



St. Nicholas C of E Primary School

Pupil Attendance Policy

Our vision

We prepare every pupil for their best future by ensuring they reach their full potential and attain the knowledge, skills and understanding required for success as we believe that 'With God, all things are possible'. Matthew 19:26



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Reviewed by:	J. Harper
Approved by Headteacher:	September 2023
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The aim of this policy is to improve school attendance at St Nicholas C of E Primary School to improve children's life chances.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure that their child receives full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance or otherwise.

St Nicholas C of E Primary School is based in the Southern area of Blackpool and has good knowledge of its surroundings, including the social, economical and environmental factors that effects the town's families.

The aim of Blackpool Borough Council Children's Services, is
*"to progress in partnership to provide a high quality education for all. . .
For this to happen pupils must be in attendance. It is also important in the process of encouraging good attendance that pupils are valued and a strong partnership exists between parents/carers, the school and other support networks."*

We strongly support the aim of Blackpool Education Department at St. Nicholas C of E Primary School, and see regular school attendance as essential for pupils to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them.

Whilst attendance is good for the majority of our children, we recognise that there exists a core group of pupils for whom attendance is an issue. It is to address the educational needs of these children that this policy for pupil attendance has been developed, monitored and reviewed.

Parental Responsibilities and Expectations

By law parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children attend school regularly.

- Parents should keep requests for their child to be absent from school to a minimum.
- They should not condone unjustified absence from school.
- They should not expect the school to automatically agree to requests for absence.
- If a child cannot attend school, for whatever reason, they should inform the school on the first day of absence.

Strategy for Monitoring and Dealing with Non-Attendance

The school has developed a system of monitoring attendance:

- ◆ Attendance registers are monitored weekly in order to give an accurate picture of attendance and punctuality, and a focus for those experiencing absences.
- ◆ The Pupil Welfare Officer (PWO) screens all registers fortnightly and a full screening is carried out every term. The information is used to target those pupils who may need support.
- ◆ The Deputy Headteacher has a responsibility for Pupil Attendance. She liaises with the PWO, the school's Family Support Worker and other agencies to promote attendance and support those pupils whose attendance is not regular.
- ◆ Class teachers raise concerns about attendance.

- ◆ Parents are contacted to explain patterns of regular short-term absences.
- ◆ Records of all notification of pupil absence by the parent/carer, whether by letter or phone, are retained for the academic year.

Under safeguarding procedures and our duty of care as corporate parents we have a procedure which we follow in the case of absence:

First Day Absence

Parents /carers contact school on the first day of absence.

If no contact is made by parents /carers, and no prior notice has been given, school contacts parents by phone, text or email and this is recorded on the absence sheets in the office.

Where reasons for absence are provided, these will be added to the register.

Second Day Absence

If no contact is made with parents on the first day or following first day contact, the same process is followed on day 2.

Third Day Absence

If no contact is made by the end of the third day, the PWO should be contacted who will make efforts to contact the parents/ carers which might include a home visit.

Positive Reinforcement of Attendance

The school makes every effort to encourage regular attendance at school and has therefore developed a number of positive strategies to promote and celebrate full attendance. The Senior Leadership team and the Pupil Executive have worked together to decide on these initiatives.

- ✓ *Parents are reminded of their responsibilities regarding absences in the School Brochure and in newsletters.*
- ✓ *The PWO targets those children who show patterns of irregular attendance through support and intervention.*
- ✓ *Class attendance is monitored weekly. The percentage attendance is charted and displayed in the hall. Each term the winning class is celebrated.*
- ✓ *“100% Attendance” certificates are given half-termly to all pupils who have attended school every day and, not arrived late.*
- ✓ *At the end of the year, 100% attendance badges will be awarded and names of children who have achieved 100% attendance and no lates for the year will be entered into a prize draw to win a **prize decided upon annually by the pupil executives.***
- ~~✓ *The school participates in the LA’s 100% Attendance Award scheme sponsored by Blackpool Football Club.*~~

Traveller Children

St Nicholas CE Primary School has a good reputation for providing education and support for pupils from the Travelling Community. Our GRT community is currently our highest ethnic minority group.

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

The unique nature of travelling children is recognised by law. The 'T' (travelling) code will be used when the pupil's parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes and the school has granted a leave of absence following a request from a parent. This code will not be used to record any other types of absence by the travelling community.

Pupils whose parent(s) do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to attend school as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other pupils in terms of the requirements to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

To help ensure continuity of education for pupils, when their parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes, it is expected that the pupil should attend school elsewhere when their parent(s) is travelling and be dual registered at the school and their main school. This will be marked in the register as 'D'.

