

# BURLINGTON JUNIOR & BURLINGTON INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOLS

**POLICY TITLE: Attendance Policy**

**Persons with Responsibility:** Mrs S Yay-Walker, Mrs P Utting

## **Key Legislation:**

Education Act

## **Policy History:**

<b>Issue No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>	<b>Next Review Date</b>
1	Feb 2013	MC		Spring 2015
2	Feb 2015	SYW/JH	Slimmed down and used RBK model policy	Spring 2018 or as required
3	Feb 2018	SYW/TE	FPN added to start Sept 2018	Autumn 2019
4	Oct 2018	SYW	Added Appendix 1	Autumn 2019
5	Sep 2019	SYW	No changes	Autumn 2021
6	Jan 2020	PU, SYW	Amendments P2,3,5	Spring 2023
7	Nov 2020	SYW	Updates	Autumn 2023
8	June 2022	SYW	Updates	Autumn 2023
9	July 2023	PU SYW	Updates	Summer 2023

## **Equality Statement**

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for our stakeholders with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in our community.

# **BURLINGTON JUNIOR, INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL**

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **Introduction**

Burlington Juniors, Infant and Nursery Schools aim to work together with parents in order to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality for all children. Regular attendance is crucial to children achieving their full potential in learning, in making friends and feeling more settled and happier in school. We closely follow the Local authority guidelines on attendance.

Regular school attendance is essential for children to make the most of the educational opportunities that are available to them. Good attendance ensures better progress both academically and socially, improves children's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life.

Poor attendance and punctuality can also be an indicator of a safeguarding issue. Monitoring attendance is a statutory responsibility and part of the safeguarding procedures for our schools and we track attendance and punctuality very closely.

### **Aims**

To promote regular attendance thus offering all children equal access to learning.

Parents need to be aware that the schools will discuss and share absence information where children from the same family are in both the Junior and Infant School.

### **Parent Responsibility in the Law**

The Education Act 1996, Part 1, Section 7 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives efficient full time education. Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence have to be reported to the School's Governing Body, the Local Authority (LA), and the Department for Education (DfE).

Parents and carers must ensure that they support the school's attendance policy as any absence will have a large impact on their child's learning. Regular school attendance is essential and parents and carers, together with our school staff have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved.

### **The offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance**

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Since 2001, a more serious offence has been introduced, which requires proof that the parent was aware of the child's non-attendance and failed to act. Under this higher offence a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court. Prosecution under section 444(1A) can lead to a custodial sentence.

- If the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to come to school, e.g chickenpox,

## **Categorisation of absences**

Absences may be categorised as **authorised** in the following circumstances:

- If the school is satisfied the child is ill.
- Any periods of absence 3 days+ - medical evidence must be provided.
- If the child has to attend an urgent hospital or therapy appointment. Evidence must be provided, and where possible, these should be arranged out of school time.
- Where the school is satisfied that unavoidable circumstances prevented attendance, e.g. extreme weather conditions resulting in school closure.
- Where there has been a family bereavement. - 1 day authorised for the funeral and 1 day authorised for travel.
- Family weddings - 1 day authorised for the wedding and 1 day authorised for travel
- For 1 agreed day of religious observance
- Where a child has been temporarily excluded.
- Any other **exceptional** reasons [An appointment must be made with the head teacher to discuss this in advance]. All agreed absence is at the discretion of the Head teacher.
- Any applications for a 'Performance Licence' to the Local Authority Educational Welfare Service (EWS) are not an indication of absences being authorised. With such applications, the child's current overall attendance and attainment will be considered. For a request to be authorised, the child must maintain satisfactory attendance at the time of each request for absence. If a child falls into the Persistent Absent category (PA = attendance below 90%), the request for performance related absence will not be authorised. If all the above requirements are met, a maximum of 1 day's absence in one term may be granted.

Absences will be regarded as **unauthorised** in the following circumstances:

- Where a pupil is absent without prior notification and no explanation is provided for absence.
- Where the explanation is unsatisfactory and the absence could have been avoided, e.g. woke up late, sibling/parent was ill, family outings, coming home late the night before, relatives visiting/visiting relations, birthdays.
- Where the school has reason to doubt the validity of parental explanations.
- Where a child is off for medical or sickness reasons immediately prior or after a school holiday for 3+ days, and no evidence is provided – e.g. 1 day sickness, 4 days unauthorised absence due to holiday
- Holidays and trips abroad in term time will be unauthorised.
- Leave taken during term time which is not deemed exceptional.
- Where there is a pattern of poor attendance, broken weeks and no medical evidence has been provided
- Senior staff or our family support officer may also carry out a home visit after 3 days if a parent is unable to come to school in person to sign an absence form.

**If a child is absent from school for more than 20 days, without prior permission from the Headteacher, their name may be taken off the school roll and their place offered to another child.**

## **Roles and responsibilities**

**The governing board has overall responsibility for:**

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.

