



# Baines School

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The Governors of Baines School  
**Attendance for Learning Policy**

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Appendix 1: Information Sheet for Parents/Carer – Penalty Notice

At Baines School we strive to maintain the highest levels of pupil punctuality and attendance as these are both inextricably linked to student progress and achievement. When embedded, punctuality and attendance are vital adult skills in the community and the world of work.

Ensuring strong attendance and punctuality must be a high priority for both school and parents/carers and these are emphasised in the School Prospectus, the Pupil Planner, the Home-School Agreement and in the pupil Code of Conduct. The efforts of pupils striving to achieve full attendance will be recognised and positively rewarded. There must also be clear identified procedures for responding to and addressing poor and erratic attendance, persistent lateness to school and poor punctuality in lessons.

Poor attendance is costly to the individual pupil in terms of learning time that is lost and to parents/carers because of the financial penalties imposed by the Government when pupils fail to attend.

In the spirit of partnership, therefore, it is vital that everyone works together to achieve the strongest outcomes in terms of punctuality and attendance. **The school attendance target for all pupils is 98%.**

## **DEFINITIONS OF ABSENCE**

Baines School is required to log and classify a pupil absence as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**. In order that pupil absences are accurately classified, parents/carers are required to provide a reason or cause for each logged absence.

**Authorised** absences are morning or afternoon sessions where the pupil does not attend school for a good reason such as illness or other unavoidable cause. The decision regarding the authorisation of absences lies with the school.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider to be reasonable and for which no 'leave of absence' has been granted. These may include:

- Parents/carers keeping their children away from school unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the school day. Where a pupil has lost learning time owing to truancy, he or she will be required to make up for that time and catch up upon any missed work as well as receiving an appropriate sanction for the negative behaviour;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Holidays or leave which have not been authorised by the school.

Some youngsters can be reluctant to attend school. Any difficulties with regular attendance are best dealt with in partnership between the school, the parents/carers and the pupil. If a pupil is reluctant to attend, it is better not to cover up the absence or give in to pressure to excuse him from attending. This creates the negative impression that attendance is not important and may cause the situation to deteriorate. The same applies to lateness and punctuality. Effective support systems exist to help with such difficulties.

From September 2015, 'Persistent Absence' refers to any absence exceeding 10%, whether Authorised or Unauthorised. DCSF data indicates that youngsters with persistent absence are often unlikely to achieve at school and stay in education after the age of 16. They are also more vulnerable and likely to engage in anti-social behaviour, youth crime and be at risk of other negative outcomes (including teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol abuse). Each pupil has an attendance target set and progress against this target will be reflected in academic monitoring and school reports.

## THE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

SIMS registration system will be used to:

- receive and store daily attendance information and data;
- generate attendance records, reports and statistical analyses.

SIMS Lesson Monitor provides the school with the means to respond promptly to unauthorised absences from school or lessons, to patterns of broken attendance and the frequency of alleged absence due to illness. The Assistant Headteacher, with the oversight of Behaviour and Attendance for Learning, is responsible for maintaining and updating the SIMS registration system and the attendance data it contains.

Where an unauthorised absence is identified or suspected, parents/carers will be contacted via an automatic texting mechanism or a telephone call from the School Office.

Morning and afternoon registration is a statutory requirement and these duties are carried out on a daily basis by the teaching staff.

The SIMS Learning Gateway will also be used by the school to hold basic attendance information.

## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PUPILS

Pupils must accept a strong element of responsibility for their own attendance and punctuality.

- Registration begins at 8.40am and a movement bell occurs at 8.35am. Pupils should be in their form room by 8.40am.
- Pupils arriving late for school before 8.55 am must go to registration. If arriving after 8.55 am, they must report to the Front Office to ensure that their presence has been recorded.
- Pupils returning to school following any absence should bring a note explaining the reason for the absence **on the day that they return to school.**
- Pupils who arrive after 9.30 am must also bring a note since, after this time, they are classified as absent.
- School must be informed about any lateness known to parents/carers.

## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS/CARERS

It is important that the school works in partnership with parents/carers to ensure that good attendance is maintained. Parents/carers are responsible in law for ensuring their child attends school. Parents / carers are asked to support the school by:

- ensuring that their children attend regularly and arrive punctually and meet their attendance target.
- informing the school on the designated pupil absence extension by 9.30am. This should be done on **the first day of absence.** Some indication to the likely duration of the absence should be given.
- providing a dated, signed note explaining the absence when the student returns to school.
- helping their child catch-up with missing work when they return to school.
- avoiding the organisation of a family holiday during school time.

Holidays during the school term are not allowed. The law regarding holidays and extended leave in term time changed from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013. A leave of absence will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. A leave of absence request has to be submitted in writing to the Headteacher using the 'Lancashire County Council Application for Leave of Absence From Maintained School' which is available on our school website. Leave will not be granted in retrospect. Parents must request permission before taking the holiday. Penalty notice fines may be used where families take unauthorised leave. Leave will never be granted during periods of external examinations.

Parents/carers are respectfully reminded that the decision to authorise an absence lies with the school. A note from home does not necessarily guarantee that the absence will be authorised. Any absence must be **unavoidable** to warrant authorisation (e.g. going shopping is an **avoidable absence** in law and would not be authorised).

Parents/carers are expected to contact Baines School at an early stage and to work with the Progress Tutors, Progress Leaders and the Attendance Improvement Team to resolve any emerging attendance issues.

