



## Brackley Church of England Junior School

*'We are a Caring, Celebratory, Courageous, Christ-inspired Community rooted in love.'*

# Attendance & Absence Policy

Policy Ownership	SLT
Statutory Requirement	Yes
Date reviewed & adopted by committee	September 2025
Review Date	September 2027



# Brackley Church of England Junior School



## Attendance & Absence Policy

### School Values

*'We are a Caring, Celebratory, Courageous, Christ-Inspired Community rooted in love.'*

### Statement of Intent:

Brackley C of E Junior School believes that for a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel safe, valued and welcome.

Every child has the right to access quality first teaching and learning. We strive to work with parents and recognise the joint responsibility parents and school staff share to actively promote excellent school attendance and punctuality.

For our children to benefit fully from the educational opportunities offered at Brackley CE Junior School, it is vital that they arrive at school on time unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. We believe that every moment counts and learning begins as soon as children enter their classroom in the morning.

The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are lifelong skills which children will need when leaving school and starting at a place of work. Successful attainment, social skills, a healthy mental wellbeing and securing future aspirations rely heavily on excellent attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attendees make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attendees find school routines, schoolwork and friendships easier
- Regular attendees find learning more satisfying
- Regular attendees transition more easily between primary school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training.

We understand that where barriers to attendance exist, they can be complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

## **Role and Responsibilities**

### **Attendance Officer (Headteacher)**

The headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the day-to-day implementation and management of this policy. The headteacher will also ensure that the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school and that attendance is both recorded accurately and regularly analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to mitigate any difficulties. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/ carers the reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

### **Class Teacher**

The class teacher will ensure that all pupils are registered accurately. They will actively promote good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities. If the class teacher has concern over a child's attendance/ change in attendance, they will make contact with the families to share their concerns. They will also liaise with the Attendance Officer and SENCO (where relevant) on matters of attendance and punctuality. The class teacher will communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may explain a child's absence from school and support children with absence to re-engage with their learning once they are back in school.

### **Pupils**

Pupils will attend school everyday unless they are ill or have an authorised absence. In the event of absence that is not due to illness, this can only be authorised by the Headteacher.

### **Parents & Carers**

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/ carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law. Parents will:

- Inform the school on the first and each day of absence.
- Request planned absence in advance in writing.
- Support the school in aiming for 100% attendance for their child each year.
- Provide the school with a reason for every absence from school.

- Avoid taking children out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

## Attendance Expectation

**At Brackley CE Junior School, our schoolwide expected attendance is 95%.**

If your child misses 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason, they are considered to have **persistent absence**.

If you take your child out of school for an accumulative total of 5 days or more (10 sessions) (90%) over a period of 10 weeks, the school will deem this as **irregular attendance** and will consider a referral to the Local authority for consideration of legal action.

This could include:

- a Penalty Notice payable up to £160 fine
- prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000
- prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment

## Recording Attendance and Punctuality

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to pupils and parents. It is important to be on time for the start of the school day and afternoon session as the start of sessions is when class teachers give out instructions or organize learning activities. When a child is late, they miss learning time with their class teacher and receiving vital information which can cause embarrassment for the child or disruption for others.

- Children can arrive from 8:30a.m. and go straight into class. The school day begins at 8:40a.m. and all pupils are expected to be in school for this time and the morning register.
- Morning registration closes at 8:45a.m. and children receive an attendance mark, when in class, before registration has closed.
- If a child arrives after registers have closed (after 8:45a.m.) a late mark will be recorded together with how many minutes late the child is. Late marks, together with absence marks, are analysed by the School Attendance Support Service (SASS).
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Please be advised that evidence of medical appointments will be requested and that where possible, doctors and dentist appointments are to be made outside of school hours.

## What to do if my child is absent

Any child absent from school is potentially a safeguarding matter and this is why a reason for absence will **always** be required. Parents are required to contact the school office via telephone or email before 9:00a.m. on the first day of their child's absence and provide an explanation for the absence.

Where a pupil is absent and their parent has not contacted the school by the close of the morning register to report the absence, the school will contact the parent by telephone as soon as is practicable on the day.

The school will always follow up on any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

If the school cannot make contact with you to ascertain why your child is not in school, we may consider it appropriate to undertake a home visit – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child’s safety as well as their regular school attendance.

## **Authorising parental absence requests**

All requests for absence should be addressed to the headteacher in writing and in advance. The decision to grant or refuse the request lies solely with them, in their capacity as headteacher. Parents should not assume that permission will be granted. The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence **in exceptional circumstances** and is unlikely to grant a leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. The headteacher’s decision is not subject to appeal. The headteacher cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that are not approved by the headteacher in advance will be marked as unauthorised. Parents are expected to contact the headteacher in writing at least two weeks prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

A request for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods.
- When a pupil’s attendance record shows any unauthorised absence.
- When a pupil’s authorised absence record is already above 10% for any reason.

Term time absence will be referred to the Local Authority and could incur a fixed penalty notice.

