

Attendance Policy

RATIONALE

Regular attendance and arriving at school on time are crucial to our Mission Statement 'Everybody Can Be Somebody' because:

- frequent absence and lateness are damaging to self esteem;
- they enable children to engage fully in the learning and social experiences of school;
- continuity is essential to learning;
- lateness can also adversely affect the learning/work of others;
- they instil good work habits which will benefit children as they grow up.

It is also important that children and staff do not attend school when they are unwell.

Attendance figures are examined by OFSTED and the Governing Body must publish the school's authorised and unauthorised absence figures to parents in its annual report.

AIMS

These are:

- to promote regular attendance and prompt arrival;
- to communicate the importance of regular attendance and prompt arrival to parents;
- to outline procedures for parents when absence is unavoidable;
- to outline procedures for the school when absence is not explained;
- to outline procedures for the school when a child's attendance/lateness is a concern;
- to outline procedures for managing staff absence.

GUIDELINES

Communication with parents

Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in the School Brochure on the website. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and of notifying the school if children are absent or late for any reason. Such notification should be by means of a letter addressed to the class teacher. Parents should phone the school on the first day of absence. The Welfare officer phones if no communication is made. In the case of independent travellers the Welfare Officer

will phone daily. The Brochure also requests that parents try to make routine medical/dental appointments outside school hours whenever possible.

At the meeting for new parents in the Summer Term and the 'Meet the Teacher' evenings at the beginning of the Autumn Term, the importance of regular attendance and arriving on time are explained. Authorised and unauthorised absences are explained. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can become upset if their parents/carers are late. The School gates close at 9.00am. After this time Parents/Carers must use the front entrance and must sign their child in the late book in the school Office. At the end of the School day, if they are running late, Parents must also inform the school and then on arrival sign their child out with the Welfare Officer. Parents are also asked to try to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term time so that their children's education is not disrupted.

Reminders about the importance of regular attendance, punctuality and procedures are put in the weekly newsletter from time to time.

Authorised and unauthorised absence figures as well as late figures for individual children are reported to parents/carers on children's annual reports.

There is a sheet of information for parents about attendance (Appendix A) which is sent out to new parents and to all parents each time the policy is reviewed. It will also be available from the school office and accessed via the school web site.

Authorised Absence

Inevitably there will be occasions when absence is unavoidable or justifiable:

- illness,
- medical/dental appointments (if emergencies or unavoidable)
- some days of religious observance,
- bereavement,
- exceptional leave of absence (ie service personnel)
- family crisis
- visits to other schools (secondary transfer, entrance exams),
- education at another establishment (eg referral unit),
- approved sporting activity or performance.

In these circumstances, absence will be authorised on receipt of a letter from parents/carers.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence for the following cannot be authorised:

- days out,
- birthdays,
- parents' business trips,

- parents' appointments,
- tiredness after an evening/weekend function,
- visits from relatives,
- long weekend breaks.

Such absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

Independent Travellers

A list of Independent Travellers is kept in the school office. These children are monitored each morning. Parents must phone the school if the child is absent. If they do not arrive the Welfare Officer will phone when she makes her first day response calls. The list is regularly updated and monitored as part of the Governors monitoring Schedule.

Family Holidays

Where holiday during term time is unavoidable, application should be made in advance to the Headteacher on a Leave of Absence form available from the office or the school web site (see Appendix B). This will be followed by an appointment with the Headteacher and/or Welfare Officer to discuss the application. Such holidays are, however, strongly discouraged. In considering such applications the Headteacher will take into account the exceptional circumstances, the timing of the holiday and the child's attendance record.

Homework will not be provided by the school for the duration of such absence.

Letters

Whenever possible, the class teacher should be informed of absence in writing or by phone in advance.

If this is not possible, as in the case of illness, a letter giving the reason for the absence should be sent to the class teacher on the day the child returns to school.

If no letter or telephone call of explanation for absence/lateness is received, a letter will be sent by the Welfare Officer to the parent, requesting such notification.

