

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Non Sibi Sed Aliis

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
Psalm 119, vs 105

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." **Ephesians 5: 15-16**

This policy document and the content contained therein remains the responsibility of the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school. No amendments can be made without their express instructions and they remain the final arbiters in any matters relating to it.

Review Date: Autumn Term 2022

Next Review Date: Autumn Term 2023

Reviewed By: Mrs A Wilson

APPROVED BY THE HEADTEACHER – Autumn Term 2022

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ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Balshaw's is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled High School and as a Christian school we believe that each of us is an individual made in God's image. Behaviour is therefore important to us, in that we should be the best that we can be in our relationships towards each other and before God

RATIONALE

To have a framework which recognises discipline as an educational matter and not just a system of control and punishment, a framework which combines academic rigour with a sense of caring for the whole person within a Christian context.

PRINCIPLES

To support the general aims of the school through concern for the various dimensions of good attendance and punctuality:-

- Encouraging high expectations and a sense of purpose within a supportive climate
- Developing appropriate sanctions in school to discourage poor punctuality
- Keeping parents well informed of a student's attendance and punctuality
- Aiming at values and practices which are coherent and consistent
- Developing and maintaining channels of communication which encourage dialogue
- Recognition that inclusive learning is the responsibility of all staff within the school.
- To improve the efficiency of monitoring attendance and punctuality and to identify, at the earliest possible stage, those pupils for whom attendance/punctuality to school and to lessons is a problem
- To develop the pupils' awareness of the necessity and importance of attendance and punctuality, so that they gain the maximum benefit from their education in school.
- To reduce further, the numbers of unauthorised absences.
- To reward those pupils who attend school on a regular basis and are punctual to lessons.
- To aim that all pupils want to come to school through successful implementation of the school's aims.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY - RATIONALE

The school recognises that pupils cannot achieve the highest standards of which they are capable without a corresponding high standard of attendance and punctuality. The aims of this policy are to encourage pupils to attend school every day (190 days per year) and to be able to take full advantage of the opportunities available. Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and it is also essential for pupils to maximise their potential and achieve success.

Extensive research on the impact of excellent school attendance shows that pupils who attend well, are more likely to achieve, there is a direct link between under-achievement and absences below 95%. Every hour in school is a valuable learning experience that cannot be recovered or repeated. At Balshaw's we are committed to providing high quality education for all of our pupils by building a healthy learning environment in which pupils can develop and fulfil their potential. This policy sets out how we can support and encourage high levels of attendance for our school community and the actions that will be taken by school should attendance levels fall below that which is expected

Introduction

This is a successful school and every child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all pupils to achieve their potential and aspire to excellence.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and every child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless they have an unavoidable reason to be absent. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

Absence or late arrival also disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Government research shows a direct link between attendance and attainment and good attenders also make better progress socially, learn to work with others, and are better prepared for the transition to secondary school and, eventually, higher education, training and employment.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Our attendance target this year is 97% but all pupils should strive to achieve 100% attendance if they can.

Descriptor	Attendance	Equals absent days	Learning hours lost
Excellent	100% 99%	0 days 2 days	0 hours 10 hours
Good	98% 97% 96%	4 days 6 days 7.5 days	20 hours 30 hours 37.5 hours
Satisfactory	95%	9.5 days	47.5 hours
Cause for Concern (At risk of legal intervention being implemented)	94% 91%	11 days 18 days	55 hours 90 hours
Unsatisfactory (At risk of legal intervention being implemented)	90%- 87%	19 days 25 days	95 hours 125 hours
Serious Cause for Concern (At risk of a referral being made to LCC for prosecution for non-attendance at school)	86% or below	27 days	135 hours

There is also strong evidence to support the link between excellent GCSE results and excellent school attendance as outlined below.

Attendance	Number of GCSEs achieved at A*-C or 9-4
100%	9 GCSE's
96% and above	8 GCSE's
90 – 95%	7 GCSE's
Under 90%	5 GCSE's

1. Recording attendance - Registers on SYNERGY

- Schools have a legal duty to record student attendance twice daily – once in the morning and once in the afternoon. An entry must be made by law on all attendance registers for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the records of the school. In addition to this lesson registers are taken each lesson a student attends on the SYNERGY system.
- A first day of absence response system is in operation and followed up by the School Attendance Officer daily.
- In school, Form Tutors are key to the maintenance of good attendance / punctuality among pupils and they must be vigilant in following up all absences /lates and in keeping Head of House well informed regarding any problems or potential problems.

