Barons Court Primary School and Nursery

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Responsible members of Staff

Mrs Julia Jones (Headteacher)
Mrs Andrea Ekins (Nursery Manager)
Mrs Jose Parson (Office Manager)
Mrs Caroline Trace (Office Administrator)
Mrs Jo Turner (Learning Mentor)
Mrs Jessica daSilva (Chair of Governors)

This Policy was approved by the Governors – January 2019
This policy will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis

“Barons Court Primary School and Nursery is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff, governors and volunteers to share this commitment.”

This policy was developed with reference to the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (September 2018) and refers to the DFE’s statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance: The Education Act 1996; The Education Act 2002; The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006; The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010; The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011; The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013; The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016; The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.
Aims
Our attendance and punctuality policy aims to:

- Support pupils and their parents/carers in our school to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality and encourage parents/carers to fulfil their legal responsibility in respect of school attendance, including persistent absence.
- Promote children’s welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to enhance learning.
- Enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school.
- Ensure that pupils enjoy, succeed and have access to a wide range of opportunities through regular attendance.
- Make parents/carers responsible of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their child attends school, properly attired.
- Ensure the school acts early to address patterns of absence.
- Ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority expectations.

Being at school
School education lays the vital foundations of a child’s life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents/carers and the school staff work in partnership in making education a success ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. As parents, it is their responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school and return home safely.

Expectations
We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day.
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss promptly with their home group teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day.
- Ensure that they contact the school daily of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour, emotional needs and learning of their child.
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.

We expect that the school will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere.
- Provide a safe learning environment.
- Provide a sympathetic response to any child’s or parent’s concerns.
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitoring individual child’s attendance and punctuality half termly.
- Contact parents promptly when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition.

Caring, sharing and achieving
Respect and responsibility
• Encourage attendance at Breakfast Club to support self-confidence and to monitor children reluctant to attend.
• Regularly inform parents of the % attendance of all pupils.
• Systematically analyse attendance data at group and pupil level and to report this termly to Governors.
• Make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly.
• Meet with the Local Authority Child and Family Early Intervention Service to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality.
• Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Local Authority Child and Family Early Intervention Service. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order.
• Will notify the Child and Family Early Intervention Service after 15 days sickness.
• Will notify the Child and Family Early Intervention Service after 10 days unexplained absence.

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness
Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to the individual’s learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. For school pupils the main playground is supervised from 8.40am and the school doors are open from 8.45am until 8.55am. By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.
• Registration takes place at 8.50am and pupils who arrive after 9.15am will be recorded as late to school. A pupil arriving after 9.00am must register with the parent/carer at the office and the pupil’s name with details of late arrival will be entered into the lateness register.
• Registers close at 9.15am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the Local Authority.
• Afternoon registration is taken at 12.45pm for Phases 2 and 3 and at 1.30pm for Phase 4 children.
• Persistent lateness by a pupil will be dealt with through the Learning Mentor and may be referred to the Child and Family Early Intervention Service.
• Pupil’s attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

All parents receive an annual report of their child’s attendance record identifying the child’s % attendance and the grading for their attendance levels.

School Procedures – Attendance Register
By law, schools are required to keep an attendance register and all pupils must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. It will mark whether every pupil is:
• Present
• Attending an approved off-site educational activity
• Absent
• Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:
• The original entry
• The amended entry
• The reason for the amendment
• The date on which the amendment was made
• The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for three years after the date on which the entry was made. Pupil must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken by 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 12.45pm for Phase 2 and Phase 3 and at 1.30pm for Phase 4.
Pupils Leaving During the School Day
During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day.

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents are requested to confirm in writing, by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time. An appointment card or verification from the doctor/dentist/hospital will be shown to the school office when collecting their child.
- Pupils must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return, which is managed by the school office.
- Where a pupil is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.

Types of Absence
Every half-day absence from school has to be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons absent from school for a good reason such as illness, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. Parents must notify the school on the first day of any unplanned absence, for example if their child is unable to attend due to ill health by 9.15am or as soon as practically possible. Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave has been given. This type of absence can lead to Southend Borough Council using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which are not properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an unauthorised absence, advance notice is required for authorising these absences. However, we encourage parents to make medical appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance.

Persistent Absence
Persistent Absence is defined as any pupil whose attendance is 90% or below. Patterns of unexplained persistent absence will be investigated at an early stage and will involve all staff who come into contact with the child to understand the underlying reasons. The table below sets out the estimated thresholds which are used to define persistently absent pupils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>10% absence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Half Term 1 (Autumn Term)</td>
<td>7 or more sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Term 1-2 (Autumn Term)</td>
<td>14 or more sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Term 1-3 (Spring Term)</td>
<td>20 or more sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Term 1-4 (Spring Term)</td>
<td>25 or more sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Term 1-5 (Summer Term)</td>
<td>31 or more sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Term 1-6 (Full Academic Year)</td>
<td>38 or more sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school will follow up any child’s absence to ascertain the reason and ensure appropriate safeguarding action where necessary. The school will identify whether the absence is approved or not.
and identify the correct attendance code to use. If the school raise concerns over a child’s attendance the following stages will be used to resolve the situation:

**Level 1**
- The school will contact parents by letter to notify them of the attendance issue and to explain that the pupil's attendance will be monitored over the next 6 week period by the Headteacher.
- Any unreported absence whilst at Level 1 may result in an unannounced visit from a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Learning Mentor.