Letters of explanation from parents are kept by the Welfare Officer if a child's absence is causing concern.

If no letter or telephone call of explanation is received after the letter has been sent to the parents, then the absence will be classified as unauthorised.

If a child is sent home from school for a medical reason, a written explanation for the session missed is not required. (Details of the 'signing out' procedures are given in the School Brochure). An 'I' should be inserted into the red 'O' for the missed

session in question. Sessions missed as from the following day do, however, need calls of explanation.

Registers

An Attendance Register is a legal document and may be used as evidence in court cases. (The register provides evidence in the event of prosecution of parents under section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

It must be completed accurately and neatly with names written by hand.

The registers will be distributed before the morning and afternoon sessions and should be returned to the secretary's office as soon as practicable. In the morning this should be by 9.15 a.m.

The register must be marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session in pen or biro using an oblique black line for attendance and a red circle for absence. Felt-tipped pens or pencils must not be used. ***NB Tippex/ink erasers must never be used in registers.***

Authorised absence should be shown by a black symbol placed in the red 'O' (see notes in registers) whilst unauthorised absence is shown as a red 'O' with no additional symbol inside it.

Where it is not possible to record at the start of a session whether or not a pupil's absence is authorised, that information must be recorded as soon as it is known. Teachers must add the appropriate symbol as soon as an explanation is received. If a letter has been sent by the Welfare Officer and a reply received by the school office, the Welfare Officer will add the symbol to show the reason for the absence.

Lateness

Unacceptable lateness (ie after 9:15 a.m.) should be classified as 'unauthorised' absence for the session in question.

The appropriate symbols are used to distinguish acceptable and unacceptable lateness (and session totals are reckoned accordingly):

- if a child arrives after 8:55 a.m. but before the register has been completed, he/she should be marked present in the normal manner;
- if a child arrives after the register has been completed but before 9:15 a.m., a black 'L' should be inserted in the red 'O' and the time of arrival noted on the line to the right of the page. This is not classed as an absence;
- if a child arrives after 9:15 a.m. a U should be inserted into the red 'O' and the time noted. This is classed as an absence. Upon receipt of a written explanation, 'absence' will be treated as authorised and the appropriate symbol added.

Parents are asked to bring their children into school and sign the late book in the school office if arrival at school is after 9:00 a.m.

Acceptable 'one off' reasons for lateness are as follows:

- adverse weather conditions,
- mechanical breakdown of vehicle bringing the child to school,
- early morning medical appointments, or family illness.
- failure or otherwise of public transport, unusually heavy traffic,
- early morning illness* **If a child has vomited or had diarrhoea during the night, the parents are asked to allow a period of at least 48 hours before the child returns to school.*

Monitoring Attendance

A record of absence is kept by the Welfare Officer and monitored by the Headteacher.

The Welfare Officer sends out letters to parents who have not explained an absence or if lateness is a regular occurrence.

Class teachers who are concerned about attendance inform the Headteacher/ Welfare Officer at the weekly Inclusion/SEN meeting.

The Headteacher/Welfare Officer may write to parents or ask to meet with them if children's attendance or punctuality is a concern. The Welfare officer monitors families each half term.

The school sets targets for attendance and reports attendance figures to the LA (termly) and to the DSCF (annually).

OFSTED examines the school's systems for monitoring absence and keeping it to a minimum.

The Educational Welfare Service

Where a continuous absence for two weeks or more has occurred, without an acceptable reason, the absence will be reported to the Education Welfare Officer.

In the same way, this service will be notified of those children who fail to attend regularly or who fail to return after an authorised absence for holiday.

The Educational Welfare Officer meets with the School Welfare Officer to inspect the registers, discuss patterns of attendance and to offer advice and support.

Managing Staff Absence

Teachers, Welfare Officer, Secretary and Caretaker are asked to inform the Headteacher by telephone (home or mobile) as early as possible after 7:00 a.m. if they are unfit for work.

Teaching Assistants should inform the Deputy Head.

Mealtime supervisors are asked to telephone the school office as early as possible.

