OLD BEXLEY CE PRIMARY SCHOOL
Love God • Love Each Other • Love Learning

Happy Children and Limitless Learning in an Anglican Christian School
A place where everyone can flourish

Reviewed	Agreed by Staff	Agreed by Governors	Review Date
October 2023	October 2023	November 2023	September 2024

Attendance Policy

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1 Aims

Old Bexley CE Primary School is committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

> Promoting good attendance and punctuality;

> Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence;

> Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;

> Acting early to address patterns of absence;

> Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school;

> Promoting effective partnerships with other Services and External Agencies, where appropriate, to promote good attendance;

> Actively encouraging weekly attendance by celebrating any class with 100% weekly attendance in Friday's Worship.

To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

This policy recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of pupils and staff. There is a clear link between poor attendance and lower academic achievement. Our attendance target for all children is 95%.

Amadeus
Primary Academies Trust

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2   Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the <u>working together to improve school attendance</u> from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on <u>school attendance parental responsibility measures</u>.

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

> Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
> Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
> Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
> The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
> The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

> School census guidance
> Keeping Children Safe in Education
> Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3   Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Governing Body

Under the "Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995" the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

The Governing Body is responsible for:

> Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos;
> Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;
> Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data;
> Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school;
> Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance;
> Holding the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher (Mrs Ivil) is responsible for:
> Implementation of this policy at the school;
> Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors;
> Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils;
> Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies;
> Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (Mrs Ivil) is responsible for:
> Leading attendance across the school;
> Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement;
> Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes;
> Having an oversight of data analysis;
> Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data;
> Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues;
> Creating intervention re-integration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers;
> Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer (Mrs Carroll) is responsible for:

> Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7);

> Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement;

> Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Head Teacher;

> Working with Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence;

> Advising the Head Teacher when to issue potential Fixed Penalty Notices.

3.5 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis using the correct codes and submitting this information to the school office by 9am and after lunch every day.

3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

> Check and finalise the register, ensure correct attendance codes have been used and make any necessary phone calls to parents;

> Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system, passing on any concerns to the Senior Leadership Team where appropriate.

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

> Make sure their child attends school every day on time;

> Call the school to report their child's absence by 8.50am on the day of absence and advise when they are expected to return;

> Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child;

> Only urgent appointments can be made during school time. All other appointments must be made outside of the school day or during school holidays;

> Be on time to collect their child from school at the end of the school day.

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

> Attend school every day on time.

4. Procedures

4.1 Registration

A pupil attendance register is taken by the Class Teacher twice a day which is a legal requirement. It is taken by 9am and again after lunch. If a pupil fails to attend or arrives late, they will be marked accordingly for that session.

Office staff will check and finalise the registers, making any necessary phone calls for children who have been marked absent. They will ensure that the correct attendance codes have been used, record whether an absence is authorised or not and flag any anomalies to the Senior Leadership Team. All attendance records are electronic and are therefore kept on a pupil's file.

4.2 Absence (unplanned)

Parents/carers must notify the school of the reason for their child's absence by 8.50am on the first day of an unplanned absence eg illness. This can be done by leaving a message on the school's absence line (telephone 01322 527981) or by emailing admin@oldbexley.bexley.sch.uk. Parents should also advise when they expect their child to return to school.

Absence due to illness will be marked as 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 will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

If a child is absent and the parent/carer has not contacted the school, then as part of the school's safeguarding procedures, office staff will call the parent/carer to ascertain the whereabouts of the child.

Parents/carers should contact the school if they are concerned about their child's attendance, or if their child is experiencing difficulties either in or outside of school which are affecting their attendance. The school aims to work in partnership with parents/carers and will discuss ways to support a pupil and their family to ensure improved attendance.

4.3 Absence (planned)

Routine medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours. However, we appreciate that there can be occasions when this is not possible. Non-routine appointments will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer has notified the school in advance. A copy of the appointment letter may be requested.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

Parents/carers are expected to ensure their child arrives at school on time every morning. Old Bexley CE Primary operates a flexible morning drop off: the school gates open at 8.30am and will close at 8.50am. Any pupil arriving after 8.50am should report to the school office to sign in. They will also receive a late mark. Persistent lateness will be reported to the Head Teacher and the Education Welfare Officer.

