

Barnes Primary School – Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Why is very good attendance and punctuality important?

At Barnes Primary School we aim to encourage the very good attendance and punctuality of every learner by:

- clearly informing parents of attendance expectations and procedures
- clearly informing parents of punctuality expectations and procedures
- informing children how important very good attendance and punctuality is and what benefits will arise for them
- regularly monitoring attendance and punctuality
- identifying concerns with attendance and punctuality at an early stage and taking steps to address them
- publishing attendance data
- publishing punctuality data
- training staff to manage registers and the process for authorising absences.

We are a high achieving school that is committed to enabling all children to reach the highest possible standards in all aspects of learning. We want all children to derive the maximum benefit from the educational provision we offer. We are committed to ensuring that every child receives their entitlement to 5 days a week schooling for just under 37 weeks a year. We know, from our analysis of pupil performance data over a sustained time frame, that there is a consistent correlation between poor attendance and lower than average attainment. Put simply, in the vast majority of cases, children who attend school more often (over 95%) do better than those who attend less often (below 95%).

Poor attendance can significantly affect a child's learning. This is because:

- valuable learning episodes that connect with previous and future learning are missed
- there is a lack of continuity in the child's learning experience
- 'learning momentum' is lost, as the structured routine of coming to school each day is broken. This unsettles children
- a child's self-esteem is frequently negatively affected on returning to school, as the work is harder for the reasons outlined above

Persistent lateness creates a number of avoidable difficulties:

- the learning of all the other children who arrived at school on time is interrupted, as the teacher has to explain what the class are doing to the late child
- the self-esteem of the child concerned is negatively affected: the child often feels embarrassed because all their peers notice their late entry to classroom
- the day starts off in a negative way for the child concerned – that can have a significant influence on what follows
- additional, unnecessary work is created for busy administrative staff.

Our partnership

At Barnes Primary School we aim to build a strong working partnership between the family and school to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to learn.

It is the parent's legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school during term time, and that the school is properly informed about the reasons for any break in attendance. The exception is, of course, when a child is unwell and unfit to attend school, or at a time of particular difficulty for a child's family. Parents have to make the decision about whether or not their child is unfit to attend school. The school recognises that this can sometimes be a difficult decision.

Our pledge

1) In all matters relating to attendance and punctuality teachers and managers at the school will adopt a fair, reasonable and balanced approach to any issues that arise. We appreciate that bringing up children is challenging and that all families experience times of difficulty. Our expectations for good attendance will be high - because we want the best for all children – but we will show a humane and sensitive approach. We will always be prepared to show flexibility to parents whose children consistently achieve good attendance.

2) Sometimes, when a child complains of feeling unwell, or the child is not quite herself, parents are not sure whether to bring their child to school. More often than not, once at school, the child settles and manages to get through the day. It is acknowledged that no parent wants their child to be unwell and distressed at school. Should a parent decide to bring their child to school and the child continues to feel unwell (or starts to feel worse) the school will always contact parents immediately. Whilst waiting to be picked up we will take great care of the child, ensuring that she is as comfortable as possible.

Reporting an absence

This can be done by phone (020-8876-7358) – leaving a message under option 1 (Foundation Stage & Key Stage 1) or option 2 (Key Stage 2), or by e-mail (info@barnes.richmond.sch.uk).

First day absence call

The school operates this system. It involves a polite telephone call from administrative staff at school on the first day of an absence if notification has not been received from parents. The purpose of the call is to ascertain the reason for the child's absence.

The school year

Whilst term dates and the lengths of terms tend to fluctuate, the general structure of the school year is as follows:

Term	Weeks (rounded)	Teaching Days
Autumn Term 1	8	38
Autumn Term 2	7	34
Spring Term 1	6	30
Spring Term 2	6	29
Summer Term 1	5	24

Summer Term 2	6	29
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Term time holidays

Children are at school for just under 37 weeks a year (184 days). They are on holiday for a full 14 weeks, plus 5 teacher training days and a Bank Holiday in May. This represents over a quarter of the year. This is the time when parents should plan their vacations. Whilst we appreciate that, unfortunately, air lines reduce their pricing structure during term time, we cannot condone term time holidays, unless there are special circumstances. So, for example, skiing holidays should take place at Christmas, February half-term or during Easter; the best time for a prolonged holiday to a distant country is the extended six week break in the summer.

Family holidays in term time do not qualify as a reason for granting leave of absence. The Governing Body, and the Local Authority, has a firm policy not to authorise holidays in term time unless exceptional circumstances exist. Any request for a term time holiday should be made to the Headteacher. The authorisation of any term time absence is at the discretion of the Headteacher.

The final week of term

Children at Barnes work up to and including the last day of term. This is not a school where children are occupied, watching DVDs and playing board games, in the final few days of term. Every single teaching day is used for just that: to teach in order to maximise learning.