2 Responsibilities and expectations

2.1 Families

Parents and carers have a legal duty and responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, if they are of compulsory school age and registered at a school (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. As a school we expect all parents to:

- Ensure that their child achieves good attendance at school (97% or above)
- Inform the school via the first day response system if their child is absent giving a specific reason
- Discuss planned absences with the school in advance and seek appropriate leave of absence in good time
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term time for holidays which will not be authorised
- Make all reasonable effort to avoid making doctor or dentist appointments during school hours

Parents and pupils should know the times the school day starts and finishes and when the register closes (see section 4, below); the processes for requesting leave (see section 3.4, below); and the process for informing school of the reason for unexpected absence (as follows).

If your child is going to be absent, parents must inform school as soon as possible and at the latest by 9:10am on the first day of absence via the school telephone number 01772 421009, the attendance email attendance@balshaws.org.uk or via a Synergy message to school

Parents must also ensure that school has up-to-date contact information for themselves and emergency contacts.

Pupils' responsibilities depend upon their age, maturity and capability but they too must do their best to attend school regularly and punctually. School contact information for other attendance-related matters is given below at the end of section 2.2

Ensuring your child has regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility

2.2 School

Head Teacher

- Leads on giving attendance a high profile.
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters and protected time allocated to discharge those responsibilities.
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to statutory requirements regarding attendance.
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some, all, or none of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision.
- Where there is uncertainty regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence, or to request further evidence to support the decision-making process.
- Provide regular reports to the governing body on school attendance, including persistent absence and vulnerable groups.

Attendance Lead and Attendance Officer

The overall Attendance Lead in school is Mrs Wilson Deputy Headteacher and The School Attendance Officer is Mrs Leyland

The Attendance Officer will:

- meet regularly with those pupils with poor attendance and set targets to ensure improvement as well as meeting with parents to discuss reasons for poor attendance.
- continue to promote the importance of full attendance and to share attendance data and attendance targets.
- continue to train all teachers in the correct marking of attendance registers.
- seek absence notes and/or medical evidence from pupils following a period of absence.

- check and amend absence codes.
- be the 'first point of contact' for absentees who have not notified school by 9.10am.
- monitor and record attendance of pupils who are educated elsewhere.
- implement re-integration programmes.
- contact parents regarding concerns by telephone and/or standard letter sent.
- involve the Senior Leadership Team if matters remain unresolved.
- arrange meetings with parents/guardians and draw up parenting contracts for completion by all parties concerned.
- First day response: contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided and record this information accordingly. Contact emergency contacts if parents cannot be reached.
- Update attendance registers.
- Regularly monitor and analyse data to identify pupil, class and whole school attendance concerns and to target attendance improvement support for those who need it most, particularly vulnerable groups.
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents.
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, using parenting contracts where appropriate.
- Involve external agencies to support children and parents as appropriate to better understand and address the issues causing attendance concerns.
- Promote regular attendance through the school newsletter, website and displays and ensure the school's attendance policy is readily accessible.
- Use projects and strategies to improve attendance and punctuality for groups, classes or the whole school (eg incentive and reward schemes, certificates, chocolate termly treats, prizes in celebration assemblies).

All school staff

School staff will ensure that:

- They provide a welcoming and safe learning environment.
- Provide sympathetic responses to any pupils' concerns.
- Be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance.
- Ensure that attendance is seen as important for all pupils.
- Assume responsibility to promote and monitor student attendance in their role as a Tutor or Classroom teacher
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures.
- They contribute to the promotion of raising the percentage attendance within school and reduction in the school's persistence absence figures.
- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Attendance and Punctuality records are monitored closely
- Punctuality is monitored and poor punctuality is followed up.
- Adhere to the procedures in place within school to promote good attendance.
- Promote the link between attendance and educational attainment to pupils and parents.
- Complete attendance registers in accordance with the legislation and under the direction of the head teacher.
- Raise any concerns about attendance with the attendance lead and/or head teacher.