Where a pupil has not fixed abode because their parent(s) is engaged in a business or trade that requires them to travel, there is an expectation that the pupil attends at least 200 sessions per year. The pupil attend school as regularly as the business permits and therefore, if the business or trade permits the pupil to attend for more than 200 sessions per year, they should do so.

When school has been informed that a pupil is travelling, the following message will be sent out to the parent(s) for them to complete in order for the absence to be authorised as 'T':

Thank you for your request for a travelling leave of absence. We understand the unique nature of travelling children and parents will not be prosecuted if:

- *You are engaged in a trade or business that requires you to travel and stay away from St Nicholas C of E Primary School.*
- *Your child attends a school elsewhere when you are travelling and is dual registered at another school and St Nicholas C of E Primary.*
- *You have no fixed abode because you are engaged in a business that requires you to travel and your child attends at least 200 sessions per year.*

Please confirm that this applies to you and please comment in the box below.

(An open text box will follow)

Pupil Welfare Service

The PWS acts on behalf of Blackpool Council. Our Pupil Welfare Officer's role is to help support our school in improving attendance and enforces the duty of parent/carers to ensure their children attend school. Therefore it is a priority in reducing the amount of time a child is missing from school. The PWS will support our school in the monitoring of pupils, register screening and exciting initiatives. The PWS will support parents in ensuring their child receives the education that best suits their individual needs, whether this involves a sick child or the need to be educated at home, offer advice and hands on support in encouraging their child to attend school. Support can also be offered if a problem occurs which involves parents not being able to ensure school attendance. The following is what the PWS will also offer:

- ❑ Following a referral to the service, contact will be made via a written letter and a booked home visit
- ❑ Regular visits and telephone calls following school absences
- ❑ Meetings to discuss unresolved problems
- ❑ Court proceedings
- ❑ Advice regarding child employment and entertainment
- ❑ Able to refer families to specialist services if their children will benefit

Attendance Registers

An **Admission Register**, which serves as the school roll is maintained and updated by the School's Administrator. Any problems or irregularities will be referred to the Headteacher.

The **Attendance Register** for each class is a legal document. It is called at the beginning of each morning and afternoon, and maintained according to the described rules as regards marks, symbols and corrections.

The register is completed on Arbor and saved by the class teacher; the register is open from 8.45am – 9am.

The register is closed by the office at 9.15am – any child coming into school before 9.15am will be marked as late (L), after that they will be present after the register has closed (U) – unauthorised absence.

Registers and attendance are screened daily by the Family Support Worker.

The register closes for the afternoon session at 1.05pm for EYFS, 1.20pm for KS1 and 1:35pm for KS2.

Children are actively involved with the calling of the register. The morning register is normally called within the first 5 minutes of the beginning of the session. They are

marked as present, absent or engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school. The marks show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised using the approved coding system. The registers are kept on computer to create an individual attendance report for each child as well as data for each class. All legal requirements are met. The registers are screened on a regular basis by the PWO who informs the Deputy Headteacher of any irregularities.

Explanation notes/letters and records of telephone calls are kept to the end of the academic year. Where there is a pattern of irregular absences, with a possibility of legal action, the notes will be kept on file until such action is taken. The school will always follow the LA's guidelines in any such case.

Authorised/ Unauthorised Absence

Where a pupil is absent at the time of registration, the law requires an indication in the register to show if the absence is authorised or unauthorised. **Authorised** means that the school has given approval in advance for the pupil to be away, or that the explanation given afterwards has been accepted as a satisfactory justification. It is for the school to decide if an explanation given is acceptable. In cases where it is doubtful, frequent or a regular pattern is emerging further investigation may be required.

The class teacher will refer such concerns to the Deputy Headteacher. The PWO may be asked to contact parent/carers if the explanation given is not satisfactory.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Where a child is present for registration and an appointment card has been seen or parent/carer has informed the school, the child is marked as legally present. When collected for the appointment their name will be logged on the appropriate sheet in the school office. If the child is returned to school during a session, this will also be logged for fire/emergency purposes. Children absent at registration but returning from an appointment later will also be logged on the movement sheet. Notes regarding medical appointments are retained in the same way as absence notes.

If a child attends a morning appointment and is not in school for the afternoon registration, this will be recorded as unauthorised unless the parent has informed the school and given a justification for the extended absence.

It is now policy and practice for each class base to have the number of children present recorded in each room which acts as an aide memoire in the case of emergency evacuation. This number is amended when children either leave or return to the school after a medical appointment for example.

