



Attendance Policy

We believe that good attendance is essential if children are to take full advantage of school and gain the educational and social skills, which will equip them for life.

The Department for Education has established that there shall be 195 school days, 5 of which may be used for staff training and on which the children should not be on the premises.

It is expected that all children aim for at least 96% attendance each year. An attendance record of 90% might seem good but is equal to 1 day missed per fortnight. If this continues over 5 years, a total of 6 months education will be lost. An attendance record of 80% might seem acceptable but is equal to 1 day missed per week. If this continues for 5 years, a total of 1 year's education will be lost.

Barrow Hedges aims to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy within which staff, pupils, parents/guardians and the Borough School Attendance Officer can work in partnership. We will monitor attendance and work quickly to solve any identified problems. The staff will encourage good attendance and will liaise with families and other agencies when this is appropriate. Good attendance is seen as an achievement in its own right however, punctuality is also an important facet to attendance and is covered by this policy.

It is important to remember that **only** the school can approve absence – within the constraints of the law – not the parents.

Definitions of Attendance and Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the School as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for good reasons such as illness, medical/dental appointments or emergencies.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'permission' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the school and the Local Authority using sanctions i.e. penalty notices and/or legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court. Unauthorised absences/holidays taken in term time or persistent lateness may be referred to the Borough School Attendance Service requesting that a fixed penalty notice is issued.

This attendance policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all. **Unauthorised absences stop you from carrying out your legal parental responsibility to ensure your child attends school.**

Leave of absence in term time

Changes to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 came into force in September 2013 which removed reference to Headteachers' discretion to authorise family holidays of up to 10 days as well as the reference to extended leave. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances when the Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. This change to legislation reinforces the recognised link between good attendance and good progress.

All requests for leave of absence must be made in writing, marked for the attention of the Headteacher. An email or letter delivered to the office is acceptable. If leave of absence is requested due to exceptional circumstances each request will be considered on an individual basis by the Headteacher. If there are deemed to be exceptional circumstances and leave of absence is granted, a return date will be agreed by the Headteacher. Parents should be aware that failure to return by the agreed date may mean that their child's school place is at risk. Parents should also be aware that where absence is not authorised but it is still taken, then the Local Authority may issue a penalty notice. (Refer to appendix)

Lateness

A letter will be issued by the school to both parents where 30 (lateness) minutes or more are accrued.

GUIDELINES

THE FAMILY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Making sure your children attend regularly.
- Ensuring that your child arrives in good time for registration at 8.55am.
- Contacting the office by 8.30am if your child is unable to attend school.
- Providing a note on the morning your child returns to school explaining their absence.
- Arranging family holidays **outside** of term times.

THE SCHOOL WILL:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality as the norm.
- Help every child to reach their maximum potential unhindered by unnecessary breaks in their school life.
- Demonstrate that the school values good attendance.
- Monitor attendance and deal with related issues, as appropriate.

THE OFFICE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Recording attendance codes correctly for both am and pm sessions.
- Recording names of children who arrive late in the Late Book.
- Recording information from letters and phone calls from parents and special authorised absence from the Headteacher.
- Liaising with Borough School Attendance Officer.
- Producing monthly official register.
- Producing lateness/absence letters when necessary.
- Producing reports as required.

THE BOROUGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OFFICER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Working in partnership with the school to find solutions to identified problems when checking the official register. This may include looking for patterns of absence and lateness, together with any concerns raised by members of staff. Writing letters or making home visits where necessary and report to the school on findings and any further actions to be taken.
- Taking up referrals made by the Headteacher when a child incurs a certain level of unauthorised absence. In this instance, the School Attendance Officer may use statutory powers under the Education Act, including the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices, where appropriate. The Borough School Attendance Service may also instigate legal proceedings under Section 444 (1a) of the Education Act if appropriate.

THE GOVERNOR WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ABSENCE WILL:

- Monitor attendance and procedures by liaising with the Headteacher.
- Report back to the Governing Body where necessary.

PROCEDURES

The school requests that parents use the following procedures when their child is absent from school:

- Parents/carers should telephone the school to inform the office on the first day of absence as soon as possible.
- If the school is unable to make contact with the family and/or has concerns about the safety of a child/parent they will refer this matter on to the police/social services.
- If the office has not been contacted, a text will be sent to the child's parent to establish the reason for absence. On returning to school, parents/carers must write a note explaining the reasons for absence. The school requests that evidence such as hospital appointment letters are provided for our records.
- If a child is absent for several days, the office will ring the parent/carers as a courtesy call or a follow up text message.
- If a child has a medical appointment, parents must contact the office in advance and inform the school when the child will be absent and when they are expected to return.
- It is important that the school are informed as to when a child is due to return so that appropriate arrangements can be made regarding school dinners.

CATEGORISING ABSENCE

- Leave of absence for medical/dental appointments confirmed in writing will be authorised.
- Religious observance may be authorised.
- Other cultural reasons for absence will be considered sympathetically.
- Sitting external examinations e.g. music exams will be authorised.
- Absence off-site for special tuition may be authorised depending on the nature of and reasons for the tuition.
- Fixed period or permanent exclusions will be authorised.

APPENDIX

PENALTY NOTICES (Local Authority advice for parents and carers)

What is a penalty notice?

Under existing legislation, parents and carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (those for which the school cannot, or has not given permission). Depending on 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, but which seeks to secure improvement in a pupil's attendance. Full payment of the Penalty Notice discharges parents and carers of any further liability for the period stated on the Notice.

When are they issued?

The London Borough of Sutton considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be issued in a range of situations, such as:

- Your child has unauthorised absences from school
- Your child is persistently late at school after the registers have closed
- Taking unauthorised leave of absence in term time

Who are they issued to?

A Penalty Notice is issued to **each** parent in respect of **each** child not attending school. 'Parents' in Education law relates to a parent or carer of the child(ren).

What are the costs?

The fine is £60 if paid within 21 days of issue of the Penalty Notice, increasing to £120 if paid after this date, but within 28 days of issue.