



ATTENDANCE POLICY 2017

AIMS

1. To emphasise the importance of, and secure from pupils, maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities;
2. To make explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations over attendance levels;
3. To promote a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance;
4. To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
5. To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers, pupils) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised" and "unauthorised".
6. To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Government and County Council guidance

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at schools is, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, a legal requirement, parents being responsible for ensuring that any child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have.

Compulsory school age is defined as: commencing at the start of term on or after a child's fifth birthday and concluding on the last Friday in June of the school year in which the pupil becomes 16.

It is also essential for pupils to attend school regularly in order to maximise the opportunities available to them. The Educational Inclusion and Partnership Team (EIPT) investigate cases of irregular attendance and instigate statutory intervention where appropriate.

Irregular attendance raises complex issues. Pupils may be failing to attend school for a variety of reasons. Some reasons may be outside the immediate control of the school, but good practice and appropriate responses within the school to identify the needs can help to improve attendance. It is therefore important that there are clearly defined criteria and procedures for referring non-attenders to the EIPT. The importance of early identification, assessment and intervention cannot be over emphasised.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put simply: **absence means missed learning**. It is also a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential.

Attendance is a national priority and all schools have to submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will clearly be scrutinised by OFSTED. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance and high examination performance. **90%** attendance is the equivalent of **half a day absence each week**; this is clearly unacceptable and government evidence shows a clear relationship between attendance at school and attainment.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

The Department for Education (DFE) has published data that shows the National Average attendance for primary age pupils is **96%**; this figure is the minimum children should be achieving and this is what we aim for all our pupils.

96% attendance equates to 182 (out of 190) school days attended.

Authorised Absences

The Department for Education (DFE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- (i) When a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) Days of religious observance notified in advance;
- (iii) Absence due to exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as "Approved Sporting Activity" that can be authorised (at the discretion of the Head Teacher and only if the pupil's attendance record is above 96%).

There will also be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- ~ no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- ~ the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The DFE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as unauthorised:

- ~ family holiday
- ~ minding the house;
- ~ caring for relatives;
- ~ awaiting repair people;
- ~ shopping;
- ~ a birthday

The DFE guidelines look at the area of "Special Occasions" and make clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised; none of the above fall into this category.

We ask parents to notify the school in advance of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. A request for absence form (*Appendix 1*) **must** be completed for any planned absence, including medical appointments.

Where a pupil has frequent absences due to illness and no medical advice has been sought by the parents, or no additional evidence from a medical professional provided, the school will consider

whether this is an “acceptable explanation” in line with DfE guidance and reserves the right to mark the absence as unauthorised.

Term Time Holidays

From 1st September 2013 the new law gave **NO** entitlement to parents to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must only be in exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of leave. **Head Teachers would not be expected to class a term time holiday as exceptional.**

A two-week holiday in term time (10 school days) would take a pupil below the 96% expected threshold for attendance.

Parents can be fined by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time. This is because learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child.

The Impact of Persistent Absence

There are **190 school** days each year where children are required to attend school, each with two sessions a day, which adds up to 380 registration sessions.

This means there are **175 days** (weekends and school holidays) for shopping, birthday treats, non-urgent medical and dental appointments and family holidays.

If a child misses 16 days of school in a year, then s/he spends more time out of school than in school (191 days out, 174 days in).

If a child misses one day a week for their entire school life (ages 4-16), it is equivalent to missing 2 entire years of school.

The table below shows the potential impact of persistent term-time absence:

% Attendance	School days a year attended	% Absence	School days a year missed	School weeks a year missed	Over 5 years, entire school years missed
100	190	0	0	0	0
90	171	10	19	4	0.5 (6 months)
80	152	20	38	8	1
70	133	30	57	12	1.5
60	114	40	76	15	2
50	95	50	95	19	2.5
40	76	60	114	23	3
30	57	70	133	27	3.5
20	38	80	152	30	4
10	19	90	171	34	4.5

Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents and carers to:

1. Ensure that their child arrives on time for morning and afternoon school; register is at 9am. Parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken.
2. Notify the school on the first day and before 9.15 with an estimation of the likely length of absence if their child is ill;
3. Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude to school.
4. Ensure that an absence request form is completed for any planned absences, including medical appointments.

