



# **SHARPLES PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE**

Reviewed by	Governors
Date	October 2020
Approved by Governors	October 2020
Date for renewal	October 2022

## **Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is:

- To ensure pupils' full attendance.
- To give our pupils every opportunity to be successful in their learning.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- To outline parent's responsibilities to support their child(ren)'s learning by ensuring the best possible attendance.
- To clarify the school's policy on term time holiday absence.
- To outline the school's approach to dealing with absence.

Rationale for policy:

- To eliminate the number and frequency of term time holidays.
- To reduce the potential negative impact of absence on children's education.
- To ensure the policy is transparent to Parents and Carers.

## **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

Sharples Primary School expects attendance of at least 95% but aims for 100%. This is in line with Government Policy which states that attendance needs to be 95% to be considered satisfactory.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon Parents and Carers to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance Parents and Carers are always informed of our concerns.

Initially concerns about attendance are raised with Parents and Carers via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support may given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Early Intervention Team.

Absence from school can seriously disrupt a child's learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away but they also have to simultaneously catch up and keep up on their return. This leads to a risk of underachievement which we want to avoid. Research shows that pupil attendance of less than 95% can impact on pupil attainment by as much as a grade or level. An attendance rate of less than 90% makes a child 3 times more likely to fail to get to age related expectations, could dramatically reduce a child's chance of getting 5 good GCSEs, and will impact on the child's earning potential throughout their adult life.

Parents and Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's full attendance – 190 days per academic year. If a child has 10 unauthorised absences (i.e. 5 days) the Parents and Carers are committing an offence. There is no "entitlement" to term time holiday leave of absence. Since 2013 the head no longer has any discretion to authorise term time holidays, and consequently the Headteacher is obliged to decline any such requests.

There may be exceptional circumstances when absence from school on a planned basis is required. On these occasions the permission of the Headteacher must be sought in advance of the absence. Any retrospective requests for absence to be authorized will be declined. In all circumstances, including sickness, the Headteacher reserves the right to decide whether or not to authorise an absence. The Headteacher will be held to account for any decision by the governors and by OFSTED.

Our school Attendance Officer is the Business Manager. The Business Manager will monitor attendance and will deal with all enquiries regarding attendance and requests for authorised absence; when appropriate the Business Manager will then pass the information onto the Headteacher e.g. when a request is at the Headteacher's discretion.

## **Procedures**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with Parents and Carers to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Bolton LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Leadership Team or Business Manager with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Leadership Team where there are concerns.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests in writing for explanation which should be noted inside the register (see Appendix 6).
- Discussing attendance issues at parent evenings where necessary.

### **Senior Leaders**

The Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher are responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance including trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Making referrals to the Early Intervention service.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with Early Intervention.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Meeting with families of very poor attendees.

### **Office staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from Parents and Carers regarding absence.
- Contacting Parents and Carers of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.
- Preparing documentation for the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice.

- Print Attendance Certificates to go home with reports and prior to parents evening.

## **Behaviour Mentor**

Behaviour Mentors are responsible for:

- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Provide early support for families of persistent absentees or with poor punctuality.
- Working with persistent absentees to raise importance of school attendance.

## **Parents and Carers**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence by 0930.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time for the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not usually authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

## **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence as early as possible but no later than 0930. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from Parents and Carers with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Registars are completed in class at the start of the morning and afternoon. Children not in school by 0850 will be marked as absent in the register. Children arriving after 0850 will be marked as late. The register closes at 0930. Children arriving after this time will be marked as late but will be recorded as unauthorised late, which for statistical purposes is the same as unauthorised absence.

If the parents/carers have not contacted school by 0930 the office staff will attempt to contact the family to ascertain the child's whereabouts. If there are safeguarding concerns they will inform the DSL.

## **Illness**

Absences for sickness may be authorised at the Headteacher's discretion provided the parents/carers contact the school at the start of the absence. In all but exceptional circumstances if a sickness is not reported at the start of the absence it will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents/carers to ask them to provide medical evidence for each further period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you to allow for the school to make its own enquiries.

