



Pupil Attendance Policy

Policy owner	CEO
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Introduction

At St Barnabas Multi Academy Trust, our mission is rooted in *The Parable of the Talents*. We believe that every child is a unique gift, endowed with talents and abilities meant to flourish in community. It is our goal to nurture these talents, helping children to live fulfilling lives. We also recognise that regular attendance is essential to both safeguarding and educational success, ensuring every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential in a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment.

1. Aims and Purpose of the Policy

We are committed to ensuring high levels of school attendance and punctuality by:

- Promoting the importance of consistent attendance and taking steps to address absenteeism, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring all pupils have access to full-time education and meet their entitlement.
- Highlighting the value of learning, ensuring every lesson counts.
- Addressing patterns of absence at an early stage.

In addition, we will support parents in meeting their legal duty to ensure children of compulsory school age attend school regularly and on time.

2. Legal Framework and Guidance

Regular and punctual attendance of students at school is set out under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

This policy meets the requirements of the updated Working Together to Improve School Attendance which became statutory in August 2024 from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

All schools make the necessary statutory data returns to the local authority and Secretary of State.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees are responsible for:

- Recognising the importance of school attendance and promoting it across the Trust's ethos and policies.
- Ensuring leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing Trust attendance data, discussing, and challenging trends
- Appointing a Trust attendance lead who helps school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most and who shares effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools.

3.2 The Local Governing Board

Governors are responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school, on behalf of the Trust Board on at least a termly basis.
- Monitoring the implementation and impact of this policy, reporting any concerns to the Trust Board.
- Ensuring school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

3.3 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Making sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Establishing and maintaining an effective culture of attendance at the academy
- Whole school absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supervising staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Providing evidence for prosecution to Cornwall Council
- Providing evidence for fixed-penalty notices to Cornwall Council
- Monitoring of attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Working with education welfare officers to reduce absence across the whole school population
- Ensuring the correct use of the school system used to record and monitor attendance
- Agreeing any part-time timetables within the school

3.4 The Attendance Champion is responsible for attendance

Please note in some of our schools the headteacher may undertake this role or some of these tasks may be delegated to a Designated Attendance Support Officer or administrator.

The Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Maintaining effective systems for tackling absence
- Having a strong grasp of absence data at the school and individual pupil level and benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Reporting concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Working with external agencies including education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advising the Senior Leadership Team when pupil absence crosses thresholds that require action (eg. Advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices)
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- taking the class register twice a day and submitting this information to the school office. The register is taken electronically using the MIS. Class teachers to positively promote good attendance and alert SLT to any concerns they have or any patterns they notice in regard to attendance.
- liaising with children and families to promote the need for good attendance.

3.6 School Office staff/Designated Attendance Support Officer

Designated staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record any explanations provided by the school system. Any unexplained absences are promptly followed up by the designated office staff or Attendance Support Officer with an electronic message or telephone call home to the parents/carers to ascertain the reason for the non-attendance.

3.7 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every session on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.40am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence unless a doctor's note has been provided), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with at least 2 emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Engage with Attendance Contracts if and when the need arises.

Who is considered a parent in education law?

Parent' as set out in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, defines parent to include: natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and; any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with said child.

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 Attendance Register

We maintain an accurate attendance register, taken at the start of each session (morning and afternoon). Pupils will be marked as:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

See Appendix 1 for the DfE Attendance Codes.

The office staff will make any notes on the register with details of the reason for the absence.

At school, pupils arrive from 8:40am each school day when doors open.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am on each school day and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1.30pm. Any child arriving after these times will be marked as 'late'.

All amendments to the register will include details of the original entry, the reason for the change, the date of the amendment, and the name and position of the person making the change.

4.2 Unplanned Absence

Parents must notify the school by telephone of any unplanned absence by 9:00 am on the first day of absence. Absences due to illness will generally be recorded as authorised unless there are concerns about authenticity, or where a family is requested to provide medical evidence and this evidence is not forthcoming.

4.3 Planned Absence

Parents should notify the school in advance for any planned absences, including medical or dental appointments, which are encouraged to be scheduled outside school hours. Term-time absences for other reasons will only be granted under "exceptional circumstances" as determined by the headteacher.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed children will be marked as unauthorised late, using the appropriate code. This means that children arriving after this time will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark. It will mean that they have an unauthorised absence unless the explanation for the late arrival is accepted by the head teacher, in which case they will be marked as late using the appropriate code.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with a member of school staff and/or the Education Welfare Officer to resolve the problem. Please feel free to approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school. Should we be unable to resolve any ongoing lateness issues, we reserve the right to bring forward the close of the register. This may mean that your child's lateness could be recorded as unauthorised which could result in the Education Welfare Service considering enforcement proceedings against you. We will always inform you in writing should this action be necessary.

5. Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for an unavoidable reason like illness/medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable cause. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

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 Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Examples of this type of absence include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained or where supporting evidence has not been received
- 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.

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 or anxious about attending school, 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 makes things worse. Any pupil who has attendance below 95% may be asked to provide medical evidence.

5.1 Following up absence

If any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason
- Ensure schools safeguarding protocol and process is followed
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

5.2 Reporting to parents

Attendance is reported to parents every term. Parents may also request attendance figures for their child from the office.

In addition, we notify parents in writing when a child's attendance falls below 95%, 93% and 90% respectively. Please note: a pupil is classified as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. The school looks at ways to support the family with improving attendance and may involve the education welfare officer as needed.

