Attendance and Registration Policy

Contacts.

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Further Information Web Address

Parents can access detailed information at the following web address:

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/schoolsnet/your-pupils/attendance/

Legal Requirements

- Parents or guardians of students of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education by attendance at school or otherwise under the provisions of the education act 1996. This policy adheres to the requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the UN convention on the rights of the child and meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance ***(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)*** from the Department for Education (DfE). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:
- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013,
- 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to:

- DfE's statutory guidance - Working together to improve school attendance (August 2024)
- DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.
- DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Aims

Balcarras aims for excellent attendance from all pupils. All pupils should aim for 100% attendance whenever possible. A minimum of 96% attendance is expected by all pupils and parents are encouraged to support students reaching these goals. For minor illnesses, such as a sore throat, headache or mild cold, pupils are encouraged to still attend school, where they will be supported and encouraged to attend as many lessons as possible.
This policy applies to main school pupils (Years 7 to 11)

Regular Attendance

Balcarras defines regular attendance as above 96%.
We expect pupils to be in school for every session of the school day and for every day that the school is open.

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if he considers there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as

Death of a near relative, which includes, mother, father, sister, brother
Wedding of sibling, parent

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least four weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, which can be requested from your child's Head of House. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

Parents/carers are expected to:

1. Make sure their child attends every day on time.
2. Call the school to report their child's absence (see section below on *illness*) on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return.
3. Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child.
4. Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
5. Proactively engage with support offered informally or formally to help your child overcome any barriers to attendance.

Pupils are expected to:

1. Attend school every day on time.
2. Attend every timetabled session on time.

Illness

If a pupil is too ill to come to school, parents should:

1. **E-mail the school attendance officer (address at top of policy) before 9:00am on the day of the illness with details of the reason for absence**. *(Parents may also leave a phone message on the attendance officers answering machine, but e-mails are the preferred method of communication)*
2. This procedure should be repeated on each day that the illness continues.(telephone: 01242 545114)

If the pupil becomes well enough to come into school later in the day, parents should encourage this to happen. If a pupil's attendance rate falls below 90%, the school will insist that parents take the pupil to their GP whenever further illness occurs and written medical confirmation of attending a GP appointment from the surgery must be presented to the school. The school will also request

a visit from the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) to the parents' house when attendance drops below 90%.

Medical Appointments

Parents should try and avoid school time when making medical appointments. When an appointment is unavoidable in school time, parents should inform the school 24hrs in advance of the appointment, and the absence will be recorded on the system as a medical appointment. Pupils should leave school with just enough time to reach the medical provider and return to school promptly after the appointment is over.

Holidays in Term Time

Pupils are not permitted to take holidays in term time. The correlation between good attendance and good exam results is very strong and missing lessons will lead to significant underperformance in examinations. In exceptional circumstances, parents may complete a form and send it to the Headteacher, explaining why exceptional provision should be granted. Only in rare and pressing situations will a holiday be sanctioned.

Contact for Support

If parents are concerned about attendance or would like additional support for their child, they can contact:

- Senior Manager with responsibility for Attendance
- Pupil's Head of House
- Pupils' Tutor
- Attendance Officer
- Education Welfare Officer

Parents can also contact Gloucestershire County Council Council
(see further information web address at the top of this policy)
for advice and guidance on school attendance and punctuality

Absence for Extra Curricular Activities

Balcarras encourages pupils' participation in extracurricular activities. Pupils will sometimes need time away from school to participate in their chosen field. Examples might include:

- Playing sport for a national or county side
- Performing in a drama production or TV/film role

- Instrumental performance for an orchestra
- A dance exam or a music exam

