



**Blackshaw Lane
Primary and Nursery School**

Attendance Policy

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1. OVERVIEW

This policy is written under the guidance of the Education Act 1996 and the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. All our work is defined in our Mission Statement and in our motto of 'Belong, Learn, Shine.'

At our school we firmly believe in the value of an education which provides the skills and opportunities to fulfil each child's full potential. We recognise the importance of pupils being in school every day and on time in order to fully access this.

Pupils, parents and staff will work together to maximise attendance and punctuality so that children can receive the full value of their school experience. Our target level of attendance for all children is 96% for each school year.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

Our school is a place where the community, governors, staff, parents and pupils work together to ensure all children receive a rich, inspiring, dynamic education. At Blackshaw Lane, we create a happy, secure and safe environment that encourages children to be effective learners. We ensure that every child has opportunities to learn what it takes to be an all-round good citizen and achieve the life skills to succeed in modern Britain and beyond.

3. POLICY AIMS

- To have an overall attendance within the school of 96%.
- To ensure support systems are in place for pupils falling below the 96% threshold which are fair and consistent to all.
- To offer advice and guidance to staff and parents to ensure absences are dealt with effectively.

4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. Under the present law, the school leaving age is 18.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present
- absent
- present at approved educational activity
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

5. CATEGORISING ABSENCES

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and **cannot be authorised by parents**. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence by 10am and provide the school with an expected date of return. **This is the parents' legal responsibility.**

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness

In most cases a telephone call prior to 10am (0161 770 6711) or a note from the parent on the first day of absence will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness.

Medical evidence can be in the form of a school medical slip, signed by the surgery/clinic attended, a copy of a prescription, a medical appointment card, a note from the doctor or sight of the prescribed medication.

Medical/Dentist Appointment

Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school. A full day's absence may not be authorised.

Other Authorised Circumstances

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

Excluded (No alternative provision made)

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Leave of Absence

Parents are strongly advised not to take pupils out of school during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time.

Parents wishing their child to take a "Leave of absence in exceptional circumstances" during term time must complete the Notification of Intended Leave of Absence form which can be obtained from the school office. The form should be returned to the school office at least 2 weeks before the start of the proposed leave is due to begin.

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing within one week and will state the following: -.

- How the absence will be recorded by school
- The expected dates of absence
- The possible consequences of having unauthorised absences including issuing Penalty Notices
- If necessary, that the child's place may be withdrawn if he/she does not return to school on the date agreed.

If a pupil fails to return on the agreed date and contact with the parents has not been made or received the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. In some cases, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child will lose their school place.

Religious Observance

Blackshaw Lane Primary and Nursery School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

In the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that **no more than two**

days per year be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival. These are to be taken on the ACTUAL DAY of the religious festival. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent using the Notification of Intended Leave of Absence form, available from the school office.

Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Oldham, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Blackshaw Lane Primary and Nursery School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at Blackshaw Lane Primary and Nursery School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Blackshaw Lane Primary and Nursery School can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Blackshaw Lane Primary and Nursery School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return. Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

Late Arrival

Not only is it important for a child to be at school each day, but also for them to arrive at school on time. The school day is organised so children have a good start to the day.

School starts at 8.50am doors close at 8.55am. Any child arriving after this time is late and should enter school by the main entrance. Parents should sign in the late book located in the office entrance area of school. Registers close at 9.15am; arrival after this time is recorded as an unauthorised absence and could lead to Penalty Notices being issued.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late, were waiting for their uniform to dry or if no explanation has been given for the lateness at all.

Late arrivals and rewards/incentives.

Pupils will only be rewarded with attendance certificates for the whole academic year if they have no more than 3 late marks within the whole school year. Pupils will only be rewarded with attendance certificates for each half term, if they have no more than 1 late mark within that term.

Unauthorised absences

Absences will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- a pupil's/family member's birthday
- shopping for uniforms
- having their hair cut
- closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "couldn't get up"
- illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- leave of absence taken without the authorisation of school

From 1st September 2013, the law gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday in term time. It makes it clear that Head teachers may not grant any holidays or other absences during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents can receive a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority for taking a child on holiday in term time without the consent of school. From 1st September 2013 these penalty notices cost £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days and £120 per child per parent if paid between 22 and 28 days.

6. EXPECTATIONS

What is expected of the Pupils?

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

- To recognise the importance of regular attendance at school and to do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually.
- To inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are having problems at school which may impact on their attendance.

What is expected of the Parents?

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. Parents should also make sure that the children arrive on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a fit state to benefit from the education offered to them. Parents may be prosecuted if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually. This will be done under the 1996 Education Act and aims to ensure that parents carry out their duty to secure suitable education for their children. Parents are expected

- To provide a home environment and routines conducive to good attendance and punctuality e.g. fixed and suitably early bedtimes/getting up times and suitable breakfast routines.
- To recognise the importance of regular attendance at school and to keep requests for their child to be absent to an absolute minimum.
- To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence.
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness.
- To work closely with the school and Attendance Improvement Officer to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance.
- Not to allow children to take time off school for minor ailments - particularly those which would not prevent you from going to work.
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be refused except in exceptional circumstances.
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as SATS.
- To support their child and recognise their successes and achievements.

