



# Sharples Primary School

## Policy for Authorising Absences Including Holidays and Term Time Absences

|                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| Reviewed by      | Martyn Slater  |
| Date             | September 2023 |
| Date for renewal | September 2025 |
| Date reviewed    | September 2025 |
| Date for renewal | September 2026 |

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is:

- To ensure pupils' full attendance
- To give our pupils every opportunity to be successful in their learning
- To outline parent's responsibilities to support their child(ren)'s learning by ensuring attendance
- To clarify the school's policy on term time holiday absence
- To outline the school's approach to dealing with absence

**Rationale for policy:**

- To eliminate the number and frequency of term time holidays
- To reduce the potential negative impact of absence on children's education.
- To ensure the policy is transparent to parents

**Context:**

Absence from school can seriously disrupt a child's learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away but they also have to simultaneously catch up and keep up on their return. This leads to a risk of underachievement which together we should be trying to avoid. Research shows that pupil attendance of less than 95% can impact on pupil attainment by as much as a grade or level. An attendance rate of less than 90% could dramatically reduce a child's chance of getting 5 good GCSEs and will impact on the child's earning potential throughout their adult life. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's full attendance – 190 days per academic year. If a child has 20 unauthorised absences (i.e. 10 days) the parents are committing an offence. There exists no "entitlement" to term time holiday leave of absence and since 2013 the prerogative of the Head teacher to authorise term time holidays has been removed. There will be exceptional circumstances when absence from school on a planned basis is required but on these occasions, the permission of the Head teacher must be sought in advance of the absence. Should requests for absence be retrospective, then in all circumstances the absence will be classed as unauthorised. In all circumstances, including sickness, the Head teacher reserves the right to decide whether or not to authorise an absence. The head teacher will be held to account for any decision by the governors and by OFSTED.

Our school Attendance Officer is the Business Manager. She will monitor attendance and will deal with all enquiries regarding attendance and requests for authorised absence; when appropriate she will then pass the information onto the Head teacher e.g. when a request is at the Head teacher's discretion.

**Policy implementation:**

Under the 2013 legislation, Sharples Primary School cannot authorise absences for holidays. In exceptional circumstances the Head teacher may authorise up to a maximum of 10 days. Absences of longer than 10 days will not be authorised.

**Definition of exceptional circumstance:**

- Has not happened previously and is extremely unlikely to happen again

To request any planned absence, parents should use the attached form.

**School will not authorise absences in the following circumstances:**

- Holiday requests;
- Where there is a retrospective request for absence;
- ○ Where there is a history of poor attendance;
- Where there is failure to evidence that any request is due to an exceptional circumstance;
- Parent/Carer's holiday pattern determined by employer;
- When a child is not brought to school because the parent/carers is ill;
- Visiting relatives who are ill.
- No part of an extended overseas visit will be authorised.

**The nature of authorised / unauthorised absence:**

Some families think that an authorised absence is better than an unauthorised absence. All absences have a negative impact on a child's education whether authorised or not and consequently all absences should be avoided.

Should the Head teacher authorise an absence, this means that the absence is recorded as such (i.e. the child is not present) but this is approved by the Head teacher. When the absence is unauthorised, then the child is recorded as having missed school without authorisation and for which there may be consequences.

**Example Types of absence:**

| Present & Authorised | Absent but Authorised                                                                                                                                         | Unauthorised absence                       |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Educated off site.   | Excluded<br>Approved sporting activity<br>Illness<br>Religious Observance*<br>Medical, dental or hospital appointments*<br>Late after register closes at 9am. | All holiday absence<br>Unexplained absence |

\* maximum 1 day

**Process for seeking authorisation for a planned absence:**

In all cases of planned absence, authorisation from the Head teacher must be sought in advance of the absence by using the planned absence form (attached). As a matter of policy, all retrospective requests for absence will be classed as unauthorised.

### **Procedure for repeated unauthorised absence**

If a child has 10 unauthorised absences (i.e. 5 days) over 2 half terms the school will issue a letter warning the parents that their child has had 10 unauthorised absences and the possible consequences of further unauthorised absence. They will also be invited in to school to discuss the absences. If a child has 20 unauthorised absences (i.e. 10 days) a Penalty Notice will be served on the parents and the case may be referred to the Early Intervention Team at the Local Authority.