In return the school will:

1. Contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home;
2. Contact home over any unexplained absences.
3. Follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;
4. Regularly remind pupils of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
5. Ensure that parents/carers understand that attendance and punctuality is their responsibility and not their child's as, in most cases, children have limited power over their arrival time at school and attendance.

Procedures

1. Class teachers take the register at the start of each morning and afternoon session, preferably this will be done electronically using SIMS.
2. The register information is uploaded after every registration. It is imperative that the data entered is accurate and that there is a mark for EVERY pupil (everyone must fall into one of the three categories of present, absent or late).
Schools have a responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care and it is vital that the information we have is accurate.
Absences must have the correct code entered where the reason is known. The class teacher (when known) or office staff dealing with the register will be responsible for recording these codes. The office staff member will do their best to ensure that reasons are provided by parents and will seek the help of the head teacher where this proves difficult. Letters home may need to be sent. Where no reason is provided, despite the best efforts of school staff, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
3. We operate a policy of 1st day response regarding absence across the school. The office staff phone the parents of any child registered absent. Parents/carers have been asked to ensure

that they contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence to notify us of their child's absence.

When Attendance Drops to 96% or Below

96% indicates more than 8 school days (16 sessions) missed in a full school year, including sessions marked U – late after registers closed (9.10 a.m.).

The attendance team consists of the school Attendance Officer (Mrs Cullum), the school Family Liaison Support Worker (Mrs Malcolm) and the Head Teacher (Mrs James). In order to rule out which absences are in need of further action, they meet to identify children with attendance below 96% and identify the reasons for this. They then follow the process outlined below:

1. Attendance team rules out pupils with authorised absences due to either long-term, identified medical needs or short-term issues that won't be repeated (scarlet fever, chicken pox, tonsillectomy etc)
2. Attendance team then looks at and rules out absences authorised for illness (with additional evidence, such as doctors' notes/appointment letters)

These absences are considered to be **green**, i.e. do not require further follow up.

The following absences would be considered **amber**, i.e. need monitoring:

- More than 6 absences for illness (with only parents' word) within a 6-week period

The following absences are considered **red**

- Term time holidays of any length – these can never be authorised
- Any absences where an adequate reason cannot be given
- More than 10 absences for illness with only parents' word and no medical evidence, within a 6-week period; *particularly if there seems to be a pattern or trend over time of this.*

Stage 1:

Phone call to parent to check if the school can help to support child's attendance in any way. Should attendance not improve within the next 6 weeks, a process will begin whereby the Head Teacher will write to parents/carers, reminding them of their responsibility regarding attendance.

Stage 2:

Parent is invited in to school to attend a meeting with the Attendance Team.

A Parent Contract is set up and agreed at the meeting. The contract is an action plan so that all involved with the pupil can work together to maximise his/her attendance. This may include a need to involve other professionals, e.g. a referral to health services.

The contract runs for 6 weeks, during which time anything which contravenes the contract is monitored and discussed with the parent. At the end of the 6-week period, the contract is reviewed with the parent. If the agreed attendance level has been met, no further action will be needed at this stage.

Stage 3:

If parents do not attend or attendance does not improve during the contract period, a letter will be sent to warn of referral to the EIPT and allow a final opportunity for the parent to work with school.

If attendance does not improve, despite Parent Contract and meetings:

Referral to Education Inclusion Partnership (the Local Authority).

There may be formal interviews, which could lead to a **penalty notice**.

The Local Authority may eventually need to initiate **legal proceedings** against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility of getting their child to school.

The Local Authority's Policy for Prosecution

The parent/s of any pupil of compulsory schools age who fails to achieve regular attendance will be considered for legal processing unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Education Act 1996 Section 444 - Failure to Ensure Regular Attendance

- **Section 444(1)** *Where a parent/carer is failing in their duty to ensure regular attendance at school and school have made attempts to engage and support. Where, following this intervention the unauthorised absence continues and no statutory defences apply, the EIPT will consider instigating legal proceedings.*
- **Section 444(1A)** *Where a parent/carer is failing in their duty to ensure regular attendance at school and school have made attempts to engage and support. Where, following this intervention the unauthorised absence continues and no statutory defences apply, the EIPT will consider instigating legal proceedings. Where it can also be proved the parent/carer knew about the poor attendance and failed, without reasonable justification to ensure regular attendance, then legal enforcement will be taken under this section.*

In the case of both s444 and s.444 (1a) an unpaid Penalty Notice (issued in accordance with the LA Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (revised September 2016) may form part of the evidence.