Tutors

- Tutors must arrive at registration promptly as, apart from exceptional circumstances, this is their first priority at 8-40am.
- All registers must be completed by staff on SYNERGY and **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** by pupils. The register is a legal document and can be used in a court of law as evidence to prosecute parents. It **MUST** be accurate.
- Tutors are responsible for the prompt completion of their registers and tutor group summary sheets and for accurate and speedy follow up on any student absences / lateness, including the collection of parental notes etc.
- When a tutor is absent from school the member of staff to take that registration will be designated on the cover list for the morning sessions.

Head of House

- Head of House will support Tutors in the follow up on any outstanding matters of student absence / lateness. It is the responsibility of the Tutor to contact home regarding student absence if no note or email contact is made.
- Heads of House will speak regularly to pupils referred by Tutors whose punctuality and attendance is poor.

Governors

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended.
- Agree an attendance policy and review it annually.
- Agree targets for attendance at Balshaw's High School
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance targets, or when the governors believe there is cause for concern, instigate a review of school's attendance procedures.
- Authorise the head teacher (or other designated person) to make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the head teacher in establishing equitable and consistent criteria against which leave requests will be considered.

Schools are bound by a range of attendance legislation and guidance; please see the appendix for further details.

2.3 Lancashire County Council (the local authority)

School Attendance Consultants (SACs)

SACs are schools' first point of contact for attendance advice regarding individual pupils and the whole school.

School Attendance Legal Team (SALT)

Following requests from schools for legal interventions in the event of failure to attend school regularly, SALT undertakes enforcement processes, including penalty notices, prosecutions, parenting orders, education supervision orders and school attendance orders.

Children Missing Education (CME) Team

The CME team ensures the local authority fulfils its statutory duty to identify children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. For further information see section 7, below, regarding notifications schools must submit.

3 Types of absence

Every half-day absence from school is classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required from parents/carers. As a school, we will always work with parents (and other agencies, as appropriate) to understand the reasons underlying absence.

3.1 Authorised absences

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

- On the SYNERGY system tutors should ONLY categorise an absence when they have the necessary evidence e.g. parental note to cover a medical absence, school letter to request a holiday which will be granted as unauthorised. Unexplained absences will then show up on the next Absence Report. Tutors should liaise with their Head of House as appropriate to make sure that unexplained absences can be ACCURATELY categorised as soon as possible e.g. contacting parents, Head of House checking if unauthorised etc.
- **Absence notes should be signed and dated by the tutor.**
- Parents are expected to inform the school of their child's absence on the first day. Where no notification is received the parent will be contacted (by office staff, liaising with tutors / Head of House in this matter).
- **Under no circumstances** should any student absence be allowed to continue beyond the third day without investigation if no reason has been given by the parent.
- All tutor groups should be aiming at 100% attendance / punctuality. Individuals should be encouraged to gain their

own certificates of 100% attendance / punctuality.

- **Only the Deputy Headteacher Pastoral and the Attendance Officer should use the 'C' code to authorise absences in exceptional circumstances.**

Exeats

- If a child needs to leave school for an appointment they must obtain an exeat slip from their Tutor. These will only be given if a parent has written or phoned school to advise us about the absence. Pupils are to report to the Pastoral Hub to be signed out by a member of the office staff on production of an exeat slip signed by a member of the teaching staff.
- If a student subsequently returns to school the same day then she/he must report to the Pastoral Hub to be signed back in the book and on the exeat slip which can be later given to the tutor as confirmation.
- Pupils should be given permission to leave the premises **ONLY IF ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY**. They should not be given permission to go out for missing books / kit / packed lunches etc.
- Pupils not following these procedures should be followed up in the first instance by their tutors, who should impose a suitable sanction.

3.2 Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. If school has followed its attendance procedures and a pupil continues to have unauthorised absences, the school request legal interventions from the School Attendance Legal Team. Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences which are not explained satisfactorily.
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed.
- Days off for shopping, birthdays, death of a pet, minor ailments or looking after other children.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed by the head teacher.
- Days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the head teacher.

It is the head teacher's responsibility to decide if an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence is authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription, appointment card or similar. Parents should not ask their doctor (GP) to provide "sick notes" to excuse absence.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school for other reasons. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school as soon as possible to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. As a school, we will always work with parents (and external agencies as appropriate) to understand and address the reasons behind absence.

