



**Bere Regis School**

## Attendance Policy

<b>Adopted By:</b>	<b>The Local Governing Body</b>
<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Lucy Roberts, Chair of Governors</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>12/07/2022</b>
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## **1. Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Bere Regis Primary and Pre-School fully recognise its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

## **2. Aims**

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

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm 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.
- Ensure that our policy applies to EYFS aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Locality Team 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, and 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.

### **2.1 Promoting good attendance**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.

- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Dorset LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Headship Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- 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.

### **3. Definitions**

#### **3.1 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.

#### **3.2 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 good reason, even with the support of a parent.

#### **3.3 Approved educational activities**

An approved educational activity is either:

- An activity which takes place outside of the school, is approved by the school and is supervised by a person authorised to do so by the school, or
- Attendance at another school at which the pupil is registered

## **4. Responsibilities**

### **4.1 Parents**

Parents/carers are legally required to secure fulltime education for children of compulsory school age. The education provision must be suitable to the child's age, aptitude and ability, and to any special needs the child has. This can be regular attendance at school, alternative provision or otherwise (e.g. elective home education). A child who is registered at school must attend regularly and punctually.

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.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- 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.

### **4.2 Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- 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
- Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

### **4.3 Administration staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- 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

### **4.4 Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Identifying trends in authorised and unauthorised absence

- 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 the Locality Team Inclusion Lead.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

#### **4.5 Governors**

The role of the governors is to:

- Ensure that they receive regular attendance reports from the head teacher.
- Ensure they set challenging targets for attendance and punctuality and consider having a named governor with lead responsibility for attendance.
- Ensure the inclusion of a governor as a member of a school attendance panel which deals with the poor attendance of individual pupils.

#### **4.6 Local Authority**

Dorset Council will provide clear, consistent and timely support to schools by the appropriate use of legal action as set out in the statutory guidance. It is essential that good working relationships between the local authority and schools are established. Dorset Council will have in place processes that are fair, consistent and rigorously applied with an appropriate and effective combinations of support and sanctions for those parents who need it.

##### **4.6a Duties of the Local Authority (LA)**

The local authority has statutory powers to bring legal action against parents/carers who:

- Fail to ensure regular attendance at school of a registered pupil
- Fail to ensure their child is receiving a suitable education – either by regular attendance at school or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them.
- The local authority has a duty under section 437 of the Education Act 1996 to serve a notice or a school attendance

#### **Relevant Legislation**

Only local authorities can prosecute parents/carers.\*

*\*in education law, and for the purposes of this document, the definition of a parent is as described in the Education Act 1996, section 576. A Parent means:*

- *All natural parents, whether they are married or not*
- *Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person, and*
- *Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.*

## **5. Attendance Registers**

All the school doors open at 8.40 until 8.55 am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. On each occasion the class teacher will record whether the pupil is:

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

Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00 and 1.10pm.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority.

### **5.1. Lateness**

Once the doors are closed at 8.55am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 8.55am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.25 will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

### **5.2. Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised, unauthorised absences or approved educational activity on the attendance record. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)

### **5.3. First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.05am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

### **5.4. Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

## **5.5 Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of Headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

## **5.6 Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Local Authority via the Locality Team Inclusion Lead.

The Local Authority will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

### **Categorisation of Absence**

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

#### **Unauthorised absence**

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

#### **Authorised absence**

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

#### **Approved Educational Activity**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities

- Link courses or approved education off site

If a pupil is receiving education off site or is attending at a school where they are dual registered with, the school will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

Further guidance is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>



## **Appendix A**

### **Children's Services Penalty Notice Protocol**

#### **1. Legal Basis:**

Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 empower designated Local Authority (LA) officers, Head Teachers (& Deputy and Assistant Head teachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 require the local authority, in consultation with all the above, to develop a code of conduct which must be followed when issuing penalty notices.

The issuing of penalty notices must conform with all requirements of the Human Rights Act 1988 and all equal opportunities legislation.

These provisions apply to all persons who fall within the definition of a 'parent' as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. By virtue of this section 'parent' includes: all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989); any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means that a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with that child, is considered to be a parent in education law.

#### **2. Rationale for Issuing Penalty Notices:**

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

Children's Services will continue to investigate cases of non-attendance from school and, following appropriate casework, instigate legal action if applicable.

In law, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a child's attendance at the school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school. Penalty notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under section 444 Education Act 1996 or section 36 Children Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

Children's Services delivers this LA responsibility.

#### **3. Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be used:**

Penalty notices can only be issued in cases where a pupil of compulsory school age has been absent and the absence has not been authorised by the school or where the pupil has persistently arrived late after the register has closed.

The level of absence that is necessary before a penalty notice can be issued is 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence.

The key consideration in deciding whether to issue a penalty notice will be whether it can be effective in helping to get the pupil who is missing education back into school.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is considered capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so.