Education (Penalty Notice) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- **Penalty Notices (PN) for Non-School Attendance** *These will be issued as an alternative to Magistrates' Court proceedings wherever it is appropriate and in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct. To issue a PN, there should be 5 days (10 sessions) or more unauthorised absences in a 6-week period however we would expect schools to follow their attendance procedures in identifying the issues and putting support in place.*
- **Penalty Notices for term time absence** *These will be issued as an alternative to Magistrates Court Proceedings whenever it is appropriate and in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct. To issue a PN, there should be 5 days (10 sessions) or more of consecutive unauthorised absence.*

You can find more information about attendance on the county council website:

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/EducationandLearning/Parents/Attend/Pages/truancy.aspx>

and the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/overview>

Late Arrival to School

Gates open at 8.40a.m. each day and the bell will ring at 8.55a.m. Children have until 9a.m. to enter school and put their belongings away. They are marked as present on the register in the classroom.

When the gate is locked (9a.m.) pupils will need to enter school with their parent/carer via the main front door. Pupils arriving to class between 9 – 9.10 a.m. will marked L (Late before registers close.)

Pupils arriving to school after 9.10a.m. will be marked U (Late after registers close).

A “U” mark on the register counts as an absence for that session. Over time, this will have a significant impact on a child’s attendance.

Parents will record late arrivals (after 9.10a.m.) in the log book at reception. Persistent lateness will be followed up initially by a letter. A meeting with the Head Teacher will be necessary if punctuality hasn’t improved.

Late Collection Procedure

1. All children need to be collected by 3.20p.m. (Reception and KS1) or 3.30pm (KS2), the end of the school day.
2. If for any reason parents/carers are late collecting their child or someone else is coming to collect them the school must be informed.
3. After 15 minutes, children not collected will be brought to Reception and a telephone call will be made to the 1st Contact, followed, if no response, by all other contacts in numerical order.
4. If after 60 minutes, children remain on site, Social Services and the MASH team (0300 126 1000) will be contacted, unless the school has received a genuine explanation.
5. All children collected late will be recorded on our electronic record system (SIMS).
6. The Attendance Team will meet with parents if their child is persistently collected late.

Accepted by governors: September 2017

To be reviewed: September 2018

APPENDICES:

- 1 Request for absence form**
- 2 Stage 1 telephone conversation form**
- 3 Stage 2 letter**
- 4 Parent contract**
- 5 Stage 3 letter**
- 6 Evidence for referral to EIPT – Penalty Notice Checklist**



**APPENDIX 1: REQUEST FOR ABSENCE FORM
BOUGHTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Leave of Absence Form: Exceptional Circumstances

PART 1: PARENT TO COMPLETE

Child's name and class:		
I request permission for the above-named child to be allowed to have a leave of absence for:		
Dates	From:	To:
Please state below, the "exceptional circumstances" that necessitate a leave of absence from school in term time (see list overleaf):		
Signature of Parent/Guardian:		
Date:		

PART 2: HEAD TEACHER TO COMPLETE

Outcome: Authorised AUTHORISED AT THE HEAD TEACHER'S DISCRETION, IN LINE WITH DfE GUIDELINES	Tick
Emergency medical appointment	
Hospital scheduled appointment or treatment	
Religious observance, notified in advance	
Other exceptional circumstances: delete as appropriate <i>Family wedding/civil partnership; examinations off-site; educational opportunity; attendance at an event at the request of a public organisation; visit to a new school; family re-location visit; compassionate grounds.</i>	
Outcome: Unauthorised PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THE LOCAL AUTHORITY MAY IMPOSE A FINE FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE AND SCHOOLS ARE ASKED TO REPORT THESE.	Tick
Term-time holiday <i>DfE guidelines do not allow Head Teachers to authorise any term-time holiday, whatever the reason given by the parent. All term-time holidays will be unauthorised.</i>	
Leaving school early to travel to an event	
Routine doctor/dental appointment, which could be made outside school hours	
Attendance is below 96% (%) which means an absence which would usually be authorised cannot be.	
Signature of Head Teacher:	
Date:	

APPENDIX 2: STAGE 1 TELEPHONE CONVERSATION FORM

BOUGHTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Record of Telephone Conversation re: Attendance



Child's name and class:
Parent's name:
Date of conversation:
Current attendance (attach SIMS print out)