- In order to ensure consistency in school policy, any absence accompanied by a parental note with a reason which seems questionable, must be referred to Head of House/Deputy Head who will if necessary, consult with the School Attendance Officer or the Head before deciding on the designation of the absence. The Attendance Officer will take responsibility for making the parent aware of an absence deemed by the school as unauthorised.
- Unauthorised absences are marked as an 'O' in the register. If these (and any 'U's) reach 10 sessions (morning is one session, the afternoon is one session – if the student misses one full day this equates to 2 sessions) the School as a last resort may refer to the local authority and you may be at risk of receiving a penalty notice similar to the one you would receive if you took your child on holiday during term time. The School Attendance Officer would, in conjunction with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Head of House, work with the family to try and resolve any issues that might be resulting in the child not attending school.
- Through the home - school partnership document, the prospectus and parents' meetings the school makes it clear that it actively discourages the taking of holidays in term time as this is detrimental to the continuity of a child's education. No holidays in term time will be authorised for any student. Parents will be informed of this via letter.
- Any holiday in term time which involves a student missing 5 days or 10 sessions in one term or 14 sessions over

two consecutive terms will be unauthorised and will lead to a Penalty Notice being issued. New Government guidelines regarding Penalty Notices were introduced in September 2013. All Parents were sent confirmation of this change in Government Legislation and School Policy.

- Balshaw's will apply to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence due to holidays in term time. A Penalty Notice can be requested if a student misses any 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absences including holidays. This can be in any term or 14 sessions (equivalent to 7 days) over an academic year.
- School hope that all parents will acknowledge and understand the limitations placed on school in granting any leave in term time. Parents are asked to support the school, in our efforts to reduce unnecessary absence and thus minimise the impact on the education of Balshaw's pupils.

3.3 Persistent Absence (PA)

Persistent absence is when a child misses 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason, authorised and unauthorised (including illness, exclusion, holiday, etc). Absence at this level will damage any child's educational prospects and we expect parents' fullest support and co-operation to address this.

At Balshaw's we monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be prioritised and parents will be informed of this promptly. Pupils who are persistent absentees are tracked and monitored carefully and the attendance procedures below (section 5) will be followed.

3.4 Leave of absence during term time

By law, maintained schools cannot authorise any leave in term time other than in exceptional circumstances. Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their education and progress as much as any other absence. If leave is being requested for a holiday or extended leave abroad, approval should be obtained from the head teacher before making any bookings.

Leave of absence in term time **will not** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides (using the form available on the Balshaw's or from the school office), **and**
- the head teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **exceptional circumstances** relating to the request.

Due to the need to evidence exceptional circumstances, parents are advised to provide school with any relevant information regarding their request at the point of application if they believe the circumstances are exceptional.

In considering the request school will also consider other factors such as:

- The timing of the requested leave, eg when a pupil is just starting at school or during assessment periods, such as SATs, key assessments or any formal examinations .
- A pupil's attendance record already includes unauthorised absence.
- Attendance is already a concern, or could become a concern, as a result of taking leave.
- Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract legal sanctions such as a penalty notice.

In certain circumstances, as outlined in regulation, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if leave is taken and the criteria governing removal from roll are met (see appendix).

Leave of absence in term time including holidays

In line with national changes in 2013 which removed the authority from a Headteacher to authorise leave during term time for the purpose of a holiday, we will not authorise any term time leave of absences for holidays. All requests will be considered on an individual basis without bias on receipt of a leave of absence request form (these can be located the school website).

If the request is to be considered as an exceptional circumstance, this Leave Request Form must be accompanied with written documentation evidencing the reason for the request, this must be submitted at least four weeks prior to the leave date. Parents may be asked to attend a panel meeting to discuss the circumstances.

The Government has not defined the 'exceptional circumstances' and therefore it is for each Headteacher to decide what they view as an exceptional circumstance. The DfE's advice says schools should consider each request individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. DfE guidance says the fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. It is important that you understand that leave in term time will not be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional. We strongly urge parents to avoid booking holidays during term time.

Under no circumstances will a leave of absence be authorised if:

- The student's attendance over the past year is less than 92%;
- There are public examinations or coursework deadlines during or immediately after the proposed leave;
- The student has a serious work deficit; or
- A leave of absence has previously been authorised.
- Parents who wish to apply for a leave of absence must complete the official request form. This form can be collected from reception or downloaded from the school's website. Complete forms should be returned addressed to the Headteacher at least 3 months before the proposed absence (where possible).

