

Statement of Intent

At Birchanger C of E Primary we value good attendance. Attainment is strongly linked to attendance, and if pupils are to achieve their full potential, they must attend school regularly. We also believe good attendance helps to support the development of personal and social attributes such as responsibility and reliability. We aim for a school attendance rate of at least 96%. It is expected that the whole school community will work together to achieve this target.

We record and closely monitor the absences from school of all our pupils. We particularly track those children whose attendance falls below 90%. A level of attendance at 90% means:

- Over half a day a week absence
- 4 weeks off in the school year
- 90% attendance in KS2 means one and a half terms absence from age 7-11
- 90% attendance throughout primary and secondary schools means they will have missed a whole year of their education

We also believe in recognising and rewarding attendance. We award a weekly trophy to the class who has achieved the best attendance. Individual pupils who achieve good attendance (96%+) are rewarded with certificates and their achievement celebrated in assemblies termly.

School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes (see appendix A).

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carers,

the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

'Exceptional circumstances' means that the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, ie within the 13 weeks annual school holiday. An exceptional circumstance would be an event which is rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absence are recorded as a result).

If leave of absence is taken without the request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with the Essex Code of Conduct (£120 per parent, per child / £60 if paid within 21 days), where there have been 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence recorded. If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, Missing Education and Child Employment Service, who have a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

Roles Responsibilities and Procedures - Birchanger Primary School

Day-to-day procedures:

- The school has a paper registration system.
- External doors open at 8.45am. We operate a 'kiss and drop' system - parents leave their children at the door. Doors are closed at 8.55am.
- Children who arrive after 8.55am must enter the school through the main entrance and be signed in in the pupil signing in/out book by the adult

bringing them to school. Children arriving between 8.55am and 9.15am will be marked as late.

- The registers are open until 9.15am. If a pupil arrives after 9.15am and there is no legitimate reason, the pupil will be marked as late after the registers close. This is classed as an unauthorised absence.
- Children will not be regarded as late if there is a legitimate reason why they have not arrived on time e.g. traffic. The decision not to mark children late will be taken by the Headteacher.
- If a child has to leave school during the school day, parents should sign them out (and if appropriate back in again) at the school office in the signing out/in book.
- The school operates a 'first day calling' policy where we phone parents if we have not heard from them. This is obviously a last resort procedure to ensure a child is safe and parents are asked to contact us by phone if a child will not be in school. A message can be left on the answerphone line at any time. The phone call should be followed by written confirmation on the child's return to school.
- If a child is absent from school for a long period of time (for example as a result of illness), the school will meet parents and child to discuss how the child may be able to keep up with work at home and a reintegration programme which may, if appropriate, include part-time attendance for a short period of time.

Procedures in the event of poor attendance

- The Headteacher monitors attendance regularly and reports to Governors at least termly.
- If a pupil's attendance falls below 95%, attendance will be closely monitored.
- If attendance falls below 90% over a term, parents will be contacted by the headteacher.
- If low attendance continues, the school will seek the support of the Missing Education and Child Employment Service and parents may be invited to meet with the Investigation Officer and Headteacher
- For pupils with poor attendance, we will expect evidence (eg doctors certificate, appointment cards, prescription medication) if illness is given as a reason for absence

Absence – authorised or unauthorised?

The school may authorise absences for such reasons as:

- Illness
- Emergency medical/ dental appointments
- Family bereavement

The school will not authorise absence for reasons such as:

- Visiting relatives
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Day trips
- Looking after siblings
- Holidays

Regular and/or frequent absence will be investigated, and will only be authorised if the reason given is felt to be justified.

Term -Time holidays

Parents do not have a right to take their child out of school for a holiday. Leave of absence can only be granted if an application had been made in advance and the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances.

If you plan to take your child out of school for a family holiday, you must request permission from the school. A 'Leave of Absence' form, available from the school office, should be completed. Each request will be considered on its individual merits. However, only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised. In most situations school will not agree leave during term time as this will disrupt your child's education. In considering the application the headteacher will take into account the exceptional circumstances for the absence, the child's overall attendance record and whether leave of absence has been authorised in the past.

Penalty Notices

Parents are committing an offence if they fail to make sure that their child attends school regularly. The Missing Education and Child Employment Service may issue a penalty notice to each parent of £60 for each child to be paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale the penalty will increase to £120. If the higher penalty is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority will then institute legal proceedings.

Roles Responsibilities and Procedures - Parents/carers

- As parents, it is your responsibility to ensure your children's good attendance and to ensure your child arrives punctually at school.
- Parents are responsible for their children in the school playground before the doors open at 8.45am. Staff are not on duty in the playground before school. Children should not be left, or sent unaccompanied into school, before 8.45am.
- If your child arrives after classes have gone in, you must bring them to the main office and sign them in to ensure that they are safely in school.
- If your child is absent you must contact the school on the first day of absence and give a reason.
- This should be followed up with a letter on the day your child returns to school.

- In cases of persistent absence it is expected that parents will work with the school and the Missing Education and Child Employment Service to resolve any attendance issues.
- Parents who wish to apply for leave of absence for their child for any amount of time must complete a leave of absence/holiday request form (available from the school office) explaining the exceptional circumstances. Parents must only request leave if there are exceptional circumstances as family holidays will NOT be authorised under any circumstances

Roles Responsibilities and Procedures - Pupils

- Pupils are expected to attend regularly and be on time for registration and lessons
- Pupils may enter the school from 8.45am when the external doors open.
- Pupils arriving after classes have gone in should be brought to the front office by their parents to make sure that they are safely in school.
- Pupils who are absent from school will be marked as authorised if a reason for the absence is provided and accepted by the school. If that is not the case, the pupil's absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Roles Responsibilities and Procedures - Missing Education and Child Employment Service

- Works within locally based Area Attendance Teams to reduce persistent absence, improve overall attendance and give advice and support to children, families and schools.
- Carries out statutory duties on behalf of the Local Authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance
- The school may refer a pupil to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. The Missing Education and Child Employment Service will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/carers and could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

Evaluation and Review

The school will review this policy annually and update accordingly to include changes in the law and guidance on good practice. The policy will be promoted throughout the school community and shared with outside agencies and partners as required.