



## Bawnmore Community Infant School Policy for Attendance and Truancy

Date	Review Date	Responsible governor
14.03.24	01.09.24	Mrs Bethan Cullen

**BCF Attendance Champion:** Mr Ed Newton  
**Head of School and School Attendance Lead:** Mrs Pam Davey  
**Attendance Admin Lead:** Mrs Janette Harris

### Table of review and modifications

Date reviewed	Pages	Summary of Change	Reviewed by
20.9.22	1	Change of names	Pam Davey
30.9.22	5	Wording of child protection terminology	Pam Davey
14.03.24	1	Change of names/Titles/ Roles	Pam Davey
	2	Linked documents updated and hyperlinks added	
	3	Addition of NHS guidance and hyperlink to illness section.	
	5	Frequency of information sharing altered (at least fortnightly) in concerns section.	
	5, 6, 7, 8	Change of terminology e.g. 'headteacher' to 'Head of School' and 'Deputy Head' to 'Assistant Head'	
	7	Role of Office Staff- Day 2 removal of letter	
	3, 11	Requests for Leave of Absence and Appendix 2. Some information moved/ deleted due to repetition.	
20.03.24	3, 4, 5	Leave of Absence section in line with WCC expectations	E Newton
	12	Paragraphs relating to Fixed Penalty Notices	E Newton

We believe this policy relates to the following legislation:

- Children Act 1989
- Education Act 1996
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Criminal Justice and Courts Services Act 2000
- Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2005
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007
- Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010



- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

The following documentation is also related to this policy:

- DfE Guidance “Working together to improve school attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities” This can be found at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63049617e90e0729e63d3953/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63049617e90e0729e63d3953/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf)
- NHS Guidance “Is my child too ill for school?” <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

## Procedures

Your child should come to school every day. Children cannot learn if they are absent from school. We aim to ensure that all our children take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and to raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of pupils. Pupils are expected to be in school regularly at Bawnmore Community Infant School, with an aspiration 100% attendance.

Pupils should only be absent if the reason is ‘unavoidable’. Allowing a child to be absent without good reason is against the law and parents can be fined up to £1000. Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) either as *Authorised* or *Unauthorised*. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

## Authorised Absences

*Authorised absences* are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason which the Head of School authorises e.g. illness or other unavoidable causes.

## Unauthorised Absences

*Unauthorised absences* are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no ‘leave’ has been given. This includes keeping children off school for trivial reasons; truancy; absences which have never been properly explained and children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.

Providing a reason may not be sufficient if the reason given is not ‘unavoidable’. Children should never be kept off school for reasons such as shopping or as a treat. Some children need encouragement to attend regularly. Any issues are best sorted out between school, parents and child. It is unwise to cover their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from school. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving issues together. This is nearly always successful.

## Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS)

If problems cannot be sorted out in this way the school may refer the child to the WAS team from the local authority. He or she will try to resolve the difficulties by agreement but if other ways of trying to improve the



child's attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child.

## Parents

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school by 10am on the first morning of any absence. Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. **Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours.**

Any issues are best sorted out between school, parents and child.

## Illness and other legitimate reasons

If a child is prevented for any reason from attending school, parents should contact the school by 9.30 am on the first day. A child's absence from school is considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent/carer. For reasons of safety, parents/carers will be telephoned and/or text messaged by school to confirm absence if no notification of absence has been received by 9.30 am.

Please refer to the NHS Guidance "Is my child too ill for school?" <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/> if you are unsure about whether your child should be in school. You may also choose to call the school office and discuss this with the admin team.

Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time. Leave may be granted in an emergency or for medical appointments which have to be in school time (evidence of medical appointments will be required).

When the total length of absence from school is expected to exceed 4 weeks the Head of School will refer to the Local Authority (Education of Children out of School Team). If the child is able to work at home then the school will ensure that work is sent home for the child to complete.

## Requests for Leave of Absence

### Leave of Absence

The regulations regarding Leave of Absence (The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.) advise:

- Heads of School **shall not grant any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.

### Expectations

- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head of School must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Heads of School will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.



- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance.
- When making an application for Leave of Absence in advance parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head of School the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify parents of their decision. It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- Where a leave of absence is requested, but additional days taken either prior to or after the request may be considered as part of the leave of absence and could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s).
- Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as ‘unauthorised’. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council.
- The Warwickshire Attendance Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council’s Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>).
- **It is important to note**, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 each child if paid within 21 days).
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council’s Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

### **What are ‘exceptional circumstances’?**

The Government has not defined ‘exceptional circumstances’ as referred to in the 2013 regulations. It is for the Head of School to decide what he/she views as ‘exceptional’ and it is at their discretion if the circumstances warrant the leave to be granted. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another and whilst it will be important to look at the whole situation in making decisions about individual requests, **the normality will be that requests will be refused in line with the law.**



**We believe our request is under exceptional circumstances. How do I apply for a term-time absence for my child/ren?**

Applications for leave of absence during term time should always be made well in advance of the anticipated absence on the attached form. Forms can be obtained from the school office. Once completed, the form should be returned to the school office.

**What happens if I take an unauthorised term time absence?**

Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child will be required to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, which may result in legal action being taken against the parent(s), by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Failure to make an application for leave in advance can also result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s)/carer(s).

It is important to note, as mentioned above, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 each child if paid within 21 days).

Furthermore, your child's school attendance record will be permanently marked with an unauthorised absence which will be passed on to their future schools. If a child is absent for an extended period of time without an explanation, WCC Admissions will be contacted to secure investigation which ultimately may lead to the school being authorised to remove a pupil from the school roll meaning that they will not have a place at the school to return to.

**Excessive delayed return from holiday**

Where leave has been granted by the Head of School, parents/carers should be informed by letter of an agreed return date and what will occur if the pupil fails to return to school on the date stated. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 also enables schools to delete from their roll pupils who have failed to attend on the agreed return date. Following this date, reasonable enquiry should occur by the school and local authority to ascertain the pupil's whereabouts in an attempt to locate the pupil prior to deletion.

See **Appendix 2 – Leave of Absence** for further information

**Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.**

## Lateness

- Children must attend on time to be given a mark for a session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration.
- Arriving more than 10 minutes after the start of the session without good reason is counted as late (before registers close). The school maintains a late book in the school office. Parents of any child attending school late must give a reason why their child is late.
- Parents will be reminded about school times and the importance of good punctuality.



- If there are more than five occasions of lateness a letter will be sent to parents reminding them of their responsibility to ensure children arrive on time.
- If lateness persists following a further five late occasions the parent will be asked to make an appointment to see the Head of School / Attendance Lead. An initial 20 day target will be put into place to seek an improvement. If that is unsuccessful a conversation with WAS will take place.
- At the end of the day children who have not been collected after ten minutes will be brought to the school office. Contact will be made with 1<sup>st</sup> parent/carer listed to ascertain the reason why a child has not been picked up. If required, and a space is available, the pupil will then be escorted to Puffin Club and registered for childcare. Parents will be charged the full session fee.
- If a pupil is consistently late being collected the parent/carer will be invited to speak with SLT to discuss the reasons for this.

## Registration

- Registration will be called in each of the classes at the start of each day and again at 1.10pm.
- Registers will close at 30 minutes after morning registration and 5 minutes after afternoon registration. If a child fails to arrive before the registers close, they will be marked as 'absent'.
- Children who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the school office and parent/carers should explain their reasons to staff. Staff will amend the register entry to read 'absent/late' and code it accordingly.
- Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the child has to be recorded as an 'unauthorised absence' for that reason.

## Communication

- A copy of the school's **Attendance and Truancy Policy** is also available on the school website. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason and the significance the school places on good attendance and punctuality.
- Information on lateness, illness and absence is regularly given to parents in the newsletter (which is issued to all parents by email and made available on the school website).
- Parents whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication.
- If a school induction meeting is able to take place for parents/carers with children about to enter our Reception classes, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk will also include:
  - parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day.
  - being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only ones left at the end of the school day.



- parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset children which mean they become unhappy, and may not want to come to school. Parents need to be aware of this. This is why the school operates an open door policy and class teachers are available during the face-to-face handover of children at the start and end of every day providing a regular opportunity for parents and staff to communicate.
- reminders to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child's education is not disrupted.
- Children admitted to school after the start of the school year, meet with the Head of School initially where the importance of regular attendance is always highlighted along with other school routines.
- Authorised and unauthorised absences are explained to parents. All parents are asked to contact school by 9.30 am if their child is absent. This can be done by telephone or email. If no notification is received about a child's absence then a member of the school admin team contacts the parent/carer.