## **Religious observance**

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least two weeks in advance. The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day when the pupil’s parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

## **SEND and health-related absences**

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will provide support to pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with

any EHC plans or IEPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. All pupils will be supported with their mental health in accordance with the school's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there have been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan.
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through the Common Assessment Framework.
- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes.
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out.
- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence.
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons.
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

## **Working with parents to improve attendance**

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The school will ensure that there are at least two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

## **Monitoring and analysing absence**

The Attendance Officer will monitor and analyse data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence, for:

- The whole school
- Individual year groups
- Individual pupils
- Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds
- Other groups of pupils, e.g. pupils with SEND, LAC and pupils eligible for FSM
- Pupils at risk of Persistent Absence

The attendance officer will conduct a thorough analysis of the above data on a **half-termly, termly** and **full-year** basis to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

- Patterns in uses of certain codes.
- Particular days of poor attendance.
- Historic trends of attendance and absence.
- Barriers to attendance.

The attendance officer will provide regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures. The attendance officer will also be responsible for monitoring how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future.

The governing board will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

The school will also benchmark its attendance data against local, regional and national data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools.

## **Attendance enforcement policy Rationale**

### **WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at schools is, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, a legal requirement, parents being responsible for ensuring that any 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 the child may have.

Compulsory school age is defined as commencing at the start of term on or after a child's fifth birthday and concluding on the last Friday in June of the school year in which the pupil becomes 16.

It is essential for pupils to attend school regularly in order to maximise the opportunities available to them. The School Attendance Support Service investigate cases of irregular attendance and instigate statutory intervention where appropriate.

This enforcement policy aims to promote good practice and the principals for good enforcement, summarising how to conduct enforcement with openness, setting standards and consistency, to:

- to uphold the law fairly
- prevent and detect offending
- act with integrity, common sense and sound judgement

In doing so the School Attendance Support Service will ensure that:

- when an allegation is reported or an offence suspected of being committed a thorough investigation will follow
- the exercise of legal powers should not be oppressive to the issue under investigation
- as far as operationally practical and with due regard to an individual's right to confidentiality, investigations should be as transparent as possible in keeping those involved up to date
- we will take reasonable steps to understand the individual's needs, e.g. culture, religion, belief, sexuality, lifestyle, disability etc. (Race Relations and Equality Acts), have regard for vulnerable adults and children and respect the professional ethics of others

Any consideration for a prosecution should meet both the evidential test and also the public interest test. All cases should have due regard to the Crown Prosecution Service code of conduct.

### **Guidance and Legislation**

The School Attendance Support Service is authorised to operate this code and must have regard to the following legislation and guidance:

- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Attendance and Enforcement Policy September 2020 review September 2021
- The Race Relations (Statutory Duties) Order
- 2001 Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Data
- Protection Act 1998
- Children Act 1989
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Special Needs Code of Practice 2003
- Ensuring School Attendance: Guidance on the Legal Measures to Secure Regular School Attendance 2003

- Education Act 1996
- Working together to improve school attendance guidance (August 2024)

The School Attendance Support Service supports the Local Authority in carrying out their statutory duties with regards to promoting regular attendance at school.

Irregular attendance raises complex issues. Pupils may be failing to attend school for a variety of reasons. Some reasons may be outside the immediate control of the school, but good practice and appropriate responses within the school to identify the needs can help to improve attendance.

It is therefore important that there are clearly defined criteria and procedures for referring non-attenders to the School Attendance Support Service. The importance of early identification, assessment and intervention cannot be over emphasised.

### **Policy for Prosecution**

The parent/s of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to achieve regular attendance will be considered for legal processing unless there are extenuating circumstances.

### **Education Act 1996 Section 444 - Failure to Ensure Regular Attendance**

**Section 444(1)** - Where a parent/carer is failing in their duty to ensure regular attendance at school and school have made attempts to engage and support. Where, following this intervention the unauthorised absence continues and no statutory defences apply, the School Attendance Support Service will consider instigating legal proceedings.

**Section 444(1A)** - Where a parent/carer is failing in their duty to ensure regular attendance at school and school have made attempts to engage and support. Where, following this intervention the unauthorised absence continues and no statutory defences apply, the School Attendance Support Service will consider instigating legal proceedings.

Where it can also be proved the parent/carer knew about the poor attendance and failed, without reasonable justification to ensure regular attendance then legal enforcement will be taken under this section.

In the case of both s444 and s.444 (1a) an unpaid Penalty Notice (issued in accordance with the LA Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (revised August 2024) may form part of the evidence.

### **Education (Penalty Notice) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**

**Penalty Notices (PN) for Non-School Attendance** - These will be issued as an alternative to Magistrates' Court proceedings wherever it is appropriate and in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct.

To issue a PN, there should be 5 days (10 sessions) or more unauthorised absences in a 10-week period however we would expect schools to follow their attendance procedures in identifying the issues and putting support in place.

**Penalty Notices for term time absence** - These will be issued as an alternative to Magistrates Court Proceedings whenever it is appropriate and in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct.

To issue a PN, there should be 5 days (10 sessions) or more of consecutive unauthorised absence.

### **Determining whether to issue a penalty notice or take court proceedings**

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices issued by DfE, the following changes will come into force for School Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19 August 2024.