- Supporting the school in promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Providing support and challenge to the school to ensure good attendance for all.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data, e.g. termly in Headteacher's reports.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Having regard to KCSIE when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring that the Children Missing Education guidance is in place within the Safeguarding policy which is regularly reviewed and updated.

#### **The headteacher is responsible for:**

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

#### **The School's Responsibilities**

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school.
- To maintain accurate registers twice daily and to monitor attendance regularly.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- To complete official returns on pupil attendance.
- To record individual children's absences on their records of achievement, and maintain in children's personal files.
- To acknowledge and reward good attendance and punctuality.
- To inform parents if their child's attendance rate falls below 95% (concern), and 90% (Persistent Absence or PA).
- To work to support families and pupils with difficulties affecting regular school attendance e.g. through an Attendance Agreement.
- To follow up continual pupil absences, patterns of absence or lateness with parents, and record and report concerns to the Education Welfare Service.
- Unexplained absences are followed up by texts, phone calls and/or letters as soon as possible after the registers close.
- To make home visits where no contact has been established and an absence remains unexplained.
- To report to the Education Welfare Service any children whose attendance falls below 90% (PA) or pattern of absence is a cause for concern.

#### **The Attendance Lead is responsible for:**

- Meeting with parents if their child's attendance falls below 95%
- Meeting with parents of PA children (attendance below 90%)
- Meeting with parents of children that are consistently arriving late for school (after the registers have closed).
- Putting in place an Attendance Agreement, outlining parents' concerns and school's concerns, along with an action plan to improve the attendance
- Offering pastoral and parenting support where appropriate, including advising parents in setting basic routines, childcare and development, managing behaviour of children as appropriate

- Carrying out home visits where no contact has been established and an absence remains unexplained, or in the case of a vulnerable child, contact social services.

### Parent's Responsibilities

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details and updating the school if their details change.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- To ensure that children attend school regularly and are on time. Starting times are 8.30 and 12.30 for Nursery, 9.00 for Infants and 8.50 in the junior school.
- To inform the school by 8:50am by telephone, email or via the school's website, on the first day of a child's absence, with an explanation for the absence
- To ensure that prolonged periods of absence are avoided. This includes any trips during term time.
- Only in exceptional cases, where leave of absence is required, a parent can make an application in writing on the school's 'Application for School Absence for Exceptional Circumstances' form, giving the reason for the request. This must be done at least a month in advance and may be followed up by a meeting with the Headteacher and/or the school's Attendance Governor.
- To avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day
- To work with the school and EWO to improve lateness and attendance

### School's Procedures

- In order to improve attendance, we are monitoring the school registers on a regular basis. If your child is flagged up as having a low attendance rate, or is late on a regular basis, we will contact you and ask you to explain why. You will also be expected to demonstrate that your child's attendance and punctuality will improve with immediate effect. In the event that your child's attendance rate does not improve, you may receive a Penalty Notice.
- Children who arrive after the registers have closed (8:55 for juniors) should report to the school office where parents will be required to complete a late form in the infants, your child will then be taken to their classroom by a member of the office staff. In the juniors, office staff will sign the child in and children will then take themselves off to class.
- If your child is late because they have been attending a medical appointment, please provide evidence in the form of an appointment card or hospital letter. Their absence will be authorised.
- Parents will be contacted by telephone by 9.30am if they have not informed the school of the reason for their child's absence. If we cannot make contact with you, you may receive a home visit from The Family Outreach Worker. **If we still can't contact you and we do not hear from you within 5 days, we have a legal obligation to make a referral to Social Services on the 6<sup>th</sup> day as your child has become a Child Missing from Education [CME].**

- When an explanation for absence has not been provided, parents will be asked for proof of absence. Without it, the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- When a child's attendance falls below 95% without reasonable explanation, parents will be contacted to discuss child's attendance. Their attendance will continue to be monitored.
- If attendance falls below 90% a letter will be sent. If we do not see an improvement in attendance, you will be invited in for a meeting with the Headteacher and/or Family Liaison Officer. Should attendance continue to cause concern, the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer will be requested by the school.
- Children whose attendance remains below 90% are identified as 'Persistent Absentees'. This level of attendance immediately prompts the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer. The Educational Welfare Officer will meet with parents or may carry out home visits where attendance is a concern.
- **Ongoing poor attendance can indicate a safeguarding concern/neglect and will prompt the school to follow its safeguarding procedures including a referral to Social Services.**
- If a holiday is taken, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the Educational Welfare Officer will be notified and Fixed Term Penalties considered.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)**

Since 2004, Local Authority officers (Education Welfare Officers or EWO), Headteachers (or Deputy/Assistant Headteachers) and the Police have had the power to issue fixed penalty notices for unauthorised absences. A fixed penalty notice (FPN) can also be issued if a parent or carer fails to ensure their child is not present in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion. Burlington schools reserve the right to issue FPNs according to the 'Penalty Notices Practice Guidance for Schools' issued by AfC in 2014.