## Concerns

The attendance registers and late book are looked at regularly and patterns of lateness and/or absence noted. This information is shared with the Head of School regularly (at least fortnightly) and discussed on a case-by-case basis, considering the reasons for lateness or poor attendance. If concern is raised about a particular child, support is actioned – *see Appendix 1*.

## Missing Pupils

- In the absence of a known reason, the child will be marked absent. Office staff will contact parents/carers to seek a reason. A message will be left for parents/carers asking them to contact school as soon as is practicable, to provide a reason.
- If a child who is subject to a child protection plan, in receipt of Early Help support or is considered vulnerable, is absent without reason, office staff will notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead – or Deputy in their absence). The office staff have automatic responsibility to contact the named contacts listed (in order of recorded priority) to determine an explanation for absence. In the event of there being no contact made, or no reason being provided, a pupil's social worker will be contacted. The police may also be notified.
- If it becomes apparent that a child who has been in school is missing, without a known reason, the Head of School (or senior staff in their absence) will be notified immediately. A member of the class team will immediately search indoors; the Head of School (or Assistant Head in her absence) will search the grounds. After 10 minutes, if a child is not found, the police will be called and parents/carers contacted.

## Truancy

All staff are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness. Although it a very rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a concern that a child might be truanting then action is taken straight away.



If truancy is suspected, the Head of School is notified, who then contacts the parent/carer and WAS. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved.

In the event of not being able to talk to the parent/carer then the Head of School talks to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these are discussed with the class teacher and appropriate action is taken.

### **Role of the Governing Body**

- review the attendance and persistent absent data termly
- ask questions about trends and what is being done to prevent persistent poor attenders
- nominate a link governor to visit the school regularly, to liaise with and ensure the policy is implemented, communicated and its impact monitored and reported on to the governing body.

### **Role of the Head of School**

- undertake the regular monitoring of school attendance including 'vulnerable and other groups' and persistent absentees; monitor trends by using data effectively to help strategic planning;
- target intervention and support to those children that have been highlighted as less than 95% without authorisation
- Liaise with the Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) representative for those with less than 90% attendance without authorisation
- remind parents/carers of their commitment to this policy via assemblies, newsletters, meetings, termly attendance letters
- respond to parents/carers if they have applied for a leave of absence during school time;
- organise home tuition with the local support services for pupils with long term illness provided they are well enough to undertake the work.

### **Role of the Office Staff**

- monitoring individual registers twice per day;
- log reasons for absence on SIMS attendance registers/ absence book – including telephone messages / calls.
- Day1: making a phone call to 1<sup>st</sup> contact (parent/carer) by 10 am for any child not present at either registration without an explanation; an absent child known to be vulnerable or at risk should be notified to the Head of School
- Day 1: if no response is provided by 10 am, e-mail or text to 1<sup>st</sup> contact during the morning; try contact 2 if no response by 12 pm



- Day 2: if no contact is made on Day 1 try again on Day 2; if no contact is made, the Head of School should be notified
- recording in the Signing Out Log, any child who is taken out of school after registration. The child's re-entry after the appointment should also be recorded
- organising meetings between the Head of School / Assistant and parents/carers to discuss their child's poor attendance / punctuality / leave of absence
- ensuring registers are distributed to the teaching staff in time for registrations and are kept up to date with registration marks
- provide the Head of School / SLT with regular attendance figures and trends as requested
- continuing to contact the parents / emergency contacts throughout the day until contact is made
- contacting the key worker if a child is on the child protection register and no reason has been given for the child's absence.

