

Ref:
Approved by Governors:
Reviewer:

Attendance Policy
March 2022
Attendance SLT/March 2023

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Governing Body Approval

Policy approved by:

_____ (NAME)

_____ (SIGNATURE)

_____ (GOVERNOR POSITION)

_____ (DATE)

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Purpose of Policy

In order for our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and maintain the highest possible percentage attendance. Your child should be at school, on time, every day the school opens, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **Our target attendance for each pupil is 95% and above within an academic year.**

Any absence affects the consistency of a pupil's education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

It is your legal responsibility **as a parent or carer** to ensure your child's regular attendance at school and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of parents / carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

- To ensure the school's statutory, legal obligation is met.
- To promote maximum attendance by all students.
- To provide information for staff, parents / carers, the Governing Body and employers.
- To assist in the early detection of attendance issues so that a variety of agencies can become involved to support pupils and their families.
- That all pupil attendance, absence and punctuality is regularly monitored.
- Pupils whose attendance begins to cause a concern will be tracked and monitored by one or more of: Attendance Manager / Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO), Form Tutor, Year Leader, and Senior Members of Staff, whichever the school feels are the most appropriate.
- If no significant improvement in punctuality or attendance or both occur, parents / carers may be required to come to punctuality or attendance meeting to discuss the situation, to set formal targets or to sign a contract. The panel could consist of the HSLO, Year Leader, the pupil, parent / carer, a member of the school's leadership team and where appropriate a governor and/or a representative from an external agency. Failure to attend the meeting may result in all future absences deemed as unauthorised until such time as the parent / carer visits the school. Legal action may be requested through the process of Fixed Penalty Notices or Prosecution.
- Pupil review days: Periodically we may ask representatives from other school / external agencies (who are DBS checked and approved), to take part in a review of pupil attendance. This will include sharing information from our SIMS attendance programme and interviewing pupils to promote improvement of attendance and timekeeping.

To promote excellent attendance and punctuality the school will:

- Provide parents / carers with details on attendance and punctuality in pupil reports.
- Report to parents / carers on how a pupil is performing in school, what his/her attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to his / her academic attainment.
- Celebrate excellent attendance through Attendance Challenges, merits and the rewards trip.

Staff responsible for attendance matters include:

Home School Liaison Officer
Year Leaders

Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents / carers) as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. A reason for any absence is always required from parents/carers.

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Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school with a good reason, for example; illness, medical / dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies or any other unavoidable cause. Where a medical or dental appointment (for example) cannot be arranged outside school hours, parents / carers should ensure their child is absent for the minimum time possible and **must** provide a copy of an appointment card to the Attendance Team in school. Other evidence, which could be provided are: prescription details, emails concerning details of holiday booking etc.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider the reason given for absence (by the parent/carer) to be acceptable. This type of absence can lead to the school and the Local Authority employing sanctions and / or legal proceedings, i.e. Fixed Penalty Notices and Prosecution.

Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil becomes a “persistent Absentee” when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year or across a half term for whatever reason. Research shows that absence at this level can have a detrimental effect on any child’s education and future prospects. The school requires parents’ / carers’ fullest support and cooperation to minimise this immediately.

Parents / carers of pupils whose attendance is near or falls below 90% are likely to be asked to provide medical evidence for each subsequent absence, otherwise these absences will be recorded as unauthorised. The school acknowledges that some pupils may have long term medical / health issues and we will work to support pupils and families in minimising the impact of such issues on attendance. Pupils with absence that occurs regularly over at least 5 weeks will also raise a cause for concern.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence by telephone, 01282 506200, reporting it on class charts or by email to dhope@btrcc.lancs.sch.uk with a reason for the absence. This process should be repeated for every subsequent day of absence for safeguarding reasons.
- Send a note in or medical evidence (confirmation of Doctor Appointment / prescription, appointment letter etc on the first day of return with an explanation of the absence unless you have already provided this information.
- Notify school when there are changes to home circumstances i.e. Change of address, contact numbers or child living with another parent or family member.

If your child is absent the school will:

- Contact you by text on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. Please ensure we are kept up to date with mobile telephone numbers.
- The Attendance team or year Leader may contact you on the third day of absence to discuss support for your child, by telephone or a home visit.

If we have no reason given from you for the absence we will mark it as a N (unauthorised) which then may change to O (unauthorised), which may lead to fine or prosecution.

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Frequent Absences

It is the responsibility of parents/carers and the attendance team to bring attention to any emerging attendance concerns. In these circumstances, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parents / carers. If unsuccessful and the absences remain unauthorised the school will take further action and advice as appropriate from the Local Authority Court Officer.

Punctuality

Being late to school and form time is not acceptable. The start of the school day is extremely important as it sets the tone for the remainder of the day. Pupils arriving late also disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the pupil and has a negative impact on teaching and learning. Pupils persistently arriving late will be given detentions and persistent lateness will result in parent / carer being notified and where appropriate, required to come to a punctuality meeting. The school day begins at 8.45 am. **All pupils are expected to be in school for 8.35 am** in order to be in either their lesson by 8.45 am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their form room by 8.45 am. There is an interim buffer period of 6 mins to allow for prayer / registration / uniform checks and notifications. Pupils arriving at the front of school after the top gate has been locked at 9:00am must sign in with the Attendance Team. The School Register will close at **10.00 am**. Any pupil arriving after this time without a good reason (e.g. medical appointment) will receive an "unauthorised absence" (marked 'U' in the register).

Leave of Absence

Any requests for Leave of Absence must be completed on the official school form **Permission Request for Leave of Absence** at least 6 school weeks prior to the start of leave. This form can be requested from school but is also available on the school website under the heading Policies. The form can be emailed to dhope@btrcc.lancs.sch.uk or sent into school for the attention of Diane Hope. The Blessed Trinity office address is on the website.