For Achieving for Children's 'FPN Code of Conduct for Schools' please look [here](#).

There are two levels of fixed penalty notices which will be issued by the local authority to **each parent/carers for each child** absent from school:

- £60 fine if paid within 21 days
- £120 fine if paid later than 21, but within 28 days

FPNs may be considered appropriate when input from the EWS has failed to affect a return to school and in the following specific circumstances.

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence in any 5 week period;
- Parentally condoned absence;
- Unauthorised term time leave (includes holidays): any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave of more than 10 sessions (5 school days), not authorised by the school under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a penalty notice;
- Unauthorised delayed return from extended holidays;
- Where a child is off for medical or sickness reasons immediately prior or after a school holiday, totalling an absence of 5 days, and no evidence is provided – e.g. 1 day sickness, 4 days unauthorised absence due to holiday

**Senior staff or our family support officer may also carry out a home visit after 3 days if a parent is unable to come to school in person to sign an absence form, and where no medical evidence has been supplied.**

- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed) equivalent to 10 occasions in any 5 week period (even where attendance for the whole academic year is above 90%).

### **Who receives a Fixed Penalty Notice?**

FPNs are issued to any parent whether married or not, to each parent/carer for each child. Any parent who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children's Act 1989 for a child.

Please see Education Welfare Service guidance in Appendix 1, 'Fixed Penalty Notices: Information for Parents and Carers'

### **Child Missing Education (CME)**

As a school we follow the guidelines as set out in AfC's 'Educational Welfare Information and Guidance for Schools' May 2022 which can be found [here](#). Children missing education falls under the school's safeguarding duty.

### **Encouraging attendance and punctuality**

Burlington encourages regular attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- By responding promptly to a child or parent's concern about the school or other pupils
- By informing parents in writing of irregular attendance, including lateness by accurate and punctual completion of registers during morning and afternoon registrations
- By publishing attendance statistics
- By celebrating good attendance and punctuality through certificates and prizes
- By educating our children through assemblies, through lessons in relation to the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality as a crucial part of becoming successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens
- Monitoring punctuality every day to encourage good punctuality
- A termly celebration with for those achieving 100% attendance and 100% punctuality for a whole term.

### **Late collection**

School closes at 3:20pm for YR - Y2, at 11:30am/3:30pm for Nursery, and Junior School closes at 3.25pm. Parents must ensure that their child is collected on time every day. In addition, extra-curricular clubs finish up to 4:30pm. If a child is collected late either from school or a club, this can be distressing for the child and also mean that staff who have to supervise late children beyond the school day are taken away from their scheduled work. This can also result in staff needing to stay beyond the end of their working day. If this happens the child will be taken to our Junior after school club Acorns and a fee will be charged. In exceptional circumstances, this cost may be waived at the discretion of the Headteacher. **In extreme circumstances, regular late collection can also indicate a safeguarding issue and the school will follow its safeguarding procedures.**

## **Appendix 1 Fixed penalty notices: information for parents and carers**

### **Education Welfare Service**

#### **What is a fixed penalty notice?**

Since 2004, local authority officers (typically education welfare officers), headteachers and the police have had the power to issue fixed penalty notices for truancy/unauthorised absences. A fixed penalty notice can also be issued if a parent or carer fails to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during the first five days of exclusion.

There are two levels of fixed penalty notices:

- £60 fine if paid within 21 days
- £120 fine if paid later than 21, but within 28 days

Parents or carers who pay the fixed penalty notice within the time limit cannot later be prosecuted for the offence to which the fixed penalty notice relates. The money paid as a result of fixed penalty notice is retained by the local authority.

#### **Who receives a fixed penalty notice?**

Any natural parent whether married or not.

Any parent who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the children's Act 1989 for a child or young person.

#### **What if I don't pay?**

Should a parent not pay the notice within 28 days, the local authority will prosecute for the offence to which the fixed penalty notice relates rather than for non-payment of the fixed penalty notice.

The disposals available to the courts will generally include, for example, a fine of up to £1,000 or a conditional discharge. You may wish to seek your own independent legal advice in respect of this.

#### **Can I appeal against a fixed penalty notice?**

There is no right of appeal against the fixed penalty notice, however if you believe it to have been wrongly issued, you should contact the school immediately. Once issued, the fixed penalty notice will only be withdrawn in the following circumstances.

- Proof has been established that the fixed penalty notice was issued to the wrong person.
- The fixed penalty notice did not conform to the terms of the code of conduct.
- The fixed penalty notice contains a material error.

Should the fixed penalty notice not be withdrawn and you do not pay, you may be prosecuted under s444 of the Education Act 1996. A court will consider the evidence and determine the appropriate punishment.