### **National Threshold**

There will be a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England of 10 sessions (a school day is 2 sessions - morning and afternoon) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years.

### **First Offence**

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days. Increasing to £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court

### **Second Offence (within 3 years)**

The Second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court

### **Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)**

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case could be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court. Prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000. Prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment."

If the School Attendance Support Service is already moving towards a prosecution relating to ongoing unauthorised absence and the pupil has unauthorised leave of absence, no PN should be issued for this and the unauthorised absence should be included in the prosecution period.

Where a child has had 2 periods of unauthorised leave for which the parent has been issued with a PN, on the third occasion, no PN will be issued and that parent will be prosecuted under S444(1) as long as parent was warned that this would happen.

Where a parent has previously been prosecuted for a period of unauthorised leave, unless there is a reason not to, the usual action for a further occasion of unauthorised leave would be to proceed to Court and not to issue a further PN.

In the case of ongoing unauthorised absence, unless it is not in the public interest to proceed, Penalty Notice or legal enforcement action may be taken when the level of unauthorised absence exceeds 10% or more. Penalty Notice payment levels are fixed in law.

However, where there is sufficient reason to allow payment beyond the 28 days, this will be agreed. The decision on whether there is sufficient reason rests with the School Attendance Support Service Prosecution Officer who may agree late payment in order to ensure consistency and fairness.

Penalty Notices issued in relation to unauthorised leave of absence are referred to in the School Attendance Support Service Penalty Notice Code of Conduct. Prosecution will follow if Penalty Notices are unpaid.

Where a case requires further investigation prior to making a decision whether to proceed to Court, the parent/s may be requested to attend a Formal Caution Interview under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

The duty of instigating court procedures sits with West Northamptonshire Legal Services.

A certificate signed by the head teacher confirming the child's school attendance during the period of prosecution referred to in the summons will be required as documentary evidence by the court. Only unauthorised absence can be used in evidence.

If parents are acting responsibly but cannot ensure regular attendance of their child/children because of the attitude of the child/children then consideration should be given to applying for an Education Supervision Order.

### **Education Supervision Order (ESO)**

An ESO is an Order made by the Family Proceedings Court under Section 36 of the Children's Act 1989. The initial order is for 1 year but application can be made to extend the order yearly for up to 3 years. The court must be satisfied that a child of compulsory school age is not being properly educated and that the making of the order would be better for the child than making no order at all.

In addition, the court shall have regard in particular to:

- the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned (considered in the light of the child's age and understanding)
- the child's physical, emotional and educational needs
- the likely effect on the child of any change in circumstance
- the child's age, sex, background and any characteristics that the court considers relevant
- the capability of each parent in meeting the child's needs together with any other person whom the court considers appropriate
- any harm the child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering
- the range of powers available to the court under this Act in the proceedings in question

Under the terms of the Order, the Supervising Officer must "advise, assist and befriend" the child and the family, whilst the child and family must abide by the "directions" that the court lays down and any other reasonable direction of the Supervising Officer. Failure by the parent to follow these directions would mean returning to court when a fine of up to £2,500 could be imposed. In addition, the parent may be imprisoned for up to 3 months.

Failure by the child to follow these directions could lead to the statutory involvement of social care.

There may be some situation in which an ESO is unlikely to be effective. Where, for example, parents would be hostile to such intervention. It may not be possible to undertake the structured programme of work that is necessary. At all times, the Supervising Officer will need to operate within a structure that defines clear aims and objectives.

This will be requiring a planned and realistic programme of intervention, including directions where necessary, which will specify how the aims and objectives are to be achieved. The active involvement of parents, children and schools will aid the success.

Education Supervision Orders, as the name implies, require a great deal of time spent with the pupil supervising them and encouraging them to change patterns of behaviour. They have a limited effectiveness, as many of the strategies that could be applied may have already been tried. Where parents are cooperative this relationship can effectively be developed through Early Help support teams rather than applying for an Order.

### **Exclusion Penalty Notices**

For a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school and is excluded from that school either for a fixed period or permanently, their parent or carer is guilty of an offence under Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 if that child is present in a public place during school's hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion.

### **Parenting Orders**

The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act allows courts to make a Parenting Order for cases on non-school attendance brought under sections 443 and 444 of the Education Act 1996. The aim of the order is to increase parenting support and to encourage parent/s to develop better parenting skills.

A Parenting Order can consist of 2 requirements:

- a requirement of the parents or guardian to attend counselling or guidance sessions, these can last up to 3 months
- a requirement encouraging the parent or guardian to exercise a measure of control over the child - that the parent ensure that the child attends school regularly)

These orders can last up to 12 months.

### **Education Act 1996 Section 443 - Failure to Comply with School Attendance Order**

Where a parent or carer is failing in their duty to ensure their child is receiving an education in accordance with section 7 Education Act 1996, i.e. in that the child is not on roll at a school, nor is the parent or carer making their own arrangements for that child's education, the School Attendance Support Service, having followed the requirements under Section 437- 442 of the Act issues a School Attendance Order.

Where the parent/carer fails to comply with the Order, a Section 443 prosecution will be taken in the Magistrates' Court.

**Last updated 29 August 2024**