All staff are asked to telephone the school office before 4:00 p.m. on the day of the absence to inform the Headteacher of likely arrangements for the following day and to keep the Headteacher informed thereafter.

Staff holidays are not to be taken in term time. The occasional day's leave (unpaid) may be granted, in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Headteacher.

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

The well-being and education of all Courtland's children is at the heart of our mission statement, 'Everybody Can Be Somebody'. The need for regular attendance and punctuality must be balanced with the need for appropriate care and support when children are sick. Policies which link particularly with this one are:

- PSHE,
- Health and Safety,
- Teaching and Learning,
- Special Educational Needs.

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Attendance Policy

Policy set up:	Undated
Reviewed:	May 2002 (A. McClimont)
	May 2003 (A. McClimont)
	April 2005 (A. McClimont & M. Brown)
	October 2007 (L Walker & M Brown)
	October 2009 (L Walker & M Brown)
Date of next review:	October 2012

Courtland School
Everybody Can Be Somebody

Guidance for Parents on Attendance/Absence

Why are regular attendance and punctuality important?

- ❖ Regular attendance and prompt arrival at school are essential for children's learning and for their sense of belonging and community.
- ❖ Frequent absence can be very damaging to children's self-esteem as they can worry that they have missed something.
- ❖ Lateness means they miss out on those very important few minutes of socialising with friends before the day begins and the start of a lesson.
- ❖ Late arrivals can also disrupt the learning of others and cause unnecessary embarrassment.
- ❖ Allowing a child to be absent from school without good reason is against the law and parents can be prosecuted/fined.

What is authorised and unauthorised absence?

Every absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**.

- ❖ **Authorised absences** are unavoidable mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason:
 - ❖ illness,
 - ❖ medical/dental appointments, (if emergencies or unavoidable)
 - ❖ some days of religious observance,
 - ❖ bereavement ,
 - ❖ education at another establishment,
 - ❖ visits to other schools (secondary transfer, entrance exams),
 - ❖ approved sporting activity or participation in a performance,
 - ❖ some annual family holiday (discretionary, in exceptional circumstances).

- ❖ **Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no acceptable reason has been given:
 - ❖ days out,
 - ❖ birthdays,
 - ❖ parents' business trip,
 - ❖ long weekend breaks,
 - ❖ inappropriate time in child's academic development
 - ❖ parents' appointments,
 - ❖ tiredness after an evening/weekend function,
 - ❖ family visits/long weekends
 - ❖ package holidays/ air fares.
 - ❖ poor attendance patterns

- ❖ Absence cannot be authorised unless you give us a written explanation on the Leave of Absence request form.
- ❖ The school has to set targets for attendance and the school's overall figures have to be reported termly to the Local Authority and annually to the DSCF.
- ❖ Your child's authorised and unauthorised absences have to be put on his/her annual report as number of sessions (half days) missed.

What do I do if my child is absent?

- ❖ If your child is unfit for school, please telephone the school on the first day.
- ❖ When he/she returns, please send a note explaining the absence. (Absences can't be authorised without an explanation.)
- ❖ Please write to us in advance about other absence.

What do I do if my child is late?

- ❖ Please come into the school office, via the front entrance, to sign your child in using the Late Book if you arrive after 9:00 a.m. This is so that we know that your child is in the building for Health and Safety reasons.
- ❖ Please ensure you have spoken to the Welfare Officer if you arrive after 9:15 a.m. Arrival after this time is classed as an absence and an explanation must be given if that absence is to be authorised.

What about absence for family holiday?

- ❖ Requests for authorised absence for family holiday should only be made if there are exceptional circumstances which mean the holiday cannot be taken during school holidays.
- ❖ Requests for authorised holiday absence must be made in advance.
- ❖ A special form to request holiday absence is available from the school office. It can also be downloaded from the school website (www.courtland.barnetmail.net). Follow the link in 'Policies and Brochure'.
- ❖ All holiday leave in term time is at the discretion of the Headteacher, after consideration of the exceptional circumstances, the timing and the child's attendance record. However, such leave is strongly discouraged. Leave will not be granted in the run-up to statutory tests or at the beginning of a school year.
- ❖ Parents/Carers are expected to contact the school if anything delays the pupil returning to school when expected.
- ❖ Homework is not set for holiday absence.