**Level 2**
- The school will contact parents by letter, inviting them to a meeting with the Headteacher and Office Administrator who will be monitoring the child’s attendance for a period of 6 weeks.
- During the Level 2 meeting, the school will complete a parenting contract outlining discussion points of the meeting, support offered and action plan agreed, this will be signed by the school and parent.
- A discussion with the family will decide whether an Early Help Family Support Assessment (EHFSA) should be completed.
- The school will set a 6 week target for the child’s attendance and review. If this target is not achieved, the school will proceed to level 3.
- Any unreported absence whilst at Level 2 may result in an unannounced visit from a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Learning Mentor.

Please note: Where parents are giving ill health as a reason for continued absence without medical verification a referral will be made to the school nurse for permission to contact the pupil’s GP.

*In the unlikely event that the Level 2 is not successful then an Attendance Panel may be considered which is led by the Local Authority. This would involve the Attendance Team Officer, Headteacher and a representative from the Governing Body.*

**Level 3**
- Weekly home visit by the Child and Family Early Intervention Service, working with parents/carers and child to address the barriers regarding poor attendance.

**Level 4**
- Pupil planning meeting at Southend Borough Council which is attended by the Attendance Team Officer and line manager, parents and representative from the school.
- Action plan set.
- First or Final warning letter issued. Any unauthorised absences after this warning will result in parents being issued a penalty notice. Further unauthorised absences may lead to court action by the Local Authority.

**Penalty Notices**
Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised leave or if a parent/carer fails to ensure regular school attendance.

**Circumstances when Penalty Notices might be issued**

**Unauthorised absence/Truancy:**
Penalty Notices might be issued following assessment of unacceptable levels of unauthorised absence of 20 school sessions or more within a 24 week period (term time). In addressing the issue of parentally condoned absence, penalty notices may offer a prompt and potentially effective deterrent to unauthorised absence at a point, which may not be as easily accessed through existing enforcement provisions. Parents/carers will receive a warning letter prior to the issue of a penalty notice.

**Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Leave during Term Time:**
Following amendments to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments described below came into force in September 2013.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove reference to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may
not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers will determine the number of sessions a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

If the decision is made not to authorise, a letter to the parent confirming that a leave of absence has not been authorised will be sent home by the Headteacher and will include a warning that a penalty notice may be issued. If a holiday is then taken without authorisation the school may complete a request signed by the Headteacher for consideration of issuing a penalty notice and send it to the Child and Family Early Intervention Service within two weeks of the pupil returning to school. The Child and Family Early Intervention Service Team Leader will decide if the issue of a penalty notice is appropriate.

**Penalty Notices for term time holidays can be issued if:**
- There have been 10 sessions (5 consecutive days) or more of unauthorised absence due to leave taken during an academic year;
- **AND**
  - Attendance is below 90% during the preceding 12 weeks before the leave was taken;
  - or
  - The leave was taken during the month of September; OR
  - The leave was taken during tests or examinations.

**Leave of Absence**

The school holiday dates and end of Key Stage 1 and 2 Assessment dates are published a year in advance and leave of absence **will not** be authorised during these assessment periods. Leave of absence also **will not** be authorised during Year 1 Phonics Screening week. The Governors and Headteacher **will also not** authorise absence in September immediately following the summer break or when a pupil is just starting the school as this is an important time as children need to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible. INSET days are published as soon as the school have agreed these, but may be subject to change.

In line with the Government’s amendment regulations, holidays during term time **will NOT** be authorised.

- Where leave of absence in term time is due to **exceptional circumstances**, an application form must be requested from the school office and submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date. Consideration will then be given to the pupil's previous school attendance. The Headteacher will consider the circumstances of each application individually. All requests for leave during term time must be made and agreed by the school before a holiday is booked.
- Where requests for a grant of leave of absence are received from only one parent the response letter – agreeing or refusing – will be either, addressed to both/all parents where they live at the same address or to each with parental responsibility where they do not. This is to ensure, particularly in the case of a refusal, that both or all ‘parents with parental responsibility’ are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring a refusal as the refusal letter clearly states that each parent could receive a penalty notice.
- If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the Child and Family Early Intervention Service be notified.
- Should the school decide to grant leave of absence but, the child **does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and, no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence or, make known the whereabouts of the child, **his/her place at the school could be lost** and the child missing education process and procedure is implemented.

**Criteria for Exceptional Circumstances at Barons Court**

It is not possible to define exceptional circumstances, but examples of what might be considered as such are:
1. An opportunity which is of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.
2. The occasion of bereavement of an immediate family member.
3. Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays. This must be supported by documentary evidence from the organisation.

4. Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.

5. Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child’s rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Evidence must be provided, from qualified professionals, such as a doctor.

6. Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil and/or parent belongs. If necessary the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Where there are other factors which the Headteacher may consider to be exceptional circumstances, this may be referred to the Local Authority for advice.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body
The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher
The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting this to Governors. The Headteacher also supports staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The Office Administrator
The office administrator:
- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level weekly.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher.
- Works with the Learning Mentor and the Headteacher to tackle persistent absence.
- Arranges meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.

Home Group Teachers
Home group teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes and submitting this information to the school office. They are also responsible for encouraging and securing good levels of attendance and punctuality for all children within their home group.

Office Staff
All office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record these on the school system accurately and promptly.

Monitoring and Evaluation
Barons Court has a legal duty to publish its attendance figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All staff are committed to working with parents and children in order to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child’s welfare and opportunities are promoted. Attendance issues are discussed with parents at termly consultation meetings and reported annually. The office administrator and Headteacher monitors pupil absence on a weekly basis. The Headteacher and the senior leadership team meet regularly to discuss attendance issues and to set up meetings with the parents of pupils who are persistently absent, involving the Local Authority where appropriate. Attendance data is reported to the Governing Body termly where we compare our school attendance data to the national average. Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and shared at a Local Authority and national level through the DfE’s school absence national statistics release. Regular attendance is promoted and celebrated through weekly, termly and annual assemblies and reward systems.