

# Blackshaw Moor Church of England First School

## Attendance Policy 2020

### Working together in God's Love for the Benefit of All

At Blackshaw Moor Church of England First School we value the whole child. We aim to offer our children a creative, enriching and fulfilling learning journey enabling all to flourish. We aim to develop strong links with our local community whilst preparing our children to be good global citizens. Our school values and Christian distinctiveness underpins all that we are and do.

Pupils need to attend school regularly to fulfil their potential and 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.

The Government expects schools and authorities to

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled; and act early to address patterns of absence
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- Ensure all pupils are punctual to their lessons.

### **Principles**

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

The school will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance and behaviour by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

This policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

**Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.**

**Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:**

- **Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily**
- **Truancy before or during the school day**
- **Absences which have never been properly explained**
- **Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark**

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

*All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Good attendance is important because:*

- *Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance*
- *Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically*
- *Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with*
- *Regular attenders find learning more satisfying*

#### Late Attendance

*Pupils arriving after 9am will receive an 'L' code (late before registration closes). Pupils arriving after 9.15am will receive a 'U' code (late after registration closes), which counts against their attendance figure.*

Parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

## Procedures

**The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are: Samantha Crawforth and Nicola Frost**

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

The school takes an attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and the start of the afternoon session. On each occasion we record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school follows up any unexplained absences on the first day of absence to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the schools management information system (which is used to download data to the School census). The absence and attendance codes are national codes enabling the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulations.

Pupils arriving between 9am (after the bell) and 9.15am are recorded as late (code L). Registration closes at 9.15 am and pupils arriving after 9.15 will be recorded as late after registers are closed (code U).

If children are absent and parents haven't contacted school, the school will attempt to contact parents.

If a child is absent through sickness or any unavoidable cause, we encourage parents to inform the school by telephone in the first instance. This absence **may** constitute an authorised absence. This decision is made by the school.

If a child's attendance drops below 90% the school is advised by the Welfare Officer to request medical evidence to support absences due to illness e.g. a copy of appointment cards, prescriptions etc.

### **Leave of Absence during Term Time**

As of 1 September 2013 there has been a change in the 'The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006'.

Where there used to be the option for Head teachers to grant leave of absence during the term time in 'special circumstances' of up to ten days in a year, this has been removed.

Leave of absence in term time is discouraged. Parents are **not** automatically allowed to take their child out of school on holiday. Headteachers are now **only** allowed to authorise any leave of absence

when an application has been made in advance and it is felt to be for an exceptional circumstance; the annual family holiday would not be deemed an exceptional circumstance.

#### What should parents do if they wish to request a leave of absence?

Parents should contact the school to find out how to make a request for permission. We would strongly recommend that this is done before planning any leave of absence.

#### What happens if a child goes on holiday in term time or takes leave of absence for other reasons without permission from the school?

The absences will be marked in the school register as unauthorised absences and this may result in a Penalty Notice per parent per child being issued by the Local Authority. In some cases, parents may be prosecuted for the offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

In line with the amendments made to the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) regulations 2007 please note the following:

- The amount payable on issue of a penalty notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days.
- If the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days the Local Authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular attendance
- Penalty notices are issued to each parent/carer, for each child.

#### Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

- A Penalty Notice can be issued in cases of unauthorised absence (this includes leave of absence - holiday).
- There will be **no limit** on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorised **leave of absence** can be used in an academic year.
- In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in the first five days of exclusion.

#### Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

- From 1 January 2018 *any* period of unauthorised leave may result in a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. The head teacher is the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this can apply *only* in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence will be referred by your head teacher to the local authority.

#### Penalty Notice for persistent lateness

- Previously a pupil had to achieve 20 unauthorised late marks before a penalty notice warning could be issued. This has now changed to **10 marks**, and late marks do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued. You are therefore

encouraged where possible to ensure your child attends school on time. However, if your child is late you must inform the school of the reason(s) why, as they may be able to offer you some form of advice or support.

#### Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness

- If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence or is late 10 times over a twelve week period, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

Further details and a copy of the revised Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices can be obtained from the council's website [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education).

#### **Returning to school after illness**

Children returning to school after illness should clearly be fit to do so and free from infection. Children should be fit to participate in all school activities including outdoor games and play time. Injury, asthma, respiratory complaints or circulation difficulties are of course exceptions. If in doubt the school is happy to advise.

#### **Medicines**

If a child needs prescribed medication during the day eg antibiotics, the school requires written authority and parents need to call into the school office to complete the necessary medical forms.

The school has agreed with Staffordshire County Council to inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for up to ten days.

All schools have legal powers to use parenting contacts, parenting orders and penalty notices to address poor attendance and behaviour in school. Parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices are interventions available to promote better school attendance and behaviour.

When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 90% in any term without good reason, a referral to the EWS will be made by the school. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

#### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.