An absence will be recorded as unauthorised by school if:

- School has not given approval in advance for a student to be absent
- School does not accept a given explanation as satisfactory justification for absence
- Medical evidence requested by school is not forthcoming
- No explanation of absence is received within three weeks
- If a student of compulsory school age is absent, the register must show whether that absence is authorised or unauthorised. Parents may not authorise any absence. In cases where parents seem to condone unauthorised absence, school may involve the court officer.
- The Governing Body have agreed to adopt the Government initiative of imposing Penalty Notices in cases of persistent unauthorised absence and persistent lateness to registration.
- Parents will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and will have 15 days to ensure an improvement in attendance and/or punctuality. Failure to ensure improvement will lead to the issue of a Penalty Notice.
- Penalty Notices are issued by the court officer to the family home. Non-payment of the Penalty within the 42 day time limit will trigger the prosecution process under the Provisions of Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act.
- The school reserves the right to delete from roll a student who fails to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date.

3.5 Religious absence

School will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, eg Eid, and this will be marked as code R in the register. The day authorised will be that set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member.

Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if the head teacher agrees that exceptional circumstances apply; this would be marked in the register as code C.

3.6 Participation in sporting events

Parents can request leave of absence for their child to take part in regional, national and international sporting events. However, as always, granting leave is at the head teacher's discretion and she/he will need to discuss with you the length and frequency of the absence(s) requested and how learning will continue if absence occurs, eg the sports club or association providing an approved education tutor.

Leave for a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school can be marked in the register as code P.

Policies (P)

Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late in order to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the head teacher and is unlikely to be approved if it would occur regularly.

3.7 Participation in performances (eg theatre, television, modelling)

Parents of a child performer can request leave from school for their child to take part in a performance. A local authority licence must be obtained before a child can take part in a performance. Before a licence is granted, school will be consulted and head teachers must be satisfied that the leave will not have a negative effect on the child's education.

Where the licence specifies the dates that the child is to be away from school, the head teacher should authorise those days. However, where the licence does not specify dates, it is at the discretion of the head teacher to authorise the leave request.

Any absence authorised for the child to take part in a performance will be recorded as code C. Parents wishing to apply for a performance licence should go to the Lancashire County Council [Child performance licences webpage](#).

4 Registration

4.1 Attendance registration

Morning registration is between **8:40am and 9:10am**

Afternoon registration is between **2:05pm and 2:10pm**

The school day starts at 8:35am when pupils are allowed on school site and are expected to make their way to morning registration. At 8:40am the register is taken and remains open until 9:10am.

When the attendance register has been taken it remains open until 9.10am in the morning and 2.30pm in the afternoon.

School finishes at 3:10pm

4.2 Late arrival

Pupils who arrive after 8:50am or 2:10pm must go straight to the school office at the main entrance to sign in and give a reason for their lateness.

Pupils who arrive after the register has been taken (8:40am or 2.05pm) but before it is closed (9.10am or 2.30pm), will be marked as code L. This is classed as late but present for the session (ie the morning or afternoon).

Pupils who arrive after the register has closed and without a valid reason for being late (such as attending a dental or medical appointment) will be marked as code U, which is classed as an unauthorised absence but indicates that the pupil was physically present in school for part of the session.

Student lateness to school and registration

One of the aims of Balshaw's High School is to prepare children for adult life. To this end we expect everyone to be punctual at all times. We ask for parents full co-operation in ensuring that children leave home early enough to arrive at school before the start of the school day at 8:40am. Senior staff will make spot checks regarding student lateness and its follow up throughout the term.

4.3 Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting important news and information for the day. Pupils arriving late also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

If your child is often late you will be asked to meet with the Deputy Headteacher and/or a member of the pastoral support team to discuss ways to improve punctuality, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Persistent lateness after the register has closed may result in further action, as outlined below, under section 5.

