

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Statement

For pupils to benefit fully from the educational and extracurricular opportunities provided by Barfield, they must have high levels of attendance and punctuality. Ineffective registration or poorly executed follow-up procedures can increase the risk of educational underperformance or put children at risk. It is also recognised that poor attendance or repeated lateness can indicate a safeguarding concern. Consequently, attendance and registration arrangements are important and must be seen to be regarded as such by pupils, parents and staff.

Aims

This policy aims to provide a clear, consistent and cohesive framework which conforms with statutory requirements and that promotes high levels of attendance and punctuality of pupils at the School, as well as outlining clear procedures for identifying and addressing situations where pupils fail to attend regularly or punctually, or go missing, so that:

- Procedures and lines of responsibility within the School are clear as regards:
 - Attendance and Registration;
 - Authorisation and Clearance of Absence and Lateness;
 - How and when to report concerns, including identifying and addressing any situation where a pupil goes missing from School;
 - Staff, parents and pupils are aware of, understand and can readily comply with statutory regulations and School rules governing attendance;
- Absences and instances of lateness are identified and recorded systematically and accurately and followed up quickly and appropriately in ways that promote high levels of attendance and punctuality and enable action to be taken quickly to identify and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Pupils make the most of the educational opportunities at Mowden.
- The School fulfils its responsibility to notify the local authority when pupils register or deregister outside standard transition times.

Statutory Framework

The legal framework governing school attendance is summarised in *School attendance: Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (2020)*, published by the Department for Education (DfE). The School also complies with guidance published by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI). The Department for Education *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023*, statutory guidance highlights that children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines.

Responsibilities of Parents

Parents with a child of compulsory school age have a legal duty to make sure that their child receives efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and ability (and to any special education needs they may have). Compulsory school age lasts from the term after a child's fifth birthday up to the last Friday in the month of June in the academic year of their sixteenth birthday.

Parents are responsible for informing the school on every occasion when their child is unable to attend due to illness, or a medical appointment, providing the reason for non-attendance. This should be done by completing the absence request form as far as possible in advance and by the very latest by 8.15am on the morning of the absence. Parents can also telephone by 9.00am on any morning when their child is unable to come to school because of illness. By selecting 'Report an Absence' on the school switchboard and leave a message.

Parents wishing to take their child out of School for exceptional reasons (such as attending a funeral or wedding, religious observance, elective surgery, or involvement in a regional or national extracurricular sporting competition) must seek authorisation for the absence from the School by filling out the absence request form at least a week in advance of the proposed date(s) of absence. The Head will confirm whether the circumstances meet the definition of 'exceptional circumstances' for which leave of absence may be granted by the School.

The School will monitor, investigate and follow up any apparent patterns of absence or persistent or unauthorised absence, and will offer support to parents and pupils if appropriate. Where parents fail to ensure regular attendance and do not engage with the School, they will be reported to the Local Education Authority.

Parents must notify the School if their child is registered at another School and/or leaving Barfield. Where a parent notifies the school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school, the school must record in the admission register:

- The name of the other school
- The date of when the pupil first attended, or is due to start attending, that school.

Responsibilities of Pupils

Pupils have a responsibility to attend school when they are fit and well and to arrive at School in time for registration each day during term time. Failure to attend school regularly or punctually, or failing to attend registration without good reason, or leaving the School without permission constitute breaches of the School's Behaviour Policy and may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Pupils who have extra curricular lessons (such as Tennis, LAMDA and Music) lessons during registration must excuse themselves from any lesson affected.

Responsibilities of the School

The School has a legal responsibility for taking and maintaining an accurate School Register of all pupils twice each day throughout term time: once at the beginning of the morning session and once in the second (afternoon) session. Every entry in the Register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made. The register must be kept from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the School. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the School must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

The School must notify the local authority within five days of adding any pupil's name to the register where that pupil is added to the register at the start of any year. The School must provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil including name, date of birth, gender, address, names and contacts of those with parental responsibility.

The School must notify the local authority where Contact the local authority if a pupil of compulsory school age is to be deleted from the school register at a nonstandard time, and if a pupil joins the school at a non-standard time.

The School SLT analyses attendance data in order to intervene as early as possible and support pupils and parents appropriately.

The School is also required to inform the LEA of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a period of 10 days or more. The School will inform the LEA if any pupil falls below 90% attendance for the year.

The School will also inform the relevant LEA and/or Children's Social Care (CSC), as appropriate, immediately if:

- A single absence raises child protection concerns (see the [Missing Pupil Policy](#) and the [Safeguarding Policy](#));
- A pupil has ten days of unauthorised absence (other than for reasons of sickness or leave of absence)

Responsibilities of the Staff

- Complete registers during the Registration Period
- Report any concerns regarding absence to the Assistant Head (Pastoral)
- Let Staff know of any absence due to illness, a medical appointment, or Interview/Taster Day/Step-up Day.

NB Tutors must not approve or authorise a leave of absence for family holiday or sporting activity. Such leave must be agreed between the Head and the parents in advance. The Head informs the Form Tutor of all leave of absence granted.