What is expected of the School?

The school will endeavour to provide an environment that is conducive in educating every individual pupil. School attendance will be positively supported wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount. The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions. A register of attendance has to be taken once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register has to record whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil is absent the register must record whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

- To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of.
- To meet the legal requirements set out by Government.
- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance.
- To use clear procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention.
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the 1995 education act.
- To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance.
- To encourage open communication channels between home and school.
- To use clear procedures leading to a formal referral to the Attendance Improvement Officer.
- To regularly report to parents and make swift contact if a concern is raised with regards to attendance.
- To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum.
- To appropriately reward pupils for good attendance.

What is expected of the Local Authority?

The Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the Attendance Improvement Service the Local Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. The Attendance Improvement Service is the enforcement agency of the LEA and as well as providing guidance and support through its officers may take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty under section 444 of the Education act 1996. The court may fine the parent and put in place a School Attendance Order (SAO), an Education Supervision Order (ESO) or a Parenting Order.

7. PROCEDURES

Absence

If your child is absent from school, you should notify the school office before 10am by telephone (0161 770 6711). If necessary, leave a message on the answer phone. If your child is absent for more than one day, you should ring each day to give an update, unless your child has a condition with a known incubation period of more than 48 hours. If the school office does not receive adequate notification of the absence of a child, then it will be deemed unauthorised.

School reserves the right to investigate a child's absence and an Attendance Improvement Officer may call at the child's home address to verify illness or other reasons given.

The Head Teacher reserves the right to record an absence as unauthorised even if school has received a letter or phone call. Where a child has persistent absences due to illness and there is no underlying cause, school may refuse to authorise further absences pending medical investigation or production of medical evidence.

Attendance Monitoring by School

Pupil's attendance will be monitored regularly and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern. Blackshaw Lane Primary and Nursery School will share attendance data with the DFE and the local authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Individual pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Support Systems

School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example; bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse/falling out with a friend. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Blackshaw Lane Primary and Nursery School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include but are not exclusive to:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance Panels Meetings
- Parenting contracts/Action Plans
- Referrals to support agencies
- PSHE
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials
- Parental engagement
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour / Pastoral support
- Invitation to Breakfast Club

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered by the school to improve attendance and further unauthorised absence occurs, Blackshaw Lane will consider the use of legal sanctions or the involvement of other agencies.

Legal Sanctions

Where school level intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and attendance will be monitored with an expectation to improve (Fast Track to Attendance) after which legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Order, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Leave of absence has been taken without the authorisation of the school.
- A pupil has accumulated at least five sessions of unauthorised absence and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.

Each such penalty incurs a fine of £120, per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days, which is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the notice being served.

Failure to pay a penalty notice may result in further statutory action being taken against you

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Oldham Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

8. Appendix 1 - Escalation of Attendance Interventions

GREEN = pupils with attendance of 100% to 96%

Parents will receive a certificate congratulating them on their child's good/excellent attendance.

Pupils with this level of annual attendance will receive a green attendance code in their end of year report. If a child's attendance begins to decline or cause concern at any point in the year, this will at first be highlighted to parents in a letter.

AMBER = pupils with attendance between 95.9% and 91%

Parents will be asked to provide medical evidence for absences. Parents may also be invited to an Attendance Panel Meeting where the possible outcomes will be but are not exclusive to:

- All parties confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve.
- Parenting contract agreed.
- Penalty Notice.
- Fast Track to Prosecution Monitoring.
- Referral to Social Care or Early Help.

Where parents fail to attend the meeting without a satisfactory reason and unauthorised absence has occurred, the penalty notice monitoring period will automatically commence.

Relevant Staff will:

- Confirm with the pupil the reason for absence and offer any support that may be required
- Update the pupil on other work they have missed and support any catch up required
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil using sessions rather than percentages that will see the pupil move to the band above
- Agree a review date
- Notify the Attendance Team of any concerns regarding the child's attendance

In addition, where absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review with the pupil/parent, a further letter will be sent to parents advising of concern and possible further action.

The Attendance Team will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes. Records are retained and available for inspection.

The Attendance Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

RED = pupils with attendance below 91%

Pupils who have attendance below 90% are considered to be persistently absent from school. Actions will continue as outlined in the actions for pupils at amber level.

Attendance Team:

- Ensure that parents and pupils (where appropriate) have been invited to be involved to the stages preceding RED intervention
- RED - intervention will occur in cases where the pupil has immediately fallen from GREEN into RED
- Obtain records of previous contact and interventions as set out in AMBER and escalate accordingly

Attendance Team will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes. Records will be copied to a member of the Senior Leadership Team and Head Teacher on a regular basis.

Attendance will be a regular item on the agenda of the Senior Leadership Team and Behaviour and Standards Governor meetings, where the progress of these groups will be reported and the effectiveness of interventions measured. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

The Head Teacher will report termly to the full Governing Body.