Lesson attendance and punctuality

- Where at all possible, meetings should be held at breaks, lunchtimes and after school, and NOT after assembly, thus causing student delay to lessons.
- Pupils should be dismissed promptly at the end of registration periods and lessons so that they can reach their next lesson on time.
- Student lateness to lessons without very good reason should not be tolerated. It is the subject teacher's responsibility to deal satisfactorily with student lateness which has no good reason (i.e. it should cease). If the subject teacher feels that his/her sanctions are having no/little effect then the help of the Curriculum Leader should be sought until the problem is effectively sorted out.
- Each member of staff must keep a register of all their own lessons
- Any 'suspicious' absence should be followed up on the same day.
- A student should only be let out of the classroom if absolutely necessary. It is important that all staff are rigorous in this matter so that pupils will realise that going to the toilet in lesson time (except where there are specific medical problems), leaving books in lockers etc. are not acceptable and that we all expect and will enforce better organisation on their part.
- Heads of House or the Deputy Headteacher may request that the School Attendance Officer carry out unannounced visits to a student's house if attendance is poor.
- Pupils who have poor attendance may be invited to attend school to Attendance Panel Meetings with the School Attendance officer, the Deputy Headteacher, The Headteacher and a Governor.

5 School attendance procedures

5.1 First day of absence

If your child is absent and we have not heard from you, we will telephone you on the first day of absence to find out what the reason is and when your child is expected to return. If we are unable to contact you, we will approach your emergency contacts and, if necessary, make a home visit. Please note that such home visits may be unannounced.

5.2 Attendance concerns

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with us in resolving any attendance problems together; this is nearly always successful. However, if concerns persist, school will use the following procedures and interventions, as required, to support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality:

- Telephone calls and/or letters to make parents aware of school's concern about their child's attendance.
- Invitation to meetings to discuss concerns with our attendance lead and/or head teacher.
- Parenting contracts to identify barriers to regular attendance, ways to overcome these and agree targets for improvement.
- Incentive and reward schemes for individual pupils, if appropriate.
- The Early Help Assessment (EHA) process and/or referral to other agencies and services, including School Nurses and Primary Mental Health Workers, if appropriate.
- For unauthorised absences, request legal interventions by the local authority, such as penalty notices, prosecution or other attendance-related court orders.

At any stage, we may seek advice from our School Attendance Consultant.

5.3 Pupils with medical needs who have difficulty attending school

Government guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (see appendix) emphasises the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils, whether their condition is short or long term.

School will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be in the form of specific support or resources used within school or by sourcing appropriate provision at another establishment. When education is to be provided at an alternative location, this should always be done via the use of a direction (please see section 6, below)

When a pupil has been absent from school for an extended period, the head teacher, the class teacher and other support services will work with the family to ensure that a smooth reintegration is achieved.

5.4 Pupils refusing to attend school

At Balshaw's, we believe that every child has a right to a full-time education, and we would not accept "school refusal" as a reason for non-attendance. In such cases, we will work with parents to identify the reasons why a child may be reluctant to attend school. We may with consent, make referrals to external partners such as the Children and Family Wellbeing Service, Primary Mental Health Workers, etc, as appropriate to try to ensure the correct support is secured for the child and their family.

5.5 Promotion of good attendance

School will promote and incentivise attendance by acknowledging and rewarding good attendance by all pupils and efforts to improve attendance by individual pupils who have additional needs or challenging circumstances.

5.6 Use of penalty notices

In accordance with the Lancashire code of conduct, we may request that the local authority issue penalty notices for unauthorised absence. This includes:

- Leave of absence which is taken without a prior request being made.
- Leave taken after a request has been declined.
- Days taken in excess of an agreed period of leave, without good reason.
- Other unauthorised absence that meets the required threshold, including sessions marked as late after the register has closed (code U).

The code of conduct for penalty notices and information and FAQs for parents can be found on the Lancashire County Council [education penalty notice webpage](#).

Any absence from school, regardless of the reason, is detrimental to a child's long term life opportunities and should be avoided. Reducing absence from school is a key priority, both nationally and locally. Missing school limits a child's access to learning and long term, will adversely affect their attainment levels. A 'knock-on' effect of this disruption to school routines is that a student may be left vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

The use of legal intervention is used across the county to ensure parents adhere to their legal responsibilities to provide their child with a full time Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if their son/daughter fails to attend school regularly, and the absences are classed as unauthorised. Such cases may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996.

