

# Barrs Court Primary School

## Attendance Policy

(Statutory Policy Document)

Version No 2

September 2023



<b>Date approved by Headteacher</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	
<b>Date approved by Staff</b>	September 2023	
<b>Date of Full Governing Body Approval (if required)</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> October 2023	
<b>Policy Review Frequency</b>	Annual	
<b>Next Review Date</b>	September 2024	

1.1 Rationale Regular attendance and punctuality at school is a pre-requisite for children in achieving the 5 outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda; enjoying and achieving, staying safe, being healthy, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being.

**Regular attendance is attending school every day when you are expected to attend. We define regular attendance as 96% in line with national levels. There are times when we, in line with government coding guidance, will authorise absence from school.**

Encouraging regular attendance, high levels of punctuality and reducing persistent absence is an integral part of our drive to:

- Promote all children's welfare
- Ensure that every child has access to the full-time education they are entitled to
- Ensure that children achieve their full potential
- Equip children with the skills and knowledge needed, enabling them to have access to the widest possible range of opportunities.

Barrs Court Primary School School is recognised for its inclusive nature and welcoming ethos. We believe that the inclusive practices, high standards of teaching and outstanding pastoral care and guidance provide a foundation for children in which to feel safe, happy and motivated to attend school. However, this policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of staff, children, parents and carers to encourage regular attendance and punctuality as well as the procedures, sanctions and strategies available to the school if a child fails to attend school at a satisfactory level.

## **2) Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **2.1 Headteacher**

- a. The Headteacher must ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements e.g., the maintenance of registers and the submission of all data.
- b. The Headteacher will make sure that effective monitoring, support and intervention is in place for children whose attendance or punctuality is a cause for concern.
- c. It is only the Headteacher of the school that can authorise absence requests in exceptional circumstances.

### **2.2 Governors**

The Governing Body support the school to uphold the Attendance policy and may be required to form an appeals committee, if a parent challenges a decision by the Headteacher.

### **2.3 Parents and carers**

Under the 1996 Education Act, it is the law that parents or carers must ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and punctually. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents or carers may be reported to the Local Authority if their child(ren)'s absence from school is a significant cause for concern.

With regard to this, parents and carers must follow the school procedures for reporting any absence:

- If a child is unwell, parents are required to phone the school or leave a message on 01454 867799 on each day of absence stating the reason the child cannot attend school.
- If a parent or carer has failed to notify the school office of the absence through a telephone call, text or note by 9:15 am, then the school will run through all emergency contacts given by the parent in an attempt to clarify the situation.
- If a child is absent from school for more than 3 consecutive days (without any explanation) the school may contact the Educational Welfare Officer and then social care; this is to ensure your child is safe.
- If the Educational Welfare Officer is not available, school staff may make a home visit.
- Persistent absence which remains unauthorised will be reported to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority.
- Parents and carers should make all medical appointments outside of school hours whenever possible. Notification of absence for unavoidable medical appointments must be made in advance of the appointment by telephoning the school and by completing the absence request form.
- Parents or carers must, when requested, provide proof, such as an appointment card, when absences require further justification or authorisation will not be given.
- Parents or carers should be aware that a letter or phone call does not in itself authorise the absence. Only the schools acceptance of the explanation will authorise the absence.
- Parents or carers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that their child arrives punctually to and is collected punctually from school every day. If punctuality problems are of a persistent nature, parents or carers are encouraged to work in partnership with the school to improve the situation.

## **2.4 Children**

- Children should attend school every day unless prevented from doing so due to circumstances which the school would normally authorise.
- Children must arrive at school punctually; at the latest 8:55 a.m. This is the latest time we would expect a child to arrive for registration.
- The children may arrive from 8:30 am when the school opens.
- If children arrive after 9:30 am the morning session will be recorded as unauthorised e.g. 'U' code.

## **2.5 Staff**

- Every half day of absence has to be classified by the school (not the parent or carer) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why a cause for absence is always required.
- All teaching staff must take the electronic register on Arbor at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.

Authorisation of absence can only be made by the school who will code each absence in line with the DfE absence codes. Authorised absence would normally be for cases such as sickness, unavoidable medical/dental appointments and days off for religious observance or exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement. Authorisation will not be given for absence from school

due to shopping trips, birthdays, going to the airport, visiting relatives, buying shoes, going for a haircut, parent or siblings illness.