Responsibilities of the Class Teacher

- Highlight any pupils who are absent from their class, but who have not excused themselves and who are marked as Present on the Register
- Report any concerns regarding absence to the Head of Lower or the Head of Upper School

Responsibilities of the Registration Administrator

- Register pupils arriving after 8:35am as late
- Email a list of unexplained absent pupils to Tutors.
- Finalise the Register.
- If there are still unexplained absences at 10:00am, alert the parents to their child's absence, either by email or phone, or both.
- If no contact is received from parents by 11:00am to explain the absence, inform the Assistant Head (Pastoral)/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will decide whether to invoke the Missing Pupil Policy.
- Contact the local authority if a pupil of compulsory school age is deleted from the school register at a nonstandard time, and if a pupil joins the school at a non-standard time.
- Report any concerns regarding absence to the Assistant Head (Pastoral)

Responsibilities of the DSL

- Analyse attendance data to monitor patterns of lateness and absence.
- If Tutors are not convinced about medical absence, seek clarification with the parents and/or medical professionals.
- Follow up with any teachers and/or tutors who routinely fail to complete registers during the Registration Periods.
- Where a pupil's attendance has been flagged as a concern, follow up and intervene as early as possible and support pupils and parents appropriately.
- Contact the relevant LEA with any concerns about any pupil's attendance and in any case where a pupil has ten days of unauthorised absence (other than for reasons of sickness, confirmed by medical evidence);
- Contact children's social care services if a single absence or repeated absences raise safeguarding or child protection concerns (see the Missing Pupil Policy and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)

Responsibilities of the Head

- Authorise a leave of absence if the circumstances meet the definition of 'exceptional circumstances'
- Inform the Form Tutor and Assistant Head (Pastoral) of any approved leave of absence

Registration Procedure

The Tutors of pupils have primary responsibility for registering their tutees in the morning. Tutors will take the attendance register at the start of each session of each school day during the Registration Period (RP). A second attendance register will be taken at Lunch by the duty member of staff.

Registration Period

- Pupils should be at school by 8:30am, so that they are present for registration in their Form rooms.
- Tutors must register pupils as Present or Absent using the appropriate code using the ISAMS Registration module.
- Pupils must not be registered present unless they are sighted by the Tutor during the Registration Period.
- Pupils arriving after 8:35am must be recorded as late and should report to the Office to register their presence and explain their lateness.
- At 9:20am the Office will email a list of unexplained Absent pupils to Tutors.
- All teachers must check the emailed list of absentees and email any corrections to registration or register the child themselves.
- If they are still not cleared at 10:00am the Office will alert the parents to their child's absence, either by email or phone, or both. If no contact is received from parents by 11:00am to explain the absence, the Office will inform the Assistant Head (Pastoral)/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will decide whether to invoke the Missing Pupil Policy.
- The school morning register closes at 11am. Any arrivals after this time must be given the appropriate absence code.

Appendix 1

Attendance - Information for parents

All children will have days when they're not able to go to school, whether that's due to illness, holiday or a family emergency, and the occasional day off is unlikely to affect their education. However, missing too much school can be seriously detrimental. Children who miss a substantial amount of school fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up. Friendships can be affected by persistent absence, too: it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their classmates.

A pupil whose attendance falls below 90% may not be entered for external examinations.

Poor attendance often starts at Prep school, and children who fall into this pattern are likely to underachieve at their Senior School.

How does attendance affect outcomes for pupils?

Being in school is important to a child's achievement, wellbeing, and wider development.

Government research has found that pupils who performed better both at the end of primary and secondary school missed fewer days than those who didn't perform as well.

The data also shows that in 2019, primary school children in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6) who didn't achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths missed on average four more days per school year than those whose performance exceeded the expected standard.

Evidence also shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

What are the risks of missing a day of school?

Every moment in school counts, and days missed add up quickly. For example, a child in Year 6 who is absent for three days over a half term could miss 30 lessons in total.

A child who misses school just twice per month during term time will lose out on 16 days' education across the school year – that's over three weeks.

The higher a pupil's attendance, the more they are likely to learn, and the better they are likely to perform in exams and formal assessments.

Data from 2019 shows that 84% of Key Stage 2 pupils (Years 3 to 6) who had 100% attendance achieved the expected standard, compared to 40% of pupils who were persistently absent across the key stage.

What absences can be authorised?

You should only allow your child to miss school if they are ill, or if you have advance permission from their Form tutor or Head. The following types of absence may be marked as authorised:

- Illness: you must notify School on each morning of absence, either by emailing their Form tutor by 8:15am, or calling the School Absence line by 9:00am.
- Medical or dental appointments, although you should try to arrange these outside school hours if possible.
- Offsite educational activities: this could include music, dance or drama exams, or participation in a sporting event.
- Leave of absence authorised by the Head (such as time off due to Religious observance, bereavement).
- Holidays authorised by the Head, who must specify how many days are approved. These will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

Parents wishing to take their child out of School for exceptional reasons (such as attending a funeral or wedding, religious observance, elective surgery, or involvement in a regional or national extracurricular sporting competition) must seek authorisation for the absence from the School by completing the online absence request form at least a week in advance of the proposed date(s) of absence.

Absences where the parents haven't given the school a reason are also recorded as unauthorised.

If your child is late to school and the registers have closed, they will be marked as an unauthorised absence, even if they turn up later in the day.