### **Role of classroom staff**

- set an example of punctuality and good attendance
- ensure that registers are taken at the appropriate time, are accurate and up to date and returned to the office promptly
- share reasons for absences to the office
- share regular attendance summary with parents/carers about their child (at parent consultations or through school reports)
- be responsible for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality by monitoring class and individual attendance patterns; discuss and share individual issues with parents/carers promptly
- inform the school office / Attendance lead of any concerns about attendance/punctuality or suspected truancy
- emphasise the importance of punctuality and good attendance with pupils and parents/carers
- share individual pupil attendance issues with parents/carers at each parent-teacher consultation and any reasons for early concerns about attendance (below 95%); reinforce expectations for attendance to be close to 100% wherever possible
- in conjunction with the Head of School and/or Assistant Head, decide whether parents/carers should be contacted when a child is feeling unwell



## Role of Attendance Governor

- work closely with the Head of School and the office staff to monitor patterns and trends
- ensure this policy and other linked policies are up to date and shared with stakeholders
- report to the Governing Body at agreed intervals

## Role of parents/carers

- ensuring pupils attend school regularly; allowing a child to be absent without good reason is against the law and parents/carers can be fined
- ensuring that their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance
- informing the school on the first day of absence by 9.30 am
- informing the school of any changes to their contact details
- collecting their children on time
- not taking holidays in term time
- supporting the school ethos and guidance necessary to ensure smooth running of the school
- notifying the school in person, by a telephone call or e-mail before the beginning of the school day or by the production of a medical card/letter for any absences
- not returning their children to school until they have **fully** recovered from the illness that has caused the absence (if it was contagious or likely to debilitate a child if they return too soon)
- Refer to the NHS Guidance “Is my child too ill for school?” <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-tooill-for-school/> if you are unsure about whether your child should be in school. You may also choose to call the school office and discuss this with the admin team.

## Role of the Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) team

The Local Authority may prosecute a parent/carer for not ensuring their child attends school regularly or may issue or apply for:

- Penalty Notice
- Education Supervision Order
- Parenting Order
- School Attendance Order





## Appendix 1

### 3 stage process for school attendance

All actions are at the discretion of the Head of School

**Green:** current attendance of <97% without clear authorised reasons for absence

#### **Class teacher, Admin Team or Pastoral Support Team**

Have conversation with parent/carer re: early concerns

Back up with a letter if felt necessary

**(Letter 1)**

**Amber:** end of 4 weeks monitoring shows little / no improvement in attendance and/or <95%

#### **Head of School / Assistant Head / SENDCo**

Have conversation with parent/carer re: continuing attendance concerns  
(review through the Early Help Pathway if there are underlying issues that we can signposting support for)

Back up with a letter

*4 weeks (20 working days) target set*

**(Letter 2)**

*Further 3 weeks (15 working days) target set  
(if still above 90%)*

**(Letter 3)**

**Red:** <90% absence

#### **Head of School / Assistant Head**

Conversation with parent/carer

Discuss referral to the WAS

Back up with a letter

**(Letter 4)**

*Parents and pupils will continue to be supported by the school and other appropriate services to overcome  
apparent barriers to regular attendance.*



## Appendix 2

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

#### UPDATED INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Supreme Court recently reached a decision in the case of *Platt v Isle of Wight Council* which has clarified the law on unauthorised leave, including holidays, during term time. The parents/carers of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they attend school on a regular basis. The Supreme Court has made clear that attending school '**regularly**' means that the **children must attend school on every day that they are required to do so**. As such, the parents/carers of any child who are absent from school without authorisation for any length of time are likely to be considered as committing an offence under s444 of the Education Act 1996.

Headteachers retain the ability to authorise leave in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. When considering such requests for a leave of absence, the school are obliged to act within the law. Headteachers **may not grant any** leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances** relating to the application. If the leave is granted, headteachers are able to determine the number of school days a child can be absent for.

It is for the Headteacher to decide what is '**exceptional**' and it is at their discretion if the circumstances warrant the leave to be granted. The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the 'resident' parent/carer.

*Each application for a leave of absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.*

Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child will be required to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, which may result in legal action being taken against the parent(s)/carers(s), by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Failure to make an application for leave in advance may also result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s)/carer(s).

It is important to note, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 per child if paid within 21 days).

Where a Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid within the required timeframe as set out on the notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal proceedings under S444 Education Act 1996.

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices.

***NOTE: In this policy, where Headteacher is referred to in legislation, the ability and power to act as a Headteacher is designated by the Executive Headteacher to the Head of School.***