Failure to return from extended leave?

- ❖ Where a pupil does not return from an absence the school may take steps to remove the pupil from the school role.
- ❖ The Headteacher and the Education Welfare Team will make reasonable enquiry to locate the pupil before deletion is made.
- ❖ If the pupil has a good reason to be absent he/she will be marked authorised absent using the relevant code.

Record keeping

The school keeps records of authorisations and refusals on file for future reference in the event of complaint or, indeed, further applications. Reasons for the decision reached will be kept in order to ensure consistency of approach.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Parents who take their children on holiday without the schools consent, will be issued with a fixed penalty notice from the Education Welfare Team of £50 rising to £100 per parent for each child. Parents who fail to pay will be subject to criminal prosecution.

What is an Education Welfare Officer?

Each school is assigned an Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) who is employed by the Local Authority. The EWO visits us regularly and checks the registers and our procedures for monitoring absence and promoting good attendance. He/She follows up cases of repeated or prolonged absence and gives us advice. In some cases the EWO writes to or meets with parents of children who are poor attenders, and in extreme cases starts the proceedings leading up to prosecution/fines. Parents can also contact the EWO themselves to ask for advice. The telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the local education authority (020 8359 2000)

Thank you for working with us on this important matter.

Please don't hesitate to contact the school if you have any questions or problems relating to attendance.

The full Attendance Policy is available for you to see if you wish.

(October 2009)



COURTLAND SCHOOL

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www.courtland.barnet.sch.uk

office@courtland.barnetmail.net

Headteacher: Miss L Walker

REQUEST FOR A LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Please complete this form in advance of any absence request. It will be returned to you with the back completed. We will keep a copy for our attendance records.

Name(s) of Child(ren): Year:

..... Year:

..... Year:

Dates of holiday: to

Destination:

Please give reasons/exceptional circumstances which mean that this absence/holiday cannot be taken during school holiday.

Please give the names and year groups of any children in other schools and the names of the schools.

Signed:

Relationship to child:

Date:

REQUEST FOR A LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Dear

Thank you for completing the form overleaf requesting authorised absence for your child(ren) for annual family holiday.

I have considered the circumstances, the timing and your child's/children's attendance history. On this occasion the absence will be **authorised**.

I would stress, however, that we discourage such absence during term time and I would respectfully ask that you do not routinely book holiday during term time.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Lisa Walker
HeadTeacher

.....

Dear

Thank you for completing the form overleaf requesting authorised absence for your child(ren) for annual family holiday.

I have considered the circumstances, the timing and your child's/children's attendance history. Unfortunately, on this occasion, the absence will be **unauthorised** for the following reason(s):

We do discourage such absence during term time and I would respectfully ask that you do not routinely book holiday during term time.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Lisa Walker

BARNET HeadTeacher
LONDON BOROUGH

School Attendance Advice to Parents

This advice sheet gives you an overview of the law and regulations relating to children's attendance in school. You are advised to read this in conjunction with the attendance policy and practice of your children's school.

It is essential that parents know school term dates and the timing of the school day, ensure their children are ready for school and keep absences to a minimum.

Parental duty

You must ensure your children receive full-time, efficient education

- At a state school,
- At an independent school or
- At home

Children must be educated from the school term after they turn five until the end of June in the school year of their sixteenth birthday for those born before 1 September 1996. Children born on or after 1 September 1996 will stay in compulsory education for the school year of their seventeenth birthday,

Full-time, efficient education in school means children must attend throughout their official school year and be on time.

For children in state education, the school year is **190 days long**. The length of the school day, start and finish times are arranged by each school's governing body.

You must advise the school of the reasons for any absence on the first day. You should also notify the school of planned appointments in advance where possible.