Explain reason for call: I am phoning to advise you that we are concerned about your child's attendance. What can the school do to help?
Notes from conversation:
Agreement:
Attendance needs to be 96%+ from the date of the call onwards. If it continues to fall, this will trigger a meeting with the Attendance Team and a Parent Contract will be established.
Signed:
Counter-signature of Head Teacher:
Cc: Pupil file Parent School Attendance file
Date of review by Attendance Team:
Notes:
Further action:

APPENDIX 3: STAGE 2 LETTER

<salutation>

<address>

<date>

Our ref: stage2letter/initials

Dear <salutation>

Further to your telephone conversation with Mrs Cullum/Mrs Malcolm, I am writing to update you regarding <forename>'s attendance which is <percentage_attendance>% The attached attendance register shows the authorised and unauthorised absences.

As you will be aware, Boughton Primary School expects a minimum of 96% attendance in line with DFE recommendations from all students as regular attendance at school is a crucial factor in enabling children to reach their full potential and achieve maximum benefit from their education.

Poor school attendance damages educational achievement and the future progress of young people. Promoting and supporting good attendance at school is essential to learning and attainment. 90% attendance is the equivalent of a half day absence every week, which totals to four full weeks of lessons over an academic year.

We would like to work together with your support to achieve high levels of attendance. To this end, I would like to invite you to meet with me and our attendance officer, Mrs Natalie Cullum, on <DATE AND TIME>, to establish a Parent Contract with you.

Please telephone or email the school to confirm your attendance at the meeting.

Yours sincerely

Mary James
Head Teacher

APPENDIX 4: PARENT CONTRACT

PARENTING CONTRACT BETWEEN SCHOOL, PARENT(S) AND CHILD

(The meeting should not commence if parents do not attend. Parents should be written to detailing the support available)

Name of Chair of Meeting _____

Others present/role _____

Purpose of Agreement: To improve the above pupils schools attendance record and avoid legal action being taken.

Pupil: _____ DOB: _____ Ethnicity: _____

Address: _____

_____ Post Code: _____

School: _____ Year Group: _____

Parents' Names:

1) _____ DOB: _____ Gender: _____ Ethnicity: _____

Do you consider yourself to have a disability: YES/NO

If YES please state details: _____

2) _____ DOB: _____ Gender: _____ Ethnicity: _____

Do you consider yourself to have a disability: YES/NO

If YES please state details: _____

Please include all those with parental responsibility including those who have day to day care for the child.

Sibling[s] Names _____ School: _____

& Dates of Birth:

_____ School: _____

Are there any attendance issues with these children.

Summary of involvement: - School have visited _____ times over a period of 10 weeks, have

written on _____ occasions, made _____ telephone calls, arranged _____ meetings in

school and has made you aware of your legal responsibilities in relation to this matter.

Multi-Agency involvement YES/NO

Are any agencies involved currently with Parent YES/NO

If No multi agency involvement offer the EHA: EHA Accepted YES/NO (reasons for declining offer)

If yes please give details:

Summary of young person's strengths

Young person's views

Summary of Areas of Concern:

Attendance in last ____ weeks ____ out of ____ = ____% Attendance ____% Un.Abs

Issues Raised (please detail below)	YES	NO	Issues Raised (please detail below)	YES	NO
1.Alleged Bullying			5.Peer/Staff relationships		
2.Medical			6.Academic		
3.Home related difficulties			7.Behaviour/Attitude		
4.Transport			8.Community/other		

Young person's views

If areas of concern are identified please state what these are and their impact upon attendance.

Agreed Action:- We agree to address the following target areas for improvement in attendance and/or punctuality and to co-operate fully within these aims:

Please include actions for all (where appropriate) and ensure these are clear with who is carrying out action and timescales.

1. Attendance between now and Review Date – Minimum %

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

If I am concerned about my aspect of the delivery of the plan I will contact

_____ without delay

Timescale:- The Parenting Contract will be reviewed within 6 school weeks :

Date: _____ **Time:** _____ **Venue:** _____

If the targets are met then this contract will be reviewed. If there is significant improvement and support has been put in place that needs to be monitored the PCM can be extended with a PCM review for a further 6 weeks. However, if the targets are not and there is no legitimate reason for the non attendance then a contact will be submitted to the Local Authority Education Inclusion Partnership Service. This may result in:

- A Fixed Penalty Notice payable up to £120 fine for each parent

Alternatively you may be subject to proceedings by way of:

- Prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000.
- Prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 *and/or 3 months imprisonment.*

Parents Signatures:

.....