When the child returns to school, the parents/carers should send a letter with the child explaining why the child has been absent.

## **Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013, the government abolished the right of Headteachers to authorise absence for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

## **Monitoring Attendance**

Our office staff has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to Parents and Carers or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with Parents and Carers.

## **Definition of exceptional circumstance**

The test of "exceptional circumstances" is very high and we anticipate that there will be few situations where absence will be authorised on the basis of exceptional circumstances. Such events are unlikely to have happened previously and are extremely unlikely to happen again.

To request any planned absence, parents/carers should use the attached form. Please remember that there will be very few occasions when an absence will be authorised due to exceptional circumstances.

## **Authorised and unauthorised absence**

Some families believe that an authorised absence is better than an unauthorised absence. All absences have a negative impact on a child's education whether authorised or not and consequently all absences should be avoided. All authorised and unauthorised absences count against a child's attendance. Furthermore, when the absence is unauthorised, then the child is recorded as having missed school without authorisation and there is the possibility of a penalty notice and the loss of the school place.

School will not authorise absences in the following circumstances:

- Holiday requests.
- Where there is a retrospective request for absence.
- Where there is a history of poor attendance – i.e. less than 95% in any of the previous three years including current year.
- Where there is failure to satisfy the Headteacher that any request is due to an exceptional circumstance.
- Parent/Carer's holiday pattern determined by employer.
- When a child is not brought to school because the parent/carer or a third party is ill.
- Visiting relatives who are ill.
- Absences of longer than 10 days will not be authorised.
- No part of an extended overseas visit will be authorised.

School will authorise absences in the following circumstances provided we are notified in advance

- Medical appointments on production of appointment card/appointment letter.
- Sickness – at the Headteacher's discretion.
- Religious Holidays – maximum one day in any one occasion.

## **Procedure for repeated unauthorised absence**

If a child has 5 unauthorised absences (i.e. 2½ days) over 2 half terms the school will issue a letter warning the parents/carers that their child has had 5 unauthorised absences and the possible consequences of further unauthorised absence. They will also be invited in to school to discuss the absences. If a child has 10 unauthorised absences (i.e. 5 days) we will notify the Local Authority that a Penalty Notice must be served on the parents/carers and the case may be referred to the Early Intervention Team at the Local Authority.

## **Procedure for children taking unauthorised holiday absences**

If a child is taken on an unauthorised holiday, after 5 days, the headteacher will tell the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice to be served on the parents/carers. The school is not required to send a letter when the absence is due to an unauthorised holiday in term time. After 20 days of unauthorised absence the child may be removed from the school roll; should that happen the place would be taken by any child on the waiting list and the parents run the risk of not having a place for their child on their return.

## **Punctuality**

When children are persistently late their progress in school can be severely impeded. They have to walk in to a class that is already settled and can be left feeling very awkward and unable to concentrate. They also miss vital teaching input at the start of a lesson and then may not be able to engage in the lesson through lack of understanding. Parents and Carers must then make every effort to ensure that their children are not late for school.

School starts at 8:50am in the morning and 1:10pm in the afternoon. Children arriving after that time will be marked as late. Registers are closed at 0930; children arriving after that time are marked as late. However, if a child arrives after the register closes this is recorded as an unauthorised absence and will be dealt with the same as all unauthorised absences, i.e. a warning letter will be issued after 5 unauthorised absences and a Penalty Notice issued after 10.

## **Appendix 1 - Frequently Asked Questions**

Information from Bolton Local Authority

### **What counts as unauthorised absence?**

Any absence from school that the school has not permitted or cannot give permission for

Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps) (i.e., wagging school)

Inappropriate parentally-condoned absence (i.e., you know your child is absent from school and you do nothing about it)

Holidays in term-time or delayed return from a period of leave of absence which has been approved.

Late arrival at school (after the register has closed at 9am)

### **Is a warning given?**

Yes. The school will send you a formal letter of warning telling you that a Penalty Notice may be issued. This warning letter will also include details of your child's absences. If you receive a warning letter this is an opportunity for you to work with the school to improve your child's attendance and avoid the need to issue a Penalty Notice.