At the end of the school day, it is the parent's responsibility to ensure they are on time to collect their child. Children who are regularly collected late by their parent/carer will be reported to the Head Teacher and the Education Welfare Officer.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

> Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may complete a welfare check by visiting the family home;

> Identify whether the absence is approved or not;

> Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session;

> Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the Education Welfare Officer.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will contact parents/carers about their child's attendance should it drop below a certain level (see point 7.1). Parents/carers can also see their child's attendance by logging in to their MyChildAtSchool account.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time Leave of Absence

The Head Teacher will only grant a Leave of Absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A Leave of Absence is granted at the Head Teacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

The school can only consider applications for a Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent/carer ie the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides.

Applications for a Leave of Absence must be made as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least a week in advance using the form in Appendix A. The Head Teacher may require evidence to support any request for a Leave of Absence. Failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Applications for a Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Bexley Education Welfare Service.

Where the Head Teacher requests that a Fixed Penalty Notice be issued for any unauthorised absence, the historical attendance percentage of the child will not be used as a mitigating circumstance as it is essential that all unauthorised absences are treated fairly and consistently to prevent unnecessary challenge which may lead to complaints and breakdown in good relationships between home and school. Consistent approaches and clarity of communication prevent damage being caused to the home-school partnership.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in the Notice, the matter will be referred to the London Borough of Bexley's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include, but are not limited to:

> Illness and non-routine medical appointments (see section 4.3 for more detail);

> Religious observance – we respect the diverse, cultural and religious backgrounds of our pupils. If your child needs to be absent for religious observance, please submit a Leave of Absence for the Head Teacher to review;

> In the case of exceptional circumstances, please contact the school immediately to discuss the absence;

> Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be

authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

5.2 Legal sanctions

From 1 January 2024, the school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school for 5 or more consecutive days, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, <u>each</u> parent/carer must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Head Teacher, Local Authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

> The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year;
> One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission;
> Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

In order to promote good attendance, the school will:

- Issue any class with 100% attendance for that week with a reward which is either an extended play time or a non-uniform day;
- Children with 100% attendance at the end of an academic year will receive a certificate;
- Endeavour to build a good relationship with parents/carers based on trust and mutual respect. We encourage parents/carers to contact a member of the school office team as soon as issues arise.

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

> Monitor attendance and lateness on a weekly basis;
> The School Business Manager, Head Teacher and Educational Welfare Officer meet bi-weekly to discuss individual cases;
> Where attendance is below 90%, a letter will be sent to the parent/carer informing them of their child's attendance record;
> Where attendance is below 85%, parents/carers may be invited in to discuss the pupil's attendance with the Head Teacher (and the Educational Welfare Officer);
> When attendance is below 85% and it is considered by the Head Teacher to be a serious cause for concern, a referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Officer.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and Local Authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing body.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

> Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families;
> Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

> Provide regular attendance reports to the appropriate staff to facilitate discussions with pupils and families;
> Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head Teacher.   Any changes to the policy will be approved by the governing body.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

> Safeguarding policy
> Behaviour policy

OLD BEXLEY CE PRIMARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

This form should be completed at least a week in advance to enable the Head Teacher to decide whether to authorise the application. Authorising leave from school and the length of the authorised absence is at the discretion of the Head Teacher. If leave is taken without the authorisation of the Head Teacher, a Penalty Notice may be issued.

Pupil Details:

NAME:	
CLASS:	
ADDRESS:	

Absence Details:

I request permission for the above named pupil(s) to be granted a Leave of Absence from Old Bexley CE Primary:

From:	*(first day of absence)*
To:	*(last day of absence)*
Number of school days:	

It is necessary to take my child/ren out of school because (use a separate sheet if required):

Parent/Carer Details (both parents are required to sign):
We understand it is at the Head Teacher's discretion whether to authorise this application:

Parent/carer name and contact number:	
Signature:	
Parent/carer name and contact number:	
Signature:	