Whenever we are unable to authorise an absence and the request is for 5 days or more, we will notify the local authority who will in turn issue a formal written warning of the process of how taking an unauthorised period of absence can lead to a penalty notice. The Penalty Notice will only be pursued if you choose to ignore the decision made by school. It is important that parents understand that leave in term time will not be agreed by us at any time unless a circumstance surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

6 Alternative provision and use of directions forms

There is a range of circumstances when pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are:

- Pupils who have been excluded, either for a fixed period of more than 5 days or permanently.
- Pupils unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons.
- Pupils required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour, either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (via a managed move).

When a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for the purposes of improving behaviour, the governors of the main school must issue a written direction or notice informing all parents of the alternative provision which their child is required to attend. Where a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for other reasons, the issuing of a written direction is considered best practice.

7 Notifications school must submit to the local authority

7.1 Admissions

All schools must notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register and must provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil. This duty does not apply to pupils who are added to the admission register at the start of the school's youngest year unless the local authority also requests for such information to be provided (currently Lancashire does not).

7.2 Leavers

All schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply where the pupil's name is removed after they have completed the school's final year, unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided (Lancashire currently does not).

Where a school notifies a local authority that a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register, the school must provide the local authority with the required information as laid out in regulation.

In addition to submitting a notification about removal from roll, some circumstances also require school to make referral to other local authority teams such as the Elective Home Education team or the Children Missing Education team. Schools may also contact their School Attendance Consultant for advice on removing children from roll.

7.3 Pupils who fail to attend

All schools (including academies) must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. In Lancashire primary schools, this can be done via a variety of means and school can contact their School Attendance Consultant for further advice.

7.4 Children missing education (CME)

Local authorities have a duty to put in place arrangements for identifying (as far as possible) those children of compulsory school age in their area who are not school registered or receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Local authorities should trace those children and ensure they receive a full-time education.

If a pupil has stopped attending and her or his location is unknown, schools must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the local authority, before deleting the pupil's name from the register. In such cases, school should undertake a home visit, prior to a referral being made to the local authority Children Missing Education team. Under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 we have a legal duty of care to make arrangements to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, the whereabouts of children missing education. We will make 'reasonable' enquiries into the location of the student with continuous unauthorised absence or for those who fail to return from leave of absence granted during term time.

Balshaw's reserves the right to contact relevant agencies to seek advice (Children's Social Care, police, sibling's school, parent place of employment and other family members) if any child is absent from school for more than five days without confirmation from parents. Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents to ensure the child is safe. A referral will be made to the 'Children Missing Education Team' if our attempts are unsuccessful.

Safeguarding and Home visits

Balshaw's will invite parents into school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns. In addition, if the school suspects that a student may be at potential risk as a result of their absence from school the safeguarding team reserve the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate external agencies, i.e. – social care, police. The school will inform parents / carers if a referral is to be made. However, this may not be appropriate in every circumstance depending on the nature of the safeguarding concern and a referral may be made without informing the parent / carer. Balshaw's also reserves the right to conduct a safeguarding visit to the child's home if there are safeguarding concerns that arise from non-attendance at school.

8. School Strategies for dealing with absence

- Tutor monitoring and discussions re attendance %
- 1st day Absence Contact phone call home
- Letters of concern to parents/guardians
- Inviting parents into school for discussion.
- Home visits where appropriate where absence is being questioned
- Safeguarding visits where appropriate if there are safeguarding concerns for the student
- Strategies for family support, including the use of Parenting Contracts where appropriate.
- Attendance Contracts
- Attendance Panels with a member of the Governing body and Parents
- Further school based action with more senior staff involved.
- Fixed Penalty Notices.

9. Monitoring, Analysis, Evaluation and Action Planning

The Deputy Headteacher Pastoral Care, the Attendance Officer and Heads of House are the designated staff with specific responsibility for monitoring the whole school and year group attendance respectively, and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's procedures:

- data is collected and disseminated to all relevant staff weekly (each Monday) and published on the staff and student bulletin
- feedback re analysis of attendance data will be provided by the Deputy Headteacher and Attendance Officer. The analysis might identify specific issues for the various audiences:
- patterns of broken weeks by individual pupils
- patterns of absence for individual pupils
- misuse or inconsistent use of absence codes across the school
- trends in reasons for absence, extended medical leave, granted leave in exceptional circumstances, exclusions, etc
- trends in particular groups (ethnic groups, gender), forms or years