The regulations do not permit any leave of absence, including holidays, during term time, unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Only the Head teacher can make the decision as to whether the application is deemed to be exceptional circumstances. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may lead to sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice or Prosecution. **Leave for religious reasons will be agreed for 1 day only.**

Ongoing Medical Conditions Including Pregnancies/Disabilities

The school prides itself on its inclusive ethos and on the achievements of pupils with long-term medical issues and recognises that there may be occasions when these pupils are unavoidably absent. We may request parents or carers to provide the most up to date medical information in the interest of the child and enable us to work together.

Legal Interventions

A Fixed Penalty Notice for non-attendance may be issued in cases of unauthorised absences. The circumstances in which a Fixed Penalty Notice for non-attendance will be issued include:

- Parentally condoned absence
- Unauthorised leave
- Unwarranted delayed return from authorised leave
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed.
- **Each case will be considered individually.**

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Penalty Notices can be issued when a student has 5 days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a term or 7 days (14 sessions) in two consecutive terms. Parents / carers may now be issued with up to three penalty notices in a year. Penalty notices can also be issued when pupils are located in a public place without justification during the first five days of any period of exclusion. Please see the Lancashire County Council guidance document on Penalty Notices attached as Annex A and B to this Policy. In extreme cases of unauthorised absence, the school will apply to the Court Officer to initiate legal action.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE TARGETS

Excellent attendance is the key to successful education; to future employment and to success in an increasingly diverse technological society; we have the highest expectations of our pupils and their parents / carers in upholding the values and ethos of the school. All schools acknowledge the detrimental effect of poor attendance on achievement and set targets to further improve attendance. Your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

SUMMARY

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents / carers have a duty and legal requirement to make sure that their children attend school and on time. All school staff are committed to working with parents / carers and pupils to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This Policy will be monitored and reviewed, by the Pastoral Team, School Leadership Team and Governing Body to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our stakeholders and the statutory regulations.

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ANNEX A

PENALTY NOTICES Tackling Poor School Attendance The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and the Education Act 1996 Information for Parents and Carers

Introduction

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

What is a penalty notice?

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. Depending on the circumstances, such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days. Full payment of the penalty means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted.

What is the cost?

Penalty notices are issued at £120 however, if paid within 21 days of being issued the cost is £60.

How are they issued?

Penalty notices will always be issued by post to your home and are issued to each parent/carer individually in respect of each child.

When are they issued?

Lancashire County Council considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that penalty notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs, such as:

- unauthorised absence
- truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps);
- parentally condoned absence without good reason;
- persistent late** arrival at school;
- unauthorised leave in term time
- delayed return from authorised leave;

In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 5 school days (10 sessions) unauthorised absence in a term or 7 school days (14 sessions) unauthorised absence over 2 consecutive terms before a penalty notice is considered.

** persistent lateness refers to pupils who arrive after the school register has closed

* The expression "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for him or her, or who has care of the child.

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Is a warning given?

In cases of unauthorised absence and persistent lateness**, you will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Notice being issued. This will tell you the extent of your child's absences and give you 15 school days in which to bring about an improvement. In that time, your child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

In cases of unauthorised leave, warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that in some cases, penalty notices may be issued without a warning.

Is there an appeal process?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a penalty notice has been issued. However on receipt of a warning or penalty notice, you can make representations should you wish.

How do I pay?

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the penalty notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with penalty notices. No reminders will be sent.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the penalty but my child is still absent from school?

Not for the period stated in the penalty notice, since payment of the penalty discharges your liability for that period. However, it could be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the notice, depending on the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school.

What happens if I do not pay?

You have up to 28 days from receipt of the notice to pay the penalty in full, after which the Authority is required in most instances to commence proceedings in the local magistrates' court for the original offence of failing to ensure your child attends school regularly.

If proven, this can attract a range of sentences including fines up to £2,500 and/or up to three months' imprisonment. Other disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences can be imposed depending upon the circumstances. Costs may also be imposed.

Can I get help if my child is not attending school regularly?

Yes, Lancashire County Council and your child's school will give you advice and support if you need help to secure an improvement in your child's attendance. It is very important that you speak with the school or with Lancashire County Council at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's school attendance.

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ANNEX B

PENALTY NOTICE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **My husband/wife/partner has also received a penalty notice for the same offence – does that mean we both have to pay the fine?**

Yes. All parents of a child may be served a penalty notice for not ensuring their regular attendance at school. Each penalty notice is individually issued per parent, per child and all must be paid to avoid prosecution.

- **My partner has been issued with a penalty notice but he is not the natural father of my child – does he still have to pay?**

Yes. The expression "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for him or her, or who has care of the child.

- **I believe that the penalty notice has been issued incorrectly; do I still have to pay?**

If you believe that the fine has been issued incorrectly, you must not ignore it as you will still be liable. You should contact the issuing officer (the court officer) in the first instance, who will be able to investigate the matter and advise as to whether or not it will be withdrawn and if you will still need to pay.

- **How do I know my payment was received?**

The court officer will send you a letter saying that your payment has been received.

- **What if I lose the penalty notice with the pay slip at the bottom?**

You can still pay, please write your name and the pupil name that the penalty notice relates to on the back of the cheque or postal order.

- **Do I need to send anything with my payment?**

You must send the payslip from the bottom of the penalty notice or write your name and the pupil's name on the back of your cheque or postal order. If we cannot identify who has paid and which pupil the payment relates to, the offence will not be discharged and you will be taken to court.

- **How do I pay the fine?**

Penalty notices should be paid by cheque or postal order. Lancashire County Council are currently looking into alternative ways to pay.