



Context:

Oxenhope Church of England Primary School recognizes that the management of attendance is central to the success of pupils and the school in general. Whilst there is an understanding that absence from school is sometimes unavoidable the school will do everything it can to ensure absence is kept to a minimum for all pupils. Our school believes that having poor attendance can also impact negatively on a pupil's progress through school and needs to be addressed.

Policy Statement & Aims :

The aim of this policy is to ensure that absence from school and lateness are minimized through clear practice that is understood by staff, pupils and parents.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. We would recommend that where ever possible medical/dental appointments should be made out of school time. If this is not possible then you are required to bring some written confirmation of the appointment to the school office. Written confirmation from clinic or surgery could be in the following ways:

- Text message
- Letter
- Email
- Appointment card

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time unless in exceptional circumstances.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to

cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Exceptional circumstances:

Oxenhope Church of England Primary school uses guidance from the National Union of Head teachers when making the decision as to authorise or un-authorise an absence. These are outlined as:

- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave
- Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time
- Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities
- Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.
- Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.

Head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason (i.e. attend for less than 85%). Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Holidays in Term Time:

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not to take children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

We will no longer authorise applications for holidays during term time.

Penalty Notices:

The following information has been taken from, 'Penalty Notice Code of Conduct – Revised August 2014'

Legal Basis:

Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated LEA officers, Headteachers (& Deputy and Assistant Headteacher's authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 came into force on 27 February 2004.

The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform with all requirements of the Human Rights Act and all Equal Opportunities legislation.

Bradford Council has the prime responsibility for developing the protocol within which all partners named in the Act will operate.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.

Use of Penalty Notices will be unrestricted and parents may receive more than one penalty notice for the same child in any academic year, particularly in cases where unauthorised leave of absence/holidays in term time occurs. The Education Social Work Service will consider a prosecution under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 where a penalty notice have previously been issued.

In cases where families contain more than one poor-attending pupil, multiple issue may occur but this will be the subject of careful consideration and co-ordination.

There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent/carer may receive a formal warning of a possible issue of a Penalty Notice.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps),
- parentally-condoned absences,
- unauthorised leave of absence/holidays in term-time,
- excessive delayed return from authorised holidays without prior school agreement,
- persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed),

To ensure consistent delivery of Penalty Notices the following criteria will apply:

- at least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil in a period of 6 school weeks.
- other than in specific circumstances* the liable parent/carer will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a maximum of 20 school days to effect an improvement. An attendance target will be issued with the formal warning.

** the deliberate taking of a holiday in term time without the school's permission or where permission has been denied (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parent/carer understood that permission had not/would not be given) and where this has created a period of unauthorised absence of at least 10 sessions.*

Consultation between a school and the relevant officer from the Education Social Work Service should take place before considering whether a Penalty Notice would be appropriate in order to ensure that all cases are consistent with the agreed criteria.

Procedure for issuing Penalty Notices:

The Education Social Work Service will issue Penalty Notices in Bradford.

Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an on the spot action; this to satisfy that all evidential requirements are in place and to meet Health and Safety requirements.

The Education Social Work Service will receive requests to issue Penalty Notices from schools, West Yorkshire Police and neighbouring LEAs. These requests will be actioned provided that:

- all relevant information is supplied in the specified manner,

- the circumstances of the pupil's absence meets all the requirements of this Protocol,
- the issue of a Penalty Notice does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other enforcement sanctions already being processed.

The Education Social Work Service will respond to all requests within 10 school days of receipt and where all criteria are met will:

- issue a formal written warning to the parent/carer of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued,
- in the same letter set a period of 20 school days within which the pupil must attain the specified target,
- issue a Penalty Notice through the post at the end of the 20 day period if the required level of improvement has not been achieved.
- Immediately issue a Penalty Notice, at the request of a school, where leave of absence/holiday in term time has been taken without seeking the permission of the school or where permission has been denied and where that school has a clear policy in place that has been widely communicated to parents, that penalty notice fines will be issued for unauthorised leave of absence/holidays in term time.

For further information on Penalty Notices please refer to the Bradford Schools Online website <https://bsb.bradford.gov.uk/content/absence-in-term-time>

Children Missing from Education:

Since 2006 Bradford Council has had in place robust procedures to support schools when children go missing from education.

These procedures are in line with the Local Authorities statutory duty under Section 436A of the Education and Inspections Act 1996 and requires all local authorities to make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving a suitable education. In relation to children, by 'suitable education' we mean efficient full-time education suitable to her/his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have." These responsibilities are also in place in order that children are safe from harm. Going missing from education for any reason is damaging to the well-being of a child/young person, but of even more concern is when the disappearance from school is an indication that a child/young person's safety is at risk.

Over the last four years the Education Social Work Service has supported schools to successfully trace numerous pupils who have gone missing with their families. This has been achieved by close cooperation and information sharing arrangements with a number of key agencies across Bradford. The service has also supported children who have lost their school places following a period of leave of absence and more significantly thousands of children new to Bradford have been assisted to find appropriate school places.

Bradford Council is also part of the National network for children missing education and we have given and received support from local authorities in tracking and tracing children missing from education.

Oxenhope Church of England Primary School uses the document '**Children Missing Education: Guidance for Schools' - December 2016**

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence either in person, by email or telephone.
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already reported the absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Monitor your child's attendance and write to you if your child's attendance falls below 96% or 90%.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers once a year.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable.

If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school doors open at 8.45 a.m. The school day starts at 9.00am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by 9.05am and your child will receive a prompt mark (a circle) in the register which will alert administrators to contact parents and or carers if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive an official late mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach the school at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

School Targets:

The school has targets to improve attendance and all families have an important part to play in these.

The minimum level of attendance for our school is above 95% attendance. At this level, however, the school falls into the 2nd lowest quintile when compared to similar schools and all schools nationally. We therefore need to strive to improve our attendance to 96% and above in order to maintain our 'Good' status. We know that excellent attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best

Attendance is a key factor measured by outside agencies such as OFSTED and SIAMS.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Any concerns must be discussed with the Headteacher.

Policy written by Alice Jones June 17