




## Blyton cum Laughton Church of England Primary School ATTENDANCE POLICY

Monitoring responsibility	K Duke (Headteacher)
Date ratified	September 2021
Head teacher's signature	
Chair of Governor's signature	
Review date	September 2024

## **INTRODUCTION**

Blyton cum Laughton CE Primary School is committed to providing a full and exciting education for all pupils. The school works in partnership with pupils, parents and outside agencies to support all families to ensure pupils benefit from the education it provides and therefore from regular school attendance. To this end the school will work with parents to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted upon as quickly as possible.

Government guidelines for attendance are currently 96%. The school aims to meet this target as a minimum.

## **AIMS**

Blyton cum Laughton CE Primary School:

- seeks to ensure that all pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for achieving their potential;
- strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, so that each member of our community feels safe and valued;
- will ensure staff work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends regularly and punctually;
- will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate external agencies to provide information, advice and support;
- will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of all pupils to improve their attendance and punctuality;
- will always challenge those parents and pupils who give low priority to attendance and punctuality and invoke proportionate penalties.

## **ATTENDANCE LEGISLATION**

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient, full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that the child may have. This can be regular attendance at school or by education otherwise.

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where she/he is a registered pupil. The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. Only the Head Teacher may authorise absence, after being satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the parent/carer by letter or telephone.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent can be served with a penalty notice by the authorised officer; in this school that person is the Headteacher. Full payment of the penalty discharges the parent from liability for conviction following a prosecution.

## **Data Protection Act**

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the Act. Each school has a Data Protection Notification, which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with external agencies, where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

### **We expect the following from all our pupils:**

- That they attend school regularly.
- That they arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them attending school.

### **How parents can help us:**

- ensure their child arrives on time for school and prepared for the day
- notifies the school if their child is ill on the first day and every following day of absence unless a fixed time is given at that point before 9.30am;
- contact the school at an early stage about any concerns they may have about their child's attendance;
- recognise that the school will be concerned when any child fails to meet the attendance target and work with us to improve their child's attendance;
- attend meetings at school regarding attendance at mutually convenient times whenever possible;
- attend review meetings when requested by Headteacher or his/her representative.

### **Parents and pupils can expect the following from the school:-**

- Regular reports on attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without notification.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us.
- Notification when attendance drops below an acceptable level.
- Support to address any issues that may impact on a child's attendance.

## REGISTRATION

The accuracy of the attendance register is of paramount importance both to provide a solid foundation for analysis of absence and to support any statutory interventions that may be required.

Session starts	Laughton	Blyton
Morning registration	9.00am	8.45 am
Afternoon registration	FS/KS1 - 1.15pm	KS2 - 1.10pm

It is imperative that the data entered is accurate and that there is a mark for every pupil. Every pupil must fall into one of three categories of present, absent or late. We all have a duty of care and are responsible for safeguarding pupils. Therefore, it is vital the information is accurate.

The Headteacher is responsible for maintaining the system of recording accurate reasons for non-attendance. The Headteacher may delegate some of the administration to the School Business Manager/Administration Team. The Headteacher will ensure a rigorous system of liaising with parents takes place and will ensure the correct codes are used to record authorised or unauthorised absences by regular scrutiny of the records. All reasons for absence are recorded on the Management Information System by the Business Team.

All registers will close at 9.30 am. A child who arrives after this time will be marked as late as well as an unauthorised absence.

*E.g. Laughton site starts at 09.00 am. 09.00am – 09:30am (any pupils arriving late should be marked as Code “L” late before register closes) 09:30am onwards (any pupils arriving late should be marked as Code “U”, late after register closes)*

*E.g. Blyton site school day starts 08:45am. 08:45am -09:15am – Code L. 09:15am – onwards Code U*

In the event of bad weather, registers will remain open for a longer period

Pupils leaving the school during the day must be collected by an adult and signed out at Reception. This includes lunchtimes.

Pupils who are persistently late before close of registration will be monitored closely by the School Business Manager and Headteacher and if deemed necessary appropriate action will be taken.

## USE OF DATA

The efficient and speedy collection of the data is essential to the development of effective strategies for action. At Blyton cum Laughton we use attendance data to monitor:

- individual absence and lateness to both school and lessons;
- patterns of lateness and absence and the identification of trends by Year groups;
- seasonal patterns;
- patterns of the nature of unauthorised absences;

- analysis of the attendance of vulnerable groups e.g. SEN (Special Educational Needs), EAL (English as an Additional Language), LAC (Looked After Child), FSM (Free School Meal) and disadvantaged pupils;
- the percentage of unauthorised absence that triggers 'persistent absence' e.g. 10% unauthorised absence over a 6 week period. (equivalent to 4.5 days in a 6 week period, including 'lates' after 9.30 a.m at Laughton and 9.15 at Blyton.

All staff members need to be alert to changes in attendance patterns and raise any concerns with the Headteacher. Teachers should monitor their own pupils' attendance with regard to safeguarding concerns.

### **ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE THROUGH GOOD PRACTICE**

At Blyton cum Laughton, attendance is encouraged by rewards such as:

- a record of attendance on termly reports;
- certificates for improved attendance;
- learning celebrated informally by all adults
- engaging Reading-Inspired Curriculum including relevant experiences
- early identification and support of pupils and parents experiencing difficulties with attendance

### **RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE, POOR ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS**

- If a pupil fails to attend school and no notification as to the reason for the absence is received, the school will telephone the parents to seek a reason for the absence.
- The parents of any child whose attendance falls more than 5% below the school average for that term will be notified in writing of the school's concern and provided with a half termly attendance report so that they can further monitor their child's attendance during the next school term. Support from the Learning Mentor will be offered at this point. If attendance does not improve, parents will be required to attend a meeting with the Learning Mentor and Headteacher so that they can be given support to help improve their child's attendance. Attendance targets will be set for the next period and a plan of support agreed to help the parents and pupil improve attendance.
- Where a child is persistently late to school, parents will be informed either in writing or by telephone and provided with a lateness report for their child. Their child's punctuality will then be monitored over the next half term and an improvement expected. Where lateness remains a problem support from the Local Authority will be sought.

### **AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

**Authorised absence** is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. For all planned absences, parents should apply using a Leave of Absence form available from the School Office.

**The following may be reasons for authorising absences:-**

- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.

- The school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within distance of the child's home, and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LEA for any of the following:
  - i. the child's transport to and from school.
  - ii. boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school.
  - iii. enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home.
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions as stated in the Education Act
  - 1996 Section 444 (6) are met.
- There is a family bereavement.
- The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit.
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion (eg if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling).

*Note:* The absence of pupils taking part in *supervised* educational activities outside the school is recorded as 'approved educational activity'. This is equivalent to 'present' for performance table purposes. To avoid confusion in an emergency, schools should not record pupils who are off-site as present. The following activities show when the approved educational activity category can be used:

- Field trips and educational visits, in this country and overseas.
- Participation in or attendance at approved sporting activities.
- Interviews for a place at another school.
- Franchised pupils receiving part of their tuition off-site at another location while remaining under overall supervision of the home school (ie a flexible arrangement short of formal dual registration). This can include special tuition for dyslexic children and sick children being taught at home but remaining on roll.

Absence should be **unauthorised** if:

- No explanation is forthcoming.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil stays at home to look after the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances).
- The pupil is shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions (eg a birthday).
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday
- The pupil is on a leave of absence without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the absence and instead seek retrospective approval on their return.
- The pupil's leave of absence extends beyond the length of time applied for and authorised by the headteacher.

## FAMILY HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

The school does not authorise leave for the purpose of a holiday in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents are expected to take their children on holiday in the 175 days set school holidays each year. Holiday dates are available in advance on the school website. Examples of exceptional circumstances may be:-

- For children of parents in the Armed Forces, where a parent has been on an extended tour of duty over the school holiday period. (applications should be accompanied by a letter from the commanding officer)
- Where there are medical reasons for a child or family member to take a holiday at a specific time. (applications should be accompanied by a letter from a doctor or consultant)

Examples of circumstances that would not be considered exceptional are:-

- A parent has to work through the long summer break. (there are other school holiday periods)
- A family friend is getting married abroad.
- The family wish to go on holiday to celebrate a special anniversary or birthday.

There is no entitlement in legislation to term time holidays. Holidays taken without requesting leave of absence will not be authorised.

Parents are required to complete a 'Leave of Absence' form at least 2 weeks prior to the date of the intended absence for any absence due to family holidays and the school will carefully consider the circumstances of your request and will also take your child's attendance record into account. Even if the circumstances are exceptional, a holiday in term time is unlikely to be authorised if the child's attendance record is a cause for concern. Parents should provide details of the exceptional circumstances requiring them to apply for a family holiday in term time and this should be accompanied by written evidence from the employer or family doctor. Parents have the right to appeal to the Governors regarding the decision made and complaints should be made in writing and addressed to the Chair of Governors. Any absence due to family holidays in excess of two weeks will be recorded as unauthorised.

**A Fixed Penalty Notice** is a warning of a fine which will be imposed on each parent per child in line with current legislation should the parent take the absence without authorisation. The school will issue warning letters and the Local Authority will be instructed to issue the fine and take forward any prosecutions for non-payment of fines. All proceeds from the fines go to the Local Authority and not the school. Parents should understand that non-payment of a fine may lead to prosecution. This will apply to any parent who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age (5-16 years) who is registered at a state school *or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not found in a public place (including that school from which the child is excluded) without a justifiable reason.*

Any queries about decisions made by the Headteacher regarding authorisation of an absence needs to be referred to the Board of Governors using the school's Complaints Procedure although parents/carers need to understand this decision has been delegated to the

Headteacher and additional evidence will be needed to overturn any decision. The Local Authority is not part of the authorisation process and their decision to consider the issue of fixed penalty notices is based on information submitted by the school. They cannot advise on unauthorised absence requests and will refer the parent/carer back to the school.

## **REVIEW**

This Policy will be reviewed annually.