

BLACKWELL FIRST SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy has been written with reference to 'Working Together to Improve Attendance' (DfE, 2024)

At Blackwell First School we believe that regular attendance is crucial if children are to benefit from their education and achieve their potential. Children of school age should attend school each day during the formal school hours of 8.30am until 1.40pm. The school offers 34 hours and 45 minutes per week as part of the wider curriculum for all children (8.20am-3.15pm)

In order for children to have good attendance, measures have been put in place to monitor and address concerns over attendance and absence.

Parents are notified about the school's policy on attendance through newsletters sent to all parents at the start and throughout the academic year. The school works with families to ensure that attendance is high for all children.

Registration:

A register is taken at the start of each morning (8.30am) and afternoon session (12pm Y2-4 and 12.35pm EYs and Y1) by the teacher responsible for the class for that teaching session.

The register is on SIMS so it is saved directly to the central school data management system, ensuring that we can monitor the attendance of pupils quickly and address any missing marks for pupils.

National revised codes (2024) are used to record attendance and absence in a consistent way.

Staff enter the marks to show that pupils are present. Lateness is also recorded with two difference codes to indicate if the time of arrival was before or after the close of registers.

Absences for Illness or Medical Appointments

Parents have been advised to book medical appointments outside of school hours where possible. The formal end of the school day is 1.40pm providing adequate time for medical appointments after this time. If this is not possible, parents are asked to notify school before the appointment so that the attendance register can be amended to show why the child is not in school. Parents know to contact school on the first day of absence through illness and then to contact every day following this.

Messages that are taken via the school office relating to pupil absence are put onto the system as quickly as possible so that teachers can see why a pupil is absent.

If no reason has been given for absence then this will show up as 'N' and these children can be identified quickly enabling follow up calls to be made.

If no reason is provided for the absence or there is not a legitimate reason provided then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If there are significant concerns about a child's attendance through persistent illness then the school reserves the right to request medical evidence. For pupils absent through regular medical appointments, school will liaise with families to ensure that the least disruption to the child's core learning take place.

Leave of Absence

Occasionally, parents request leave of absence during term time. DfE and WCC policy states that leave of absence cannot be granted by Headteachers unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Requests should be made to the Headteacher at least 4 weeks in advance of the absence and each application will be considered individually before any leave is granted.

According to County policy, permission should be granted in accordance with arrangements made by the Governing Body of the school. There is no right to any leave or holiday in term time.

The granting of leave of absence in school term is, by law, a matter of consideration and decision by the school. Leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

DFE guidance states that, as a general guide, any activity, holiday or event that can be arranged during the annual 13 week holiday should not be authorised.

When considering leave requests, the school may liaise with other schools where siblings may attend. This allows for a consistent approach to authorising absence. The changes to the Education Regulations 2024 outlines the school's responsibility regarding information sharing.

Parents will be notified in writing if the absence is authorised or not authorised. If leave is granted then the letter will state the number of days a child is authorised to be absent from school. There are WCC procedures that need to be followed if a child does not return to school by the date specified on the request.

In accordance with DFE policy, leave of absence due to religious observance will be authorised.

Parents will also be notified in writing if the absence is unauthorised and will be advised that, if the absence is taken, this may lead to a Penalty Notice being issued by the local authority.

Penalty Notices

If the unauthorised absences take place then a referral can be made to Worcestershire's Education Investigation Service (EIS).

Parents may then be issued with a Penalty Notice in line with the changes to the law introduced through the Education Regulations 2024 – one per parent per child, payable within 21 days and increasing within 21 to 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty charge within this time period may lead to court proceedings. The fines are issued by the local authority and the money from the fine is not received by the school.

Where requests are received from only one parent the school reserves the right to contact the other parent to ensure that both parents are fully aware of the intended absence and the possible consequences of taking unauthorised leave during term time.

Referrals can also be made to EIS if there are significant concerns regarding attendance and unauthorised absence.

Monitoring of Attendance

The attendance of children from Reception to Year 4 is monitored:

The following systems are in place for addressing attendance:

- Each term an attendance tracker is produced showing every child's percentage attendance.
- The Headteacher and Attendance Officer look at children's attendance under 95% with a particular focus on those under 90% (the figure classed as persistent absence).
- Parents may be contacted either by letter or phone informing them that their child's attendance and/or punctuality is low and a meeting may be requested.
- Minutes are taken from that meeting.

The purpose of these meetings are to:

- Make parents aware of their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

- Ensure parents are aware that a referral to EIS may be necessary if there are a significant number of unauthorised absences.
- Discuss reasons for absence.
- Look at additional support that may be available, eg. Family Support, School Nurse.
- Look at strategies for promoting good attendance, eg. Reward charts.
- Raise awareness of the impact of good attendance on pupil outcomes.
- Ensure that parents understand the impact and possible consequences of further absence.
- If required, liaise and produce attendance contracts between school and home.

If a child has not been at school and no contact has been made with parents, then a home visit by the Attendance Officer and/or headteacher may be requested by the school, particularly if there are any additional safeguarding concerns.

If a child is absent from school for 10 days and cannot be located then the child may be reported to the local authority as CME – a child missing in education.

There is also a statutory obligation to report any child to the local authority if there has been an absence for 10 or more days unless agreed as a holiday.

Individual high attendance is acknowledged. At the end of each term, children whose attendance is 100% are presented with a certificate in assembly. At the end of the school year children whose attendance is 100% are presented with a special certificate in assembly.

Reporting on Attendance

Each term a monitoring report is produced and shared with the school leadership team and the Governors as part of the Headteacher report.

Date for Review- Autumn 2027