### **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHING STAFF**

Progress Tutors are required to use SIMS to register the students at the beginning of the registration period. A warning bell is used at 8.35am to ensure that pupils begin to make their way to form bases ready for registration at 8.40am. Any student who is late after the register is taken will be recorded on SIMS with the reason identified by the Progress Tutor using the 'minutes late' facility within SIMS.

Teaching staff are required to accurately register all pupils at the beginning of each lesson and to alert the Front Office if there are any irregularities in the attendance of pupils at the lesson. This is in keeping with Safeguarding procedures and duty of care.

Progress Leaders have oversight of the attendance and punctuality of all pupils in their House. They will follow up pupils identified as causes for concern and look for broken or erratic patterns of attendance and punctuality. They will discuss individual attendance issues with pupils and parents/carers and update the SLT Link on any pupil issues that are causing significant concern. Detention sessions will be set at lunch breaks for pupils who have missed time through lateness. Pupils will serve the detention on the day that they are late. Further sanctions will be applied for persistent lateness to school. The Attendance Team will also put specific interventions in place if the lateness continues.

Progress Leaders will identify and reward excellent attendance and work with their tutor teams to encourage strong attendance and pupils meeting their individual targets. For prolonged absences, the Heads of Year will co-ordinate relevant academic work being sent home for the pupil to complete.

Progress Tutors will keep the daily register and identify attendance issues causing concern promptly to the Progress Leader. Progress Tutors will support and encourage pupils to meet their attendance targets and maintain a positive climate in the tutor room concerning punctuality and attendance.

### **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM**

The SLT Lead will monitor attendance with the Progress Leaders and discuss any pupils or issues causing concern. They will advise upon the authorisation of absence, including requests for leave of absence, as appropriate. They will also assist in contact and dialogue with parents/carers and make referrals to the Headteacher for further action. The SLT Lead will liaise with the Attendance Improvement Officer and may

also make referrals to external agencies as appropriate and will support new staff in initial training and development of the Registration System.

### **STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO PERSISTENTLY POOR ATTENDANCE**

Excellent attendance leads to excellent progress and achievement. In addition to the procedures and strategies outlined above, other possible actions that might be taken include:

- Assemblies will focus upon the importance of strong punctuality and attendance and reward pupil success.
- Where poor attendance is linked to disaffection, this will receive prompt attention. Pupils in this situation may be placed on a Behaviour for Learning Improvement Plan.
- Mentor intervention and support will be given at specific trigger points when attendance begins to fall.
- Attendance panel meetings will be used to enforce the school's expectation of what is acceptable attendance levels
- Where risks are perceived, pupils will be referred to external support agencies where appropriate.
- Pupils may be referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer and/or a Governors' Attendance Committee for discussions about their attendance.
- The use of penalty notices and Section 444 prosecution.
- The use of alternative provision or managed move will be explored where appropriate.

Penalty Notices may be considered for the following:

- Persistent unauthorised late arrival at school;
- Persistent unauthorised absence from school.
- Unauthorised leave.

If attendance difficulties cannot be resolved using any of the above strategies, Baines School may bring the pupil to the attention of a Court Officer of the Local Authority. Court proceedings can be used to prosecute parents/carers or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the pupil. The maximum penalty is £1500.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Information Sheet for Parents/Carers – Penalty Notices**

#### **Introduction**

From February 2004, the law has given the power to the Children's Services Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's attendance. Reducing absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

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

Parents/carers commit an offence if the child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as Unauthorised. Depending on the circumstances, such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days. Full payment of the penalty means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted.

#### **What is the Cost?**

If paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice, the cost is £60, but if paid after this and up to 28 days of receipt of the Notice, the cost is £120.

#### **How are they issued?**

Penalty Notices are issued by Lancashire County Council at the request of the school.

#### **When are they issued?**

Lancashire County Council considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where an unauthorised absence occurs, such as any of the following:

- Truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps)
- Unauthorised leave in term time
- unwarranted delay of return from extended leave
- Persistent unauthorised late arrival at school
- Persistent Unauthorised absence from school

In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of five school days (10 sessions) lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or seven school days (14 sessions) over two terms before a Fixed Penalty Notice is considered.

The Local Authority never takes such action lightly. It would far rather work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement action. However, school attendance is of such importance to all of us that the Authority will use these powers if it is felt that it can improve a child's schooling.

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

Yes, you will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued. This will tell you the extent of your child's absences and give you 15 school days in which to bring about an improvement. In that time your child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

### **Is there an appeal process?**

There is no statutory right of appeal once a Notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning, you can make representations should you wish.

### **How do I pay?**

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that a Penalty Notice **must be paid in full** and cannot be paid in parts or by instalments.

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

Not for the period stated in the Penalty Notice, since payment of the Penalty discharges your liability from that period. However, it could be the case that a prosecution might be considered if there are further periods of poor attendance, which are not covered by the Notice, depending on the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school and other agencies such as Children's Integrated Services.

### **What happens if I do not pay?**

You have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Notice in full, after which the Authority is required under the legislation to commence proceedings in local Magistrates Court for the original offence, which is failing to ensure your child's attendance at school regularly.

If proven you could be subject to a substantial fine. The prosecution team will also ask the Court for costs towards their fees, which may also be imposed.