



BLACKFORD C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

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This Policy should be read in conjunction with the School Absence Enforcement Policy written by Cumbria County Council and revised in February 2022

Blackford C of E Primary School is committed to the principles stated in our document. We strongly believe that all pupils benefit from the education we provide and therefore from regular school attendance.

In order to achieve this, we will take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted on as quickly as possible.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

It is recognised that children who attend school regularly are more likely to:

- build a firm and secure knowledge and understanding across all curriculum subjects;
- ensure they consistently meet and build upon expectations for their age group;
- develop good habits and important life skills;
- maintain friendships;
- gain better qualifications;
- have access to a wider range of opportunities when they leave school.

Aims

School aims to ensure that:

- all pupils have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the National Curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- no pupils will be deprived of their education opportunities by either their own absence or lateness or that of other pupils.
- all pupils have attendance that is in line with the National Average (currently 96.1%), apart from those with chronic health issues.
- good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- we work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Local Authority Access & Inclusion team to secure good attendance and progress for all pupils.
- there is a welcoming atmosphere where every pupil feels valued.
- attendance is monitored effectively so all pupils have positive outcomes.

Responsibilities

We ensure that we adhere to the Children's Services School Absence Enforcement and DfE School Attendance Statutory guidance and departmental advice.

School responsibilities – governors

The governing body is responsible for:

- recognising the importance of school attendance and promoting it across the school's ethos and policies;
- ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;
- regularly reviewing attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most;
- ensuring school staff receive adequate training on attendance;
- the implementation of Blackford CE Primary Attendance Policy and procedures;
- ensuring that the attendance policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation;
- handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's complaints policy.

School responsibilities – Head teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- the day-to-day implementation and management of the Attendance Policy and procedures of the school;
- having effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the causes of poor attendance;
- regularly monitoring attendance across individuals and groups in school and keeping parents informed of their child's attendance;
- providing governors with the information required to evaluate school attendance;
- ensuring all staff understand and follow the Attendance Policy, encouraging good attendance across the school;
- making parents aware of the Attendance Policy and related procedures;
- arranging meetings with parents to improve attendance.

School responsibilities – school staff

School staff (including teachers, support staff and volunteers) are responsible for:

- following the Attendance Policy and for ensuring pupils do so too;
- ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently;
- modelling good attendance behaviour and implementing the agreed policy;
- the accurate completion of registers at the start of each session, and within 15 minutes of the start of each session;
- regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance in line with national guidelines;
- working with parents to improve attendance;
- (admin staff) recording pupils arriving late or leaving early each day;
- (admin staff) managing and coordinating use of Scholar Pack to record attendance;
- (admin staff) contacting parents regarding unreported absences each day;

- (admin staff) ensuring all absences are coded each week

Parental Responsibilities

Parents and carers are responsible for:

- ensuring that children attend school regularly and punctually;
- Notifying school if their child is unable to attend school or is going to be late;
- (under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996) making sure that their 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. This can be by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise (including the parent choosing to educate their child at home).

Compulsory school age is defined as being the term commencing on or after a child's fifth birthday. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen. This applies to the parents of children of compulsory school age who are registered at a maintained school, a pupil referral unit, an Academy, or other state provided education.

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996: Definition of a Parent – is as follows whether they are married or not; any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law. Throughout this document, references to 'parent' mean each and every parent coming within the definition (whether acting jointly or separately) and should not be taken to mean that provisions only apply to 'parent' in the singular.

Expectations

School expects that all our **pupils** will:

- attend school regularly and aim for 100% attendance;
- arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day with all equipment needed;
- carry out any work provided by the school during an authorised leave period.

School expects that **parents** will:

- ensure their child attends school every day unless there is a genuine reason for absence;
- ensure their child attends on time;
- contact school, as soon as is practical, whenever their child is unable to attend school;
- only keep children at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If a child has a minor illness *e.g. mild headache, stomach-ache etc.* parents should inform the school and bring them in. If they don't get any better, school will contact parents straight away, to collect them.
- endeavour to keep health appointments out of school hours when possible and, if unavoidable, pupils should be brought back to school afterwards;
- inform a member of staff of any reason or problem that may hinder their child from attending school;
- fulfil their legal responsibilities and ensure their child attends school;
- seek permission from the school for any leave of absence. The Headteacher has the right to refuse authorised absence in accordance with LA guidelines (see below for further details).

