 days or more (consecutive or cumulative), it is the duty of the local authority to liaise with medical practitioners to ensure appropriate education is available for the child. The school will inform the local authority of the absence.

Absences causing concern may fall into the following categories:

- any unexplained absence
- attendance below 90% in a half term
- recurring patterns of absence
- prolonged absence due to sickness that is not advised by a doctor

Absences are monitored by the SLT who meet with The EWO half-termly to discuss the pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. Together, they will agree the best strategies to use in the case of each individual. The registers will also be checked and signed by the EWO.

Ten Days' Absence / Children Missing in Education

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. In addition to the actions above, the local authority will be notified that the child is at risk of missing education. **Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school are not receiving suitable education other than at school. They are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.**

Effective information sharing between parents/carers, schools and LA's is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education. Every term, the school reports to the LA if there are any children missing education even if there is a nil return.

Penalty Notices and legal measures

The local authority will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance where improvements are not being made to improve unauthorised absence. This may include a penalty notice where parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days directly to the local authority. The Head Teacher will follow the local authority's code of conduct for issuing Penalty Notices. Factors which may give rise to a penalty notice being issued include; a number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year or one-off periods of irregular attendance without permission. If parents/carers pay the Penalty Notice further legal action may still be taken if attendance does not improve.

Request for leave of absence

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we do not authorise absence for holidays during term-time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. Any applications for leave must be made in advance in writing to the Head of School.

The Education Regulations (September 2013) state that head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday, and in the majority of cases holidays will not be authorised. (See guidance in Appendix 1).

Understanding types of absence

Absence is **authorised** when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. Absence is **unauthorised** when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent's request. This may include parents/carers allowing their child to be off school for birthdays, shopping trips, visiting family or holidays or where absences have not been explained.

Absences that involve travel to places which are not recommended by the Foreign Office will not be approved under any circumstance.

Recording Attendance and Lateness

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8.45am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked at 8.45am and your child will receive a late mark and a same day school detention if they are not in by that time. (Parents/carers will be notified.)

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with class teacher or to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, and again for the afternoon session. We follow DfE Guidance which suggests that registers should be closed a maximum of 30 minutes after the start of the school day. All lateness is recorded **and this information is kept on file**. If this is due to a medical appointment **or delayed Bexley transport** the student will receive an authorised absence. Persistent lateness will be managed in the same way as poor attendance.

We will record all absences on the student's end of year report.

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years.

Appendix 1

Guidance on changes to the Regulations governing holidays in term time:

Parents will be interested to learn that the Department for Education has amended the regulations governing requests for holidays in term time. With effect from September 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make it clear that Head Teachers MAY NOT grant any holidays or other absences during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Head Teacher will carefully review any request for leave of absence during term time but it is only in the most exceptional circumstances that leave will be granted.

The Head Teacher must determine what are exceptional circumstances and the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Also, from September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, so that any parent who receives a Penalty Notice for taking their child out of school during term time will have to pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. Previously parents had 28 days to pay £60 and 42 days to pay £120.

I appreciate that this may cause difficulties for some families but the Head Teacher is required to comply with these amendments to the regulations, which affect all absences from school during term time taken after 1st September 2013.

For more information please go to

www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance 8

Appendix 2

Children Missing Education

1. Concern can be raised by any person that a student has left site without informing staff or providing details of new address or educational establishment. Concerns could be raised because

- A student has failed to attend school for a number of days without good reason
- There has been no contact from the parents giving reasons for the absence
- There is unsubstantiated contact from an 'unknown adult' that the student has left school
- There is information or 'rumours' from other children that the student has left
- Information has been found on social media that leads school staff to believe that the student has left

2. There must be a named person responsible for undertaking the investigation and ensuring that the enquiry is conducted in compliance with the local authority CME protocol.

3. The School Attendance Advisory Officer must be contacted and asked to make a home address visit to obtain information. A phone call to initiate the enquiry, followed up by an email to confirm the reasons for the enquiry. Email to be retained.

4. The School Attendance Advisory Officer to visit the home address to make enquiries and ascertain whether the student is still living at the address, the reason for not attending school and if it becomes apparent that the student/family are no longer resident, enquiries with neighbours to obtain information about when they left and where they have gone. The School Attendance Advisory Officer will contact the school at the earliest opportunity to advise staff of the result of the enquiries, followed up by an email to confirm the information obtained. Email to be retained.

5. School staff to phone anybody listed as a contact in the student's file and make enquiries about the whereabouts of the student. Details of all phone calls to be retained.

6. If it is not possible to speak to the person named as a contact, letter or email to be sent so that the person asking for information about the missing student and their whereabouts. Letter or email to be retained.

7. If information received regarding the whereabouts of the missing student, make phone enquiries to confirm the present location of the student, follow this up with a letter or email asking the contact to confirm the home address, who the student is living with and their contact details and current school details of the student. Details of all phone calls and a copy of the letter or email to be retained.

8. Liaise with the School Attendance Advisory Officer to ensure that all enquiries have been made.

9. Provide briefing for the Senior Leadership Team.

10. Contact the local authority school attendance service and advise them that the student is no longer attending, detailing the enquiries that have been made to trace the student and providing any information that has been obtained. Retain a copy of all correspondence with RBG.

11. Once the school enquiries have been exhausted, the student can be taken off roll. Section 8 (1) of the Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006 states that if a student has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which the student is registered the student can be removed from the school roll.

12. Collate all correspondence and information obtained and retain in the student's file