

Bell Farm Primary School

Attendance and Registration Policy



The staff of Bell Farm Primary School are committed to developing a sound partnership with the Local Authority, parents, pupils, governors, and others, to build a school which serves the community commendably, and of which the community is proud.

All pupils benefit from regular school attendance. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. This reflects the UN Convention – The Right of the Child, by ensuring all children have a right to primary education.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school 100% of the time, unless an absence is authorised by the Headteacher;
- attend school punctually;
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day;
- discuss with their class teacher any problems preventing them from attending school.

We expect that all parents/carers that have day-to-day responsibility for the children and young people will:

- encourage full school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually; prepared for the school day and that they have completed their homework;
- ensure that they contact the school whenever the child/children is/are unable to attend school;
- contact the school every day of the child's absence. You may be required to send medical evidence.
- contact the school whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

We expect that school staff will:

- provide a welcoming atmosphere for children;
- encourage good attendance;

We expect that the designated member of school staff will:

- provide, a safe learning environment;
- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily;
- monitor all pupils' attendance and punctuality;
- contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- make initial enquiries to parents/carers of pupils who are attending irregularly, to express their concern and to clarify the school's and the LA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance;
- refer on-going irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Inclusion Service;

Term time leave of absence

If an absence during term time is unavoidable and exceptional an Application for Absence form must be completed prior to the absence. This can be obtained from the school office. Family holidays must be booked during the school holidays, these are published a year in advance. Absences due to holidays are not authorised. The Headteacher will decide whether or not to authorise the absences. If the absence is unavoidable and exceptional a decision will be made with regard to the following:

- the child's record of attendance;
- the length of the absence requested
- the circumstances surrounding the request for absence
- the timing of the absence and ensuring that it would not prevent the child from missing any important examinations/assessments.

If a child has been missing from school for 20 days or more continuously the school may remove them from roll providing all three of the following conditions are fulfilled:

1. At no time was the absence during that period authorised by the school.
2. There are no reasonable grounds to believe that the child is unable to attend due to sickness or any unavoidable cause.
3. Both the school and the local authority have jointly made reasonable enquiries and failed to ascertain the child's whereabouts.

During the first ten days of absence, schools must make reasonable attempts to locate the child and facilitate his/her safe return to school. Enquiries should include writing to the parents, attempting to make telephone contact with parents, appropriate friends and relatives, speaking to other children and parents and home visits.

Schools should refer to the Inclusion officer, on day 11 of the child's absence. The Inclusion officer will support the school's efforts to locate the child.

Changing schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school that they inform Bell Farm school staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from Bell Farm school roll until the following information has been received and confirmed:

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- the address of the new school;
- the new home address, if it is known.

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school staff have not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Inclusion Service.

Encouraging Attendance

Bell Farm School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- providing a caring and welcoming learning environment;
- praising good attendance and punctuality;
- accurate and punctual completion of registers during morning and afternoon registration. If pupils arrive to register after the close of the register, without a written explanation, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and

the pupil's name recorded by their parent/carer on the electronic sign in system and then transferred to SIMS;

- monitoring of irregular attendance by the admissions and attendance officer, who informs the parent in writing, arranging meetings with them if necessary and refers the family to the Inclusion Service if the issue continues;
- offering support and assistance, where possible.

Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school, we will respond in the following manner:

- on the first day of absence, if no telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 9am, the school will endeavour to contact them, by text, promptly.
- If by the end of the second day there has still been no contact made, it may be necessary to carry out a home visit. If the absence persists, a referral may be made to the Inclusion Service.
- failure to comply with the expectations set by the Inclusion Service may result in further action, i.e. court prosecution.
- If a child's attendance falls below 90% we will seek advice from the Inclusion Service.

Penalty Notices

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount. The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013, state that the Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

- Where a child is taken out of school for 5 days or more and the "leave of absence" is without the authority of the headteacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child** who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.
- Unauthorised leave of absence in term time (5 days/10 sessions or more within a three-month period – this does not need to be consecutive) without authorisation of the school. Each parent will be liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In the case of separated parents, the penalty notice will be sent to the parent requesting leave of absence and/or taking the pupil out of school. No written warning will be given where it can be shown that the parent/carer had previously been warned of their liability to receive a Penalty Notice.

- Pupils identified by police and inclusion officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences. The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning from the Inclusion Service of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a maximum of 15 school days to improve. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further unauthorised absence. Where a formal warning letter has been issued to parents, the Local Authority will monitor the attendance for a maximum of 15 school days and issue a Penalty Notice by first class post if the Local Authority determine that an acceptable level of attendance has not been achieved.
- When an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours within the first 5 school days of an exclusion without justifiable reason. No written warning will be given where it can be shown that the parent/carer had previously been warned of their liability to receive a Penalty Notice.
- Where attendance has fallen below 90% and there are no less than 7 unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Education Welfare will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.
- Unauthorised absences or late arrival at school after the close of registration (currently 9:20am) on 7 occasions in any six-week period (not including school closures). The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning from the Inclusion Service of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a maximum of 15 school days to improve. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further unauthorised absence. Where a formal warning letter has been issued to parents, the Local Authority will monitor the attendance for a maximum of 15 school days and issue a Penalty Notice by first class post if the Local Authority determine that an acceptable level of attendance has not been achieved

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

For School Staff only

School Organisation

In order for this policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers should also support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this there are the following specific responsibilities.

Headteacher, Governors and designated member of school staff with overall responsibility for attendance to:

- adopt the whole policy;
- initiate contact with parents in cases of unexplained absence and lateness before referring to the Inclusion Service, (unless there is justifiable cause for concern when contact is required speedily, in which case immediate referral to the Inclusion Service may be necessary);
- ensure that key staff have time-tabled periods for liaison and follow up work with the Inclusion Service;
- consult and liaise closely with the Inclusion Service on a regular basis and take responsibility to ensure appropriate referrals are identified and instigated without delay;
- work in close collaboration with the Inclusion Service during their termly/half termly register analysis;
- organise attendance assemblies, awards etc;
- monitor and evaluate attendance with the Inclusion Service.
- follow up any unexplained non-attendance;
- follow up an unexplained lateness;

Class teachers to:

- positively encourage good attendance and punctuality;
- complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily;
- record all reasons for absences in the register;
- record all reasons for lateness in the register;
- inform the designated person in charge of overall attendance/SLT of concerns;
- be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to SLT.

Status of Non-Statutory Policy	Date
Authored by Valerie Blackwell	January 2011
Revisions added by Anne Cooper	April 2016
Policy reviewed	January 2023
Agreed by Staff	February 2023
Agreed by Governors	N/A
Review	Every 2 years (January 2025)