Requests for leave of absence for special circumstances must be made to the head teacher before making any arrangements. There is **no parental right** to remove a child from school for the purpose of a holiday. If you take your children out of school for holidays without seeking permission, or knowing permission has been refused, each parent can be issued with a fixed-penalty notice for each child (see **Legal Sanctions**)

Parents must obtain the head teacher's permission for any school absence to take part in film, tv or stage performances, modelling or representative sports (excluding participation in school teams).

School-aged children are not allowed to work during school hours except as part of a Work-related Learning programme organised by their school. You must not allow your children to take illegal employment as both you and the employer can be prosecuted.

The work of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

The EWO's main task is to promote full school attendance for all children in Barnet schools, recognising the strong link between attendance and achievement. If you don't go, you don't learn!

The EWO uses the **Fast-track to Attendance Scheme** to secure full attendance. If there is no improvement within a limited time-scale (12 weeks), a **Court Assessment Meeting** is held to decide which legal sanction, if any, is to be used. Sometimes, more extensive work is required and the EWO will engage with other professionals, as necessary.

In this regard, the EWO can offer to complete a **Common Assessment Framework (CAF)** form with you. This can be shared with other professionals to assist in resolving a family's issues. The CAF process is entirely **voluntary** on the part of the family.

Legal sanctions

Parents who fail to enrol their children for school **and are not educating them at home** can be issued with a **School Attendance Order** naming a school for their child. Failure to comply leads to prosecution.

Parents who fail to send their children to school regularly can each be

- prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court where the maximum fine is £2500 and/or three months' imprisonment,
- issued with up to three Fixed-penalty Notices of £100 *per child* in a calendar year, or
- subject to an Education Supervision Order from a Family Court requiring them to comply with the expectations of an Education Welfare Officer for one year

Fixed-penalty Notices are for £100, but reduced to £50 if paid within 28 days of issue. Failure to pay within 42 days of issue leads to prosecution in the Magistrates' Court for unauthorised absence. There is no right of appeal against a Fixed-penalty Notice.

Fixed-penalty Notices can also be issued to parents in the following cases

- their children are taken on holidays from school without the school's permission
- their children are stopped during a Truancy Sweep and are absent without a valid reason
- their child is seen unsupervised in public during the first five days of an exclusion.

FIXED-PENALTY NOTICES ARE ISSUED BY POST, NEVER BY AN EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER OR OTHER PERSON.

MOST VISITS TO FAMILY HOMES ARE BY APPOINTMENT BUT UNANNOUNCED VISITS ARE UNDERTAKEN WHEN PARENTS ARE UNRESPONSIVE OR WHEN THERE ARE CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS. EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICERS CARRY I.D CARDS.

More specific advice and information can be obtained from:

The Education Welfare Team
London Borough of Barnet
North London Business Park
Oakleigh Road South
London N11 1NP

Tel 020 8359 7684
BARNET 799
LONDON BOROUGH et.gov.uk
web www.barnet.gov.uk

September 1 2008

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Name of School / Agency:	
Person Making Referral:	
Telephone Number:	
Fax Number:	
E-Mail Address:	

Parents to be issued with Penalty Notice	Parent* 1	Parent* 2
Parent's* First Name:		
Parent's* Family Name:		
Address of Parent(s):		
Post Code:		
Telephone number(s):		
Address of Parent not living at main address: (to be provided only if parent is to be issued with fine) Post Code:		
Telephone number(s):		

Name of Child:	
Date of Birth of Child:	
Year / Class Name:	
Reason for Penalty to be issued:	

Checklist [please tick]	
Full names and address of all parents*:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copies of correspondence sent to/from the parents relating to incident attached (if applicable):	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attendance printout showing unauthorised absences (schools only):	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dates of Absences in reason for Penalty to be issued:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signed:	
Date:	

Please send to Ferzana Arif email: ferzana.arif@barnet.gov.uk fax no: 0870 889 6799 *for definition of Parent see Local Code of Conduct.