The last day of half-term and the last day of term

School finishes at 3.15 pm each day. The only exceptions to that are:

- the final day of each half-term and the final day of each term. On these occasions school finishes at the earlier time of 2.30 pm
- once a term, on a specified Tuesday, when parent-teacher consultations are held.

Registration

Children's attendance is noted in the school's electronic registers. Registers are the recognised system in the school for monitoring attendance and punctuality, and are taken at the start of each morning and afternoon session. Timings are as follows:

Age range	Register opens	Register closes Morning	Register closes Afternoon
Early Years	8.55 am	9.00 am	1.05 pm
Key Stage 1	8.55 am	9.00 am	1.20 pm
Key Stage 2	8.55 am	9.00 am	1.20 pm

Lessons start at 9.00 am – this is learning time.

If a child enters class after 9.00 am they are officially marked as late. If a child enters the classroom after 9.45 am they are officially marked as absent for the morning session. It is common knowledge that in our locality the railway crossing can hold parents up for a considerable time and that all areas of London are prone to early morning traffic congestion. Parents are politely

asked to factor these issues into their travel plans and ensure that sufficient time is set aside to manage these potential hazards.

Attendance data, 2005-06 to 2016-17

Thanks to a combination of the commitment and support from parents and children, along with the school's robust, but sensitive, procedures for challenging unacceptable absences from school, our attendance figures have risen. Our target yearly attendance average for 2016-17 is %

Year	Attendance
2005-06	94%
2006-07	95.2%
2007-08	95.7%
2008-09	96.2%
2009-10	95.7%
2010-11	96.5%
2011-12	97.0%
2012-13	96.8%
2013-14	97.0%
2014-15	97.44%
2015-16	97.44%
2016-17	97.03%
3 year average	97.3%
5 year average	97.14%

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2010-11	96.5%
2011-12	97.0%
2012-13	96.8%
2013-14	97.0%
2014-15	97.44%
2015-16	97.44%
2016-17	97.03%

The following article appeared in the school newsletter on 14.9.11. It shows clearly what an impact an increase in overall school attendance can have on the number of days children attend.

*Thank you very much indeed for bringing your children to school so regularly last academic year. Our average attendance for the 2010-11 academic year was our best ever: **96.5%**. This figure contrasts noticeably with the attendance average when I first joined the school: it was 94% for the 2005-06 academic year and this figure was below the national average. A 2.5% increase might not seem significant until you do the maths:*

- *Pupils come to school for 38 weeks a year – that's 38 x 5 = 190 days per pupil*
- *Excluding the nursery, the school roll average, over a 5 year period, is 405 pupils*
- *Total number of days a year for all pupils: 405 pupils x 190 days = 76,950 school days*
- *In 2005-06 72,333 days were attended 4,617 were missed*
- *In 2010-11 74,256 days were attended 2,693 were missed*
- *So, an extra 1,924 days were attended in 2010-11 compared to 2005-06*
- *On average that's 4.75 days per child (1,924 ÷ 405) – almost a whole week! That's significant!*

Thresholds for reporting attendance to parents in end of year reports

		Equivalent days off in the school year
Outstanding	98% or above	3 days
Good	96% to 97.9%	4-7 days
Satisfactory	93% to 95.9%	8-13 days
Inadequate	Below 93%	More than 13 days

* Please note that the term 'inadequate' will be used with care and discretion. It will never be used when the school has clear, unequivocal evidence of very good reasons for the child's low attendance. For example:

- a child may need an operation and take four weeks off
- there may be a family crisis which involves a child having to miss a considerable amount of school.

The term 'satisfactory' will be used by teachers in such situations.

Procedures for extended leave and overseas visits

Very occasionally, parents may request an extended period of leave for their child. Any request will be treated, individually, on its merits. The following guidance on this issue has been prepared by Richmond's Legal Services.

- Parents who wish their child to be away from school for the purpose of an overseas visit must apply to the Headteacher in advance of the proposed period of absence and the proposed dates of absence.
- This request must be made prior to any travel tickets being booked.
- The Headteacher must feel satisfied that the visit constituted exceptional circumstances. He retains the right to refuse to authorise a term time holiday.
- A contact address for the pupil during the period of absence will be provided.
- If the Headteacher approves the extended leave, the parents must be aware that robust procedures, including the possible removal of the child's name from the school register, will be enforced if the child does not return by the agreed date.
- During the period of agreed absence the child's absence will be authorised under category 'J'.

- If the child does not return by the agreed date, the absence will be unauthorised and the Headteacher will attempt to find out the reason for the absence.
- If the Headteacher decides to remove a child's name from the register, a warning letter will be sent to the parents, and the Local Authority will receive notification.

Mark Hartley
Headteacher