Your child must have no further unauthorised absences from school from the date of the letter. If your child's unauthorised absence continues and reaches 10 sessions (5 school days) or more, a Penalty Notice will be issued.

### **What is a Penalty Notice?**

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution. You have to pay a fine but you do not have to appear in court. You also have to make sure that your child's attendance at school improves.

Payment of a Penalty Notice enables Parents and Carers to discharge potential liability for conviction.

### **What are the costs?**

£60 if you pay within 21 days of receipt of a Penalty Notice or £120 if you pay after this but within 28 days. (Per parent, per child)

### **How are Penalty Notices issued?**

They are posted to your home.

### **Is there an appeal process?**

There is no right of appeal by parents/carers against a Penalty Notice.

### **How do I pay?**

This information is on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option.

**What happens if I don't pay?**

If you don't pay the fine in full, within 28 days Bolton Council is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for the original offence of poor attendance by your child.

If proven this can attract a range of fines up to £1,000 and/or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences depending on individual circumstances.

**Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?**

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. A prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Penalty Notice, depending on your circumstances.

If the poor school attendance persists the Local Authority may also consider prosecution under Section 444 (1A) of the Education Act 1996, which can carry a fine of up to £2500 and/or imprisonment.

If this is an issue it is really important that you work closely with your child's school and support services like the Early Intervention Service.

**Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?**

Yes. Bolton Council and your child's school will provide you with advice and support.

Contact  
Child Employment and Enforcement Officer  
Early Intervention Service  
2nd Floor, BASE  
Marsden Road  
BOLTON  
BL1 2PF  
Tel: 01204 338173

**Appendix 2 – Letter to be sent to parents and carers at start of school year where attendance previous academic year was <90%.**

Attendance of (Insert Child's Name)

Dear (Insert Parents/Carers name)

In the last school year (Child's Name) attendance was XXX%. This is below the Rate of 95% that government says is the minimum to be satisfactory. Furthermore, being below 90% your child is classed as a persistent absentee. All registers are completed electronically and recorded in the town hall where your child is now registered as a persistent absentee.

Good attendance is vital for children to make the best progress they can. All education research shows that being absent can have a detrimental effect on all children's education and increases the likelihood of the child being a "drop-out" from Higher Education. As little as two weeks can affect end of year grades and current research says that your child's attendance of less than 90% will seriously impede their chance of attaining 5 good GCSE's and affect their earning capacity in the future.

It is for this reason that the Local Authority with the backing of Bolton LA Schools are becoming more stringent in prosecuting unauthorised absences and have reduced the number of sessions needed to 10 before triggering a penalty notice. This will mean from September 2018 5 days unauthorised absence will be enough for a penalty notice to be issued and will bring Bolton in line with neighbouring Local Authorities.

You must ensure that your child attends school for every possible session. While sickness will be authorised, absence through sickness still impacts on a child's learning. I would ask that if you are not sure how poorly your child is, then send them to school as if they become worse we will contact you. Also, if a child suddenly improves dramatically – as often happens when they think they are having a day off – then please bring them in to school.

However, sickness should not be used as an excuse when a child is kept off for different reasons and the school does not have to authorise an absence if there is reason to believe the child was not sick e.g. if the child says that they have had five days holiday the absence would not be authorised. Please remember also that if a child arrives after the register has closed then even though they are in school this is recorded as an unauthorised absence – this is the law and not a school rule.

For 2020- 21 please ensure that your child attends school for every possible session so that their rate of attendance improves and they make the best possible progress. If you would like any support in improving your child's attendance or punctuality please contact school. We have a new behaviour mentor who will be working in school one day per week who will be glad to help. Just call and ask for Mrs Samways.

Yours sincerely

Mrs G Partington

**Appendix 3 – Letter to be sent to parents and carers at start of school year where attendance in previous academic year was at least 90% but less than 95%.**

Attendance of (Insert Child's Name)

Dear (Insert Parents/Carers name)

In the last school year (Child's Name) attendance was XXX%. This is below the Rate of 95% that government says is the minimum to be satisfactory.