5.3 Legal sanctions

Where a child is absent from school without authorisation, the parent(s) will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. Schools have the right to submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action.

Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court. Schools will collaborate with the Education Welfare Officer who will oversee this process on behalf of school.

5.4 Leave of Absence 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 taking children away in term 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.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school to go on holiday and the government made an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 to reflect this.

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless —

(a) an application has been made in advance to the headteacher by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides: and

(b) the proprietor, or a person authorised by the headteacher in accordance with paragraph (z), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

All applications should be made in writing to the Headteacher at least 20 school days prior to the requested leave date. Where the decision is made not to authorise leave in term time, school will inform parents/carers in writing. Please do not book a holiday before being given permission for absence from the school.

A general guide for parents is leave for any holiday, activity or event that could be arranged during the annual 13-week holiday time would not be authorised.

On any occasion that school refuses a request for leave in term time, should a parent/carer proceed with the leave it will be recorded as code (G) (family holiday not agreed or in excess of agreement), on the school's register.

Where a leave of absence has been unauthorised, penalty notices will be considered in line with Cornwall Council's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence or children present in a public place whilst excluded from school. St Barnabas Trust will ensure that the Trust Inclusion Officer considers the exceptional circumstance before any decision is made to unauthorise a leave of absence request where the issue of a Penalty Notice is required.

Failure to notify and/or request leave of absence in term time, providing at least 5 days notice may result in all absence being recorded as (O) (unauthorised absence not covered by any other description).

As of 19th August 2024, there will be a new national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions for any reason (equivalent to 5 school days) within a rolling 10 school week period for when a penalty notice must be considered.

The new legislation means you will no longer be able to take your child out of school for one week's holiday without the consideration of a penalty notice being issued.

There will be an increase in the penalty fine from £60 to £80 if paid in 21 days. If the fine is not paid by the first 21 days, it will rise to £160 if paid within 28 days of being issued.

If a second penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period, the fine will automatically rise to £160 with no option to pay the lower rate of £80.

If a parent then commits a third offence in a 3-year rolling period, the local authority will need to consider other enforcement options available to them. This could include a parenting order or prosecution. If you are prosecuted you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.

6. Pupils with Ongoing Medical Conditions

Parents/Carers should inform the school of any medical conditions that could impact on Attendance and Wellbeing. A Healthcare Plan should be agreed with Health Services on how to ensure the pupil is able to access their full potential and attend school. In some cases, a child can be educated at home whereby the school environment is detrimental to either condition or causes a risk (of infection etc.) to said pupil. Pupils should not be penalised if their absence from school is related to their medical condition, such as attending hospital appointments. To avoid being fined for non-attendance, parents must

obtain permission from the school in advance of the appointment, so that the absence can be treated as authorised. An absence can also be authorised if the child is too ill to attend school and the school is notified of that as soon as possible.

A school should not encourage non-attendance, such as sending a pupil with medical conditions home frequently or preventing a pupil from staying for normal school activities, including lunch. This will only be justified if it is in accordance with the pupil's individual healthcare plan and is necessary.

If a child is regularly sent home at lunch or placed on a part-time timetable which has not been fully agreed to, these absences may amount to unofficial exclusions. The Equality Act 2010 states that the school's governing bodies or proprietors must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that children and young people with disability are not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to other students. Therefore, some pupils may be exempt from the consequences of poor attendance due to their, but only if their poor attendance is supported with medical evidence from medical practitioners.

The Children and Families Act 2014 includes a duty on schools to support children with medical conditions. This is inclusive of children with conditions such as diabetes. Schools must make arrangements for supporting pupils at schools with medical conditions and in meeting that duty they must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. We give you details on attendance in our regular correspondence and remind parents about the importance of good attendance on our newsletter. We talk to the children about the importance of good attendance. We meet and discuss attendance issues with families and offer relevant support when needed.

At St Barnabas we promote and celebrate attendance in many ways. For example:

- Our home-school agreement
- Regular communication regarding attendance in school newsletters, reports, and social media
- Individual attendance monitoring, with termly updates provided to parents
- Incentives such as certificates for excellent attendance
- A warm welcome from the class team
- An 'open door' policy for parents and carers to seek support and advice
- A rich and exciting programme of learning
- A strong focus on personal development, further supported by an exciting outdoor adventure programme.

8. Attendance monitoring

The school office/attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis. Attendance is reviewed at least every half term. A pupil's parent/carer is required to inform the school before 8:50am if their child is going to be absent due to ill health.

Regular contact will be made during periods of absence by the school.

Attendance and absence data is analysed regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and the school uses this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.

The school looks at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develops strategies to address these patterns.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

8.1 Staged Approach to Tackling Absence

1. Initial Concern (Attendance falls below 95%)

Parents will receive a letter or communication to highlight the importance of regular attendance.

2. Monitoring and Support (Attendance below 90%)

Further communication or meetings will be arranged with parents to identify the reasons for absence and provide appropriate support both within school and externally.

3. Legal Action (Continued absence)

If attendance issues persist, formal interventions may be introduced, including the consideration of issuing a fine in accordance with government guidance on enforcing school attendance.

8.2 Reducing persistent and severe absence

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Send letters to parents of those children who are at risk of becoming persistently absent
- Half-termly attendance monitoring/tracking meetings
- Closer monitoring of identified children

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the executive leadership team and approved by the board of trustees. It will be updated in line with new guidance from the local authority or DfE.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding

- Behaviour
- Health and Safety
- Pupils with Medical Conditions

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, weather or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