Policy written: 2006
Updated: 2008
Updated: 2009
Revised: September 2010
Updated: October 2011
Updated: September 2012
Reviewed: October 2012
Updated: February 2013
Ratified: June 2013
Updated in light of
Government Legislation: September 2013
Ratified: November 2013
Updated: September 2014
Updated: October 2015

Policies (P)

Updated: February 2017
Updated: September 2018
Updated: July 2019
Updated: June 2020 in light of Covid 19

Updated: September 2021

Updated: September 2022

Rewritten: September 2023 in light of guidance from LCC

Appendices: School attendance and the law

There are many pieces of legislation and government regulations and guidance that are relevant to school attendance and to children and their parents and carers. The list below relates to this attendance policy but is not exhaustive.

Appendices and information relevant to Parents and carers

Duty to ensure children receive education

[Section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#) covers the duty of parents to secure the education of children in their care who are of compulsory school age and states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and*
 - (b) to any special educational needs he may have,*
- either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.*

Offence if a child does not attend regularly

Under [Section 444 of the Education Act 1996](#), if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly, their parent is guilty of an offence.

The offence is absolute as the only defences available to the parent are those statutory defences listed within that section of the Act, ie:

- the child was absent with leave granted by the school;
- the child was prevented from attending by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause;
- absence was on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which their parent belongs;
- that the school is not within statutory walking distance and that the local education authority has made no suitable transport arrangements or enabled the pupil to become registered at an alternative nearer school.

Compulsory school age

[Section 8 of the Education Act 1996](#) establishes that a child becomes of compulsory school age on the start date of the term following her/his fifth birthday, or that day if her/his fifth birthday falls on the day term starts.

A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which he/she reaches the age of 16 or if he/she reaches 16 after the last Friday in June but before the start of the new school year.

Legal definition of "parent" in relation to attendance

The law requires that all "parents" are held responsible for their child's attendance. This definition can include any person who has care of the child. [Section 576 of the Education Act 1996](#) states:

Meaning of "parent".

(1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, “parent”, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person—

(a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or

(b) who has care of him.

Thus, the definition of “parent” means all natural parents, whether they are married or not, and includes any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility and/or care for a child or young person.

Appendices relevant to Schools- Attendance and absence registration codes

[Working together to improve school attendance](#), DfE, published May 2022, applies from September 2022 and will become statutory no sooner than September 2023.

Data protection - Schools must ensure that personal data is handled in accordance with the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). See Balshaw’s High School Privacy Notice for information about how personal data will be used.

Duty for schools to include attendance information in reports for parents

[The Education \(Pupil Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2005](#)

Duty for schools to notify the local authority when pupils join or leave school

[Regulation 12 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Duty for maintained schools to publish attendance data

[What maintained schools must publish online](#), DfE guidance

Duty for schools to report attendance concerns about individual pupils to the local authority

[Regulation 12 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Duty for schools to report attendance data to Government

[Section 537A of the Education Act 1996](#) and

[Complete the school census](#), DfE guidance for schools and local authorities on what data government requires

Duty for schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

[Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and](#)

[colleges](#), DfE, regularly updated

Leave in term time *

[September 2013 amendment to The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Appendices that relate to Legal interventions

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child who is on a school roll fails to attend regularly and those absences are recorded by the school as unauthorised.

Legal interventions are available under the following Acts, Guidance and Regulations:

- [Section 444 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- [Section 36 of the Children Act 1989](#)
- [Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [School attendance parental responsibility measures 2015](#)

Pupils with health needs who cannot attend school

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions: Statutory guidance](#), DfE, 2015

Pupils with individual needs and specific barriers to attendance

When considering the individual needs of pupils and families who have specific barriers to attendance, schools should be mindful of their obligations under the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#). Schools may wish to refer to the [Technical Guidance for Schools in England](#), published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which outlines the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 for schools.

Regulations regarding participation in performances

[The Children \(Performances and Activities\) \(England\) Regulations 2014](#)

Regulations regarding removal from roll

[Regulation 8 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Regulations regarding the school day and number of sessions

[The Education \(School Day and School Year\) \(England\) Regulations 1999](#)

Requirement for state-funded mainstream schools to deliver a school week of at least 32.5 hours by September 2023.