Lateness

We believe that punctuality is an important trait to be developed for life not just at school, therefore we endeavour to encourage all our pupils to be in the school playground just before the bell rings so that they can enter school and complete the registration process promptly.

Any child arriving after the 9am school bell must report to the school office. A note will be made of the names of those pupils who arrive late and their parent/carers will be reminded of the school start times should it be recognised that such arrival is frequent. Those children arriving after their name has been called will be marked as **late**. Registers filled in on Arbor and are saved by 9am and they are then closed at 9.15am. Any child arriving after this time without an acceptable reason will be marked as **unauthorised absence**.

In addition to the school's monitoring of late attenders, the PWO also carries out regular checks through the register screening and through visits to the school.

Children not collected on time

If no contact can be made to parents/carers despite school's efforts, the school will keep the child until **4.00pm**. After this time the school will have no choice but to contact the Pupil Welfare Service, who in turn if no contact can be made will ask Social Care to take the child into appropriate care for the evening.

Suspended / Excluded Pupils, Pupils registered at a PRU or Special Unit

Where a child has been given a suspension or exclusion, the accepted mark will be made in the register. The same also applies when a pupil has been transferred to a Serf or PRU while remaining on the school's admission register.

Penalty Notices

Rationale – penalty notices for non-attendance

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their education opportunities.

Legal action in the courts may be used as a strategy to improve attendance when parents have failed to secure their children's regular attendance at school or other alternative provision. Penalty notices are simply another enforcement option that is now available to the local authority (LA).

However, it should be noted that sanctions of any nature are for use only where parental co-operation in this process is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem.

Furthermore, all parties involved must act within the parameters of the local code of conduct.

Administration of education-related penalty notices

Payment of penalty

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the penalty notice proforma.

Payment of a penalty discharges the parent/carer of liability for the period/episode in question and so they cannot be subsequently prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the absence period/episode already covered by the penalty notice.

Payment of a penalty within 21 days of receipt of the notice is £60 (subject to regulatory change). **Payment after this time, but within 28 days of receipt of the notice is £120** (subject to regulatory change).

The LA will retain any revenue from the income generated by education-related penalty notices to help cover the administration and enforcement costs.

Non-payment of penalty

Non-payment of the penalty within the 28 day time limit will trigger the prosecution process under the provisions of section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, except where the notice is withdrawn (as detailed in the criteria below). However, as with all prosecutions the rules of evidence and criminal procedural rules apply, and so the authority must be satisfied that any prosecution meets the “evidential” test and the “public interest” test, otherwise a prosecution may not proceed.

Circumstances where a penalty notice may be issued for non-attendance

To ensure consistent and equitable delivery and the avoidance of duplicate notices being issued, the local delivery of the penalty notice scheme will be managed by the LA.

A penalty notice for non-attendance can only be issued in cases of **unauthorised** absence. Any schools submitting requests must adhere to the guidance on the marking of registers. This guidance can be found in the DfE document entitled “Advice on school attendance” and in local authority guidance documents.

The circumstances in which a penalty notice for non-attendance may be issued include:

- Parentally condoned absence
- Unauthorised leave
- Unwarranted delayed return from authorised leave
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed

Each case will be considered individually. In addition, when considering issuing a penalty notice for unauthorised leave, the LA will take into consideration any relevant advice issued to schools on granting leave of absence.

A minimum evidential requirement of ten (10) school sessions lost to unauthorised absence by any pupil in the current term, **and/or** twenty (20) sessions lost to unauthorised absence over two consecutive terms, will be required to trigger the process.

Family Holidays during Term-Time

Parents/carers do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for the purpose of a family holiday.

A leave of absence form is available on Parentapps under the tab 'Leave of Absence Request'. Forms are also available from the office, if required. These are to be completed to apply to remove a child from school for the purpose of a family holiday during term-time. After agreement with the Governing Body, it has been decided that the Headteacher will not authorise holidays in term time. **Any absence for holidays in term time are unauthorised and will precipitate action from the school and PWO.** A minimum evidential requirement of ten (10) school sessions lost to unauthorised absence (holidays in term time) by any pupil in the current term, **and/or** twenty (20) sessions lost to unauthorised absence over two consecutive terms, will be required to trigger the process.

The school actively discourages such holidays as they disrupt the child's education and progress.

A Whole School Responsibility

The school has a high regard for full pupil attendance. All staff are involved but particular responsibility is taken by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Family Support Worker who liaise with parents/carers, Pupil Welfare and support staff.