To ensure consistent and fair delivery of penalty notices, the following criteria for their use shall apply:

- No one parent will receive more than three separate penalty notices resulting from the unauthorised absence of an individual child in any twelve-month period.
- However, where families contain more than one poorly attending pupil, multiple issues may occur.

#### **4. Procedure for issuing Penalty Notices:**

Children's Services will issue penalty notices for all Dorset schools.

Penalty notices will only be issued by first class post and never as an on the spot action; this is to satisfy that all evidential requirements are in place and to meet health and safety requirements.

Children's Services will receive requests from schools, Dorset Police and neighbouring LAs. Requests from schools will be sent to the School Attendance Team following discussion with a member of the team.

A penalty notice may be issued providing it does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other enforcement sanctions already being processed.

Children's Services will respond to all requests and where all criteria are met, will:

##### **In cases of unauthorised absence**

- Issue a formal warning to the parent/carer of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being used.
- In the same letter set a period of 15 school days within which the pupil must have no unauthorised absence.
- Issue a Penalty Notice through the post at the end of the 15 day period if the required level of improvement has not been achieved.

##### **Unauthorised Leave in Term Time**

In accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, a penalty notice can be issued in exceptional circumstances, for example, where a parent takes a child on holiday during term time without the school authorising the absence. In such circumstances, although a minimum of 10 half day sessions of unauthorised absence will still apply before a penalty notice may be issued, the

authorised person may issue a penalty notice without first issuing a formal warning to the parent as would otherwise be required. However, s/he should still be satisfied that the parent was informed beforehand that, in some exceptional circumstances e.g. term time holiday, unauthorised absence could lead to a penalty notice being issued without further warning.

#### **Who can receive a Penalty Notice?**

Any Penalty Notice issued must be addressed to one parent, but a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences.

An authorised person has discretion when deciding whether to issue one or more parents of a child with a Penalty Notice. This is to enable account to be taken of the specific circumstances in individual cases.

### **5. Roles and Responsibilities of the Local Authority**

Local Authorities (LAs) may, in the absence of any other agreement, only issue Penalty Notices in respect of pupils registered at a school in that LA area or, in the case of an unregistered pupil, who resides in their area or for whom that LA has arranged alternative provision. LAs may only issue Penalty Notices in respect of pupils registered at a school in another LA area or, in the case of an unregistered pupil, for which another LA has arranged alternative provision if they have an agreement to that effect with the other LA.

### **6. Procedure for withdrawing Penalty Notices:**

Once issued, a Penalty Notice will only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- Proof has been established that the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person.
- The use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to the terms of this Protocol.
- The Penalty Notice contains a material error.
- The Local Authority (LA) must withdraw the Penalty Notice if it is not paid in full and the LA has not, and does not intend to, instigate legal proceedings.

### **7. Payment of Penalty Notices:**

Arrangements for payment will be detailed in the Penalty Notice.

Payment of a penalty notice discharges the parent/carer liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered in the penalty notice.

Payment of a penalty notice within 21 days is £60 and payment after this time but within 28 days is £120.

## **8. Non-payment of Penalty Notices:**

Non-payment of a penalty notice will trigger the prosecution process.

Prosecution is for the offence to which the notice relates rather than for non-payment of the notice. In the case of unauthorised absence, if there is a prosecution, it will follow the usual procedure of a prosecution for irregular attendance (including considering an Education Supervision Order as an alternative, or in addition, to prosecution) under the provisions of section 444(1) or 444(1a) The Education Act 1996.

## **9. Penalty Notices and Excluded Pupils**

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents in relation to an excluded pupil. A parent has to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion.

Section 105 allows for a penalty notice to be given to a parent guilty of an offence under Section 103. The penalty notice allows a parent to pay a penalty as a way of discharging any liability for the offence of failing to ensure that their child is not present in a public place on the days specified in a notice given to them. The parent must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of their duty and the days to which it relates.

## **10. Procedure for Issuing of Penalty Notices in Cases of Exclusion**

When a child is excluded from school – either for a fixed period or permanently – and the child is found in a public place during normal school hours on a specified day of exclusion

- Issue a Penalty Notice

In order for the parent to incur either form of legal responsibility the school must give them notice informing them of the duty to ensure their child is not found in a public place, the days when this duty will apply and, as appropriate, of the arrangements for alternative provision.

If the child has been provided with alternative provision and is not attending this provision, then the parent will be liable under the unauthorised absence regulations

## **11. Non-Payment of Penalty Notices – Exclusions**

In the case of a prosecution of a parent who has failed to ensure their child is not found in a public place during a specified day of exclusion, the procedures, such as preparing and serving a summons, will be similar to those for unauthorised absence.

## Amendments