

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Person responsible:

Mrs Sandra Bell

Policy Revised: March 2026

Next Review: Annual – March 2027

Date Ratified by LGB: 10.3.26

Rationale

We believe that by encouraging high standards of attendance and punctuality we will further promote a positive school ethos in which the achievements of each child will be celebrated, and good patterns will be established which will have a direct impact upon a child's future learning.

Statutory and Local Authority Context

This policy is written in line with Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, 2022, updated 2024), Keeping Children Safe in Education, Children Missing Education guidance, Together for Children (Sunderland) procedures, and Vision Learning Trust expectations. Attendance is recognised as a safeguarding issue.

Why is attendance important?

A good education is every child's right and provides the best possible start in life. Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. At Barnes Infant Academy we aim to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality.

At Barnes Infant Academy we are committed to ensure that all children achieve their full potential. Good attendance and punctuality are essential factors to achieve this aim.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- ensure that our policy applies to children under five years of age (below statutory school age) in order to promote good habits at an early age.*
- improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.*
- create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised and seen to be valued by the school.*
- raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.*
- work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and outside agencies so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.*
- promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued*
- encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility*
- establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.*
- recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.*

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- *equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.*
- *ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.*
- *raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.*
- *maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.*
- *developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.*
- *supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.*
- *developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.*

Academy Procedures

The Academy has a rigorous procedure for seeking information from parents when a child is absent from school. All parents/carers are required to ring the Academy before 9.15am to indicate why a child will not be in school. Absences should be explained by parents on the first day of absence. Explanations of absence should be recorded in the Attendance management system.

Any unexplained school absence will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken.

The Academy will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- *maintain compliant registration processes.*
- *maintain accurate attendance data.*
- *communicate the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.*
- *have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.*
- *follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.*
- *inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.*
- *strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.*
- *work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality.*
- *refer to external agencies any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.*

Class teachers are responsible for:

- *emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.*
- *keeping an overview of class and individual attendance identifying poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.*
- *informing members of the senior leadership team where there are concerns*
- *supporting agreed actions*
- *monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to address attendance concerns.*
- *providing background information to support referrals.*
- *discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.*

The Family Liaison Officer is responsible for:

- overall monitoring of school attendance.
- contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- making referrals to external agencies
- providing reports and background information to inform discussion
- liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher.
- sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Where reasonably possible, the school may request evidence of medical appointments. The school recognises that evidence is not always available and will act reasonably and proportionately.
- making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Punctuality

The school day starts promptly at 8.45am for EYFS and 8.50am for KS1. It is vitally important that in order for all children to access the curriculum fully that they are on time at the start of the school day. If for any reason a child arrives after this time parents will be required to sign a late register recording the reason for your lateness. Persistent late arrivals will be monitored in line with school procedures.

Definitions of absence

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.

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 valid reason, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

As a school we follow Together for Children's attendance procedures which are in line with the DfEs national framework for penalty notices. Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exists in line with the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. Fixed Penalty Notices will be considered where a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (5 days) within 10 school weeks with one or a combination of codes (G, O or U)

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- *Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence*
- *Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education*
- *Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:*
 - *Discuss attendance and engagement at school*
 - *Listen, and understand barriers to attendance*
 - *Explain the help that is available*
 - *Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence*
 - *Review any existing actions or interventions*
- *Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant*
- *Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence*
- *Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above)*

Removal from roll

Children will be removed from roll under the following circumstances:

- *Pupils will only be removed from roll in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations. This includes transfer to another school (with confirmation), elective home education (following Local Authority notification), family relocation, or other lawful circumstances. The school will notify the Local Authority and follow Children Missing Education procedures where required.*