### **Requests for Absence during Term**

Time The Department of Education's guidance encourages the school to take a much firmer stance on absence authorised in term times. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays, but the school may choose to grant a single leave of absence up to 5 days in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Headteacher. Circumstances that would not meet the criteria include:

- General requests for holidays
- Relatives coming to visit
- Cheaper holidays in England and abroad
- Family day trips
- Visiting family who have different half terms or holiday
- Grandparents have booked a holiday and parents were not aware of the dates
- Re-occurring car/traffic problems

Advance dates of school terms are always published on the South Gloucestershire website, however, the school will also advise of additional training days once they have been agreed.

It is important that parents and carers only book holidays during the stated holiday periods.

### **Procedures for responding to absence and unauthorised absence**

- We operate an everyday call system and if a reason for absence has not been communicated to the school office by 9:15 a.m. a call or text message to the parent or carer will be made. Every day calling is an effective measure that helps ensure children are safe.
- If, despite attempts to contact parents or carers to ascertain a reason for absence the absence remains unauthorised, a letter detailing the date of the unauthorised absence may be sent home. This letter has a tear off slip where parents are expected to write the reason for absence and return the slip to the school office.

### **Procedures, strategies and sanctions for responding to unsatisfactory attendance and persistent lateness**

The school attendance team oversee the school's attendance policy and are, therefore, responsible for the management of attendance, absence and punctuality across the school. High levels of attendance will be encouraged through a range of approaches and joint working:

- Attendance data for each Year Group is reviewed by the attendance team every term which highlights those children with unauthorised absence, unsatisfactory levels of attendance, concerning patterns of absence or lateness and high levels of authorised absence from school.
- Prompt investigation into issues where a child is experiencing attendance difficulties will be undertaken by the attendance team.

- All teaching and non-teaching staff will regularly use attendance data to help inform meetings with children e.g. mentoring meetings, progress review meetings and pastoral intervention. The links between attainment and attendance will be explicitly made at every opportunity.
- Close monitoring of children with below satisfactory attendance and those from
  - vulnerable groups such as, pupil premium, looked after children, SEN, ethnic minority children and children entitled to free school meals.
  - Effective use of attendance data to inform early intervention programmes or action plans for children who are experiencing emotional or social issues which affect their school attendance.
  - Partnership work with a range of external agencies such as, the Education Welfare Officer, School Nurse or Social Services Department to support children and families where wider issues affect school attendance
- Having a high regard for critical times such as transitions into school, within school (moves into new year groups) and exam periods.

### **School attendance meetings**

For children whose attendance and lateness consistently falls below a satisfactory level, parents or carers and children will be invited to attend a school attendance meeting with the Attendance Team and if appropriate, the Education Welfare Officer. These meetings provide a useful opportunity to review the reasons for absence and lateness and agree actions that will support the children in making the necessary improvements. These plans set specific targets for attendance and may include the school requesting evidence in support of a child's high level of absence, such as, copies of prescriptions, appointment cards as well as parents or carers providing written permission for the school to contact professionals in the Health service by signing a medical consent form. The school may decide to not authorise any absences unless proof of illness or medical consent is provided. A referral to the school's Education Welfare Officer may be made at this stage.

### **Penalty Notice**

Penalty notices may be requested by the Headteacher and issued to both parents and carers regarding each of their children if more than 10 sessions of unauthorised absence accumulates within a 7 week period, (excluding school holidays). A session is a morning or afternoon.

We always encourage parents or carers to work in partnership with the school at all times and not to collude with their child's absence from school. If a child is experiencing problems attending, it is much better for the school to know straightaway so that we can offer our support to you and them. The Education Welfare Officer also work in partnership with parents but do have the power to issue Fixed Penalty notices as well as prosecute parents or carers in the Magistrate court for failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. In other circumstances, they may also apply for an Education Supervision order on the child.

Whenever the school is unable to contact a parent/carer because of inaccurate/ outdated contact details, the parent/carer will be informed and new contact details requested. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to keep the school informed of all changes to contacts details. Absence request forms can be obtained from the office, and all requests should be submitted to the School Office at least TWO weeks before the first day of intended absence. (Even if the absence is likely to be unauthorised). No work will be set for the period of absence.