Parents and children can expect the following from the **school**:

- strong relationships with families;
- provide clear information about what good attendance looks like;
- accurately completed registers including reasons for absences;
- early contact when a pupil is absent without explanation;
- work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality;
- action on any attendance problem notified to the school;
- referral of specific attendance issues to supporting agencies where appropriate;
- refer to the Local Authority Access & Inclusion Officer, any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve;
- encouragement of, and rewards for, good attendance.

We encourage and reward good attendance by:

- consistent, clear communication with parents and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt, attendance;
- setting targets for improved attendance and sharing these with Governors, parents and pupils;
- attendance reports each half term and an annual report at the end of the school year;
- termly and yearly 100% attendance rewards.

Registration

Registers will be taken punctually each day at 9am and at 1.15pm

Register closes at 9.15 am and 1.30 pm. Children will be marked absent or late by teachers using our attendance system. Admin staff record whether the attendance is authorised or unauthorised.

Lateness

- If a child is late, they must enter by the main entrance and let a member of staff in the office know. If a parent/carer is present, they will be asked the reason for lateness.
- It is to be expected that very occasionally a child may be late for a genuine reason. The concern is in regard to any consistent late arrivals (where there is no avoidable reason). If there are children who fall into this category, the following procedure takes place:
 - Parent is reminded by office staff of the importance and reasons for lateness and support strategies discussed.
 - Staff responsible for attendance contacts parents informally for discussion about continued lateness.
 - Formal written letter from Head teacher.
 - If the issue persists, a formal meeting will be held between the Head teacher and the Attendance Governor to establish the reasons and plan forward.
 - Regular monitoring of lateness will occur by the school and, where necessary, action will be taken at the headteacher's discretion.

Follow-up action in cases of non-attendance

- School will contact parents on the first day of an absence by 9.20am if no reason has been received (contact will be by telephone).
- If there is no response to the first contact, a text will be sent to enquire about the unexplained absence. If no response within an hour, other contacts down the list will be rung until a reply is

received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted.

- If attendance drops below the school target of 96% (starting from Autumn 2), parents will be notified that this is the case and that attendance needs to improve.
- School termly attendance monitoring identifies persistent absentees (below 90%) and will send out letters for information to parents informing them that attendance will be monitored during the following half term and if there is no improvement, they will be invited to an Attendance Panel with Head Teacher and Attendance governor to discuss support needed. An appropriate action plan will be jointly agreed and may involve external agencies
- A review will take place after a half term, and if there has been no improvement in attendance, school will consult with LA Access and Inclusion Officer to determine the next course of action. This may be an Early Help Assessment, a referral to other agency or referral to Access & Inclusion Officer for formal involvement and consideration of legal action.

Please see the Attendance Flow Chart in the County Council Enforcement Policy for a full overview of how the school will manage poor attendance.

Leave of Absence during term time

- Recent changes to legislation have removed the discretionary 10-day period of absence which covered family holidays. Schools are now required to refuse requests for holiday absence in term time.
- Head teachers may, however, grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If parents believe that their circumstances are exceptional, they should make request a leave of absence form from the school office and return it to the Head teacher detailing the reasons behind the request.
- The Head teacher will not authorise absence unless they believe the circumstances are exceptional. Case law identifies that any holiday or event which can be arranged during school holiday periods should not be authorised during the school term.
- In considering a request, the school will also take into account the child's age, the time of year of the absence, and the reason for the visit. The head teacher will also consider the child's stage of education and progress and the child's overall attendance record.
- Parents are therefore strongly encouraged to avoid booking family holidays during term time.
- The Head teacher will consider each request on a case-by-case basis and will respond promptly.
- If exceptional circumstances do exist and leave is granted, parents must ensure their child catches up with any missed work on their return.

Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holiday in Term Time

*"Penalty Notices will not be used as an **automatic** sanction against parents who take unauthorised holidays in term time but may be issued in certain circumstances. Headteacher's can lawfully grant a leave of absence in term time if they believe the situation to be exceptional. Each request for a leave of absence should be considered individually and reasons for either granting or refusing should be provided in writing."*

Taken from the County Council Enforcement Policy 2022.

Author/Owner	Date Written/updated	Approved by Governors	Comments
Mrs L Smith	Sept 2010		
	5 th March 2013		Updated by curriculum committee
	Jan 2014		In light of new legislation re holidays
	July 2016	Sept 2016	Regular review
	Sept 2017		Minor adjustments re A&I involvement
	Sept 2019		Minor updates
	Sept 2021		Minor updates
	Sept 2022		Major rewrite

To be reviewed by governors in line with the policy review timetable