### **Procedure for children taking unauthorised holiday absences**

If a child is taken on an unauthorised holiday, school will make every effort to contact the family but after 5 days a warning letter will be issued. After 10 days of unauthorised absence a Penalty Notice may be served on the parents, the child may be removed from the school roll and the case will be referred to the Early Intervention Team at the Local Authority.

### **Absence for Religious Observance**

School will authorise one day for the observance of religious festivals. Any days taken in addition will be unauthorised.

### **Punctuality**

When children are persistently late their progress in school can be severely impeded. They have to walk in to a class that is already settled and can be left feeling very awkward and unable to concentrate. They will also miss vital teaching input at the start of a lesson and then may not be able to engage in the lesson through lack of understanding. Parents must then make every effort to ensure that their children are not late for school.

School starts at 8:40am in the morning and 1:10pm in the afternoon. Children arriving after that time will be marked as late. The registration period ends ten minutes later and registers are then closed; children arriving after that time are marked as late. However, if a child arrives after the register closes this is recorded as an unauthorised absence and will be dealt with the same as all unauthorised absences, i.e. a warning letter will be issued after 10 unauthorised absences and a Penalty Notice issued after 20.

## **Sickness**

All absences for sickness will be authorised provided the parents/carers contact the school at the start of the absence. If a sickness is not reported at the start of the absence it will be recorded as unauthorised.

All absences for medical appointments will be authorized up to a maximum of one day on the production of an appointment card prior to the appointment time.

## **Appendix 1 - Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What counts as unauthorised absence?**

- Any absence from school that the school has not permitted or cannot give permission for
- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps) (i.e., wagging school)
- Inappropriate parentally-condoned absence (i.e., you know your child is absent from school and you do nothing about it)
- Holidays in term-time or delayed return from a period of leave of absence which has been approved.
- Late arrival at school (after the register has closed at 9am)

### **Is a warning given?**

Yes. The school will send you a **formal letter of warning** telling you that a Penalty Notice may be issued. This warning letter will also include details of your child's absences. If you receive a warning letter this is an opportunity for you to work with the school to improve your child's attendance and avoid the need to issue a Penalty Notice.

Your child must have no further unauthorised absences from school from the date of the letter. **If your child's unauthorised absence continues and reaches 20 sessions (10 school days) or more, a Penalty Notice will be issued.**

### **What is a Penalty Notice?**

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution. You have to pay a fine but you do not have to appear in court. You also have to make sure that your child's attendance at school improves.

Payment of a Penalty Notice enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction.

### **What are the costs?**

£60 if you pay within 21 days of receipt of a Penalty Notice or £120 if you pay after this but within 28 days. (Per parent, per child)

### **How are Penalty Notices issued?**

They are posted to your home.

**Is there an appeal process?**

There is no right of appeal by parents against a Penalty Notice.

**How do I pay?**

This information is on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option.

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

If you don't pay the fine in full, within 28 days Bolton Council is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for the original offence of poor attendance by your child.

If proven this can attract a range of fines up to £1,000 and/or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences depending on individual circumstances.

**Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?**

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. A prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Penalty Notice, depending on your circumstances.

If the poor school attendance persists the Local Authority may also consider prosecution under Section 444 (1A) of the Education Act 1996, which can carry a fine of up to £2500 and/or imprisonment.

If this is an issue it is really important that you work closely with your child's school and support services like the Early Intervention Service.

**Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?** Yes. Bolton Council and your child's school will provide you with advice and support.

**Contact**

Child Employment and Enforcement Officer  
Early Intervention Service  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, BASE  
Marsden Road  
BOLTON  
BL1 2PF  
Tel: 01204 338173

**Sharples Primary School**  
**Request by Parent/Carer for a planned pupil absence**

|                                        |  |                |  |
|----------------------------------------|--|----------------|--|
| Childs name                            |  | Year           |  |
| First date of absence                  |  | Date of return |  |
| Total school days planned to be absent |  |                |  |

Reason for planned absence (please tick)

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Religious Observance           |  |
| Medical /Hospital Appointment  |  |
| Dental Appointment             |  |
| Other authorised circumstances |  |

Further details: Please give further details of your request for absence - failure to do so will compromise your request.

POLICY PRINCIPLE: AUTHORISED ABSENCES WILL BE THE EXCEPTION. THE RULE WILL BE THAT HOLIDAY ABSENCES CAN NOT BE AUTHORISED

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent / Guardian    Date \_\_\_\_\_

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY |  |
| Previous absences   |  |
| Current Attendance  |  |

Absence authorised / unauthorised

Head teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CC:

*Parent/Carer,: School File*