Also Present: Pupil

School Representative

Others

Date

APPENDIX 5: STAGE 3 LETTER

<salutation>

<address>

<date>

Our ref: stage3letter/initials

Dear <salutation>

Further to our meetings and Parent Contract, we note that <forename>'s attendance has not improved whilst being monitored and, despite our best efforts to support you in improving <forename>'s attendance, the overall percentage remains at <percentage_attendance>% (Please see attached attendance register). Any further absences will be unauthorised unless you are able to provide evidence from a medical professional of your child's illness.

As explained to you when we introduced the Parent Contract, the next step for the school will be to refer the case to the Education Inclusion Partnership Team, who may take more formal action.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure their child receives suitable efficient full time education either by regular attendance at school or education otherwise. Section 444 (1)(a) of the same Act states that where a parent of a child who knowingly and without justification fails to ensure regular attendance of a registered student at that school, the parent of the child shall be guilty of an offence against that Section. The Local Education Authority may, where necessary, institute legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court under this section of the Education Act 1996, against those parents concerned. Alternatively, Section 44B of the same Act empowers the Local Education Authority to issue a Penalty Notice of £120.

This could result in an interview being held under caution in accordance with the Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984. You should also be aware that if convicted of an offence of failing to ensure regular attendance of your child at school under **Section 444, 1/1A Education Act 1996**, you could be fined up to **£1000/£2500 and/or receive a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months.**

We would like to give you a final opportunity to work with the school to address this issue. Therefore, you are invited to a meeting with the Attendance Team on <date and time>.

Failure to attend this meeting will result in a referral to the EIPT being made.

Please telephone or email to confirm your attendance at the meeting.

Penalty Notice (PN) Request Checklist

Before completing form

- Has the period for which the PN is requested been recorded as unauthorised?
- Are there any missing marks or coding irregularities?
- Does coding on the register accurately reflect the dates for which the PN is being requested?
- Is the reason for the request indicated on the form eg unauthorised holiday or unauthorised absence?
- Have the parents/carers been informed that they could receive a PN.

Criteria for issuing PN

- 5 days or more continuous absence if overall attendance is below 90% (in the previous rolling year) or if there are further G codes in the academic year.
- Can be used as a sanction for irregular attendance.

Documentation to accompany irregular attendance request

- Completed Contact form
- Attendance certificate ensuring all absences are coded as unauthorised eg no 'N' codes
- Evidence of actions taken – letters issued, notes of meetings held, Parent Contact Meeting (PCM) chronology, offer of Early Help Assessment (EHA)
- Evidence that the parent/carer has been notified that they may receive a PN (this can be within documentation of school website, in behaviour policy, in newsletters to parents etc.

(If Leave of Absence Request Form is completed by parent/carer)

- Copy of request for leave of absence received from parent/carer and signed by all relevant parent/carers and any letter pertaining to that request.
- Signed evidence that school have informed parent/carer in writing that absence will be unauthorised and that this could lead to a PN being issued.
- Reasons for not authorising the holiday should be clearly stated to parent/carer.
- Up to date registration certificate showing the period of absence as unauthorised 'G'

(If Leave of Absence Request Form has not been completed by parent/carer)

- Up to date attendance certificate showing the period of absence as unauthorised 'G'.

- Evidence as to why the school believe that the absence was for the purpose of a leave of absence.
- Signed copy of letter to parent from the head teacher stating that the absence will be coded as unauthorised as it is believed to be for the purposes of a leave of absence without exceptional circumstance and that this could lead to a PN being issued.

Completing contact form

- Parents' full name and surname.
 - If there are two parents, details of both parents should be completed.
 - Address should be checked.
 - A PN will be issued individually to both parent/carers.
- First language if not English – the PN will be issued in that language.
- The contact form should only be submitted once the child has returned to school. If the child fails to return then the school should follow their Missing child procedures.
- Documentation provided by the school which supports the request for a PN by the Local Authority can be used as evidence should any legal action be taken. All cases where there is non-payment of the PN would be considered for a prosecution under s.444 of the Education Act 1996.
- In the event that the case proceeds to a prosecution school staff may be required to provide a written witness statement and may be required to give evidence in court.