Good attendance is vital for children to make the best progress they can. All education research shows that being absent can have a detrimental effect on all children's education and increases the likelihood of the child being a "drop-out" from Higher Education.

It is for this reason that the Local Authority with the backing of Bolton LA Schools are becoming more stringent in prosecuting unauthorised absences and have reduced the number of sessions needed to 10 before triggering a penalty notice. This will mean from September 2018 5 days unauthorised absence will be enough for a penalty notice to be issued and will bring Bolton in line with neighbouring Local Authorities.

You must ensure that your child attends school for every possible session. While sickness will be authorised, absence through sickness still impacts on a child's learning. I would ask that if you are not sure how poorly your child is, then send them to school as if they become worse we will contact you. Also, if a child suddenly improves dramatically – as often happens when they think they are having a day off – then please bring them in to school.

However, sickness should not be used as an excuse when a child is kept off for different reasons and the school does not have to authorise an absence if there is reason to believe the child was not sick e.g. if the child says that they have had five days holiday the absence would not be authorised. Please remember also that if a child arrives after the register has closed then even though they are in school this is recorded as an unauthorised absence – this is the law and not a school rule.

For 2020- 21 please ensure that your child attends school for every possible session so that their rate of attendance improves and they make the best possible progress.

Yours sincerely

Mrs G Partington

**Appendix 4 Letter to be sent to parents and carers at start of school year where attendance in previous academic year was <95% but where child had sustained illness.**

Attendance of (Insert Child's Name)

Dear (Insert Parents/Carers name)

In the last school year (Child's Name) attendance was XXX%. This is below the Rate of 95% that government says is the minimum to be satisfactory.

Good attendance is vital for children to make the best progress they can. All education research shows that being absent can have a detrimental effect on all children's education and increases the likelihood of the child being a "drop-out" from Higher Education.

We do appreciate that last year your child had a lot of illness that was unavoidable and we hope that this year they will be more lucky with their health and have a better rate of attendance. After having so much time off last year it is important that this year they have maximum possible attendance so that they will achieve as much as they can.

If you would like any support in improving your child's attendance or punctuality please contact school. We have a new behaviour mentor who will be working in school one day per week who will be glad to help. Just call and ask for Mrs Samways

Yours sincerely

Mrs G Partington

**Appendix 5 – Letter to be sent to parents warning they are in danger of receiving penalty notice**

Re: Attendance of (child's name) – Risk of Penalty Notice

Dear (name of parent carer)

During the last half term and this half term your child has had xxxxxxxx unauthorised absences. Consequently you are at risk of being served a penalty notice (a fine).

As you know, Bolton has reduced the number of unauthorised absences a child can have to 10 before a penalty notice is served. Should your child get to 10 unauthorised absences this will trigger the process to serve the penalty notice. I am therefore urging you to make every possible effort to make sure that your child has no further absence of any sort.

I would also remind you that a child gets an unauthorised absence for any absence if you do not tell the school in advance, or if they arrive late after the register closes.

If you are having difficulties in getting your child to school you may want to call school to make an appointment with Mrs Samways to see how we can support you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs G Partington



Appendix 7 – Parental request for planned absence



**Sharples Primary School**  
**Request by Parent/Carer for a planned pupil absence**

Childs name		Year	
First date of absence		Date of return	
Total school days planned to be absent			

Reason for planned absence (please tick)

Religious Observance	
Medical /Hospital Appointment	
Dental Appointment	
Other authorised circumstances	

Further details: Please give further details of your request for absence - failure to do so will compromise your request.

**POLICY PRINCIPLE: AUTHORISED ABSENCES WILL BE THE EXCEPTION. THE RULE WILL BE THAT HOLIDAY ABSENCES CAN NOT BE AUTHORISED**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent / Guardian Date \_\_\_\_\_

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY	
Previous absences	
Current Attendance	

Absence authorised / unauthorised

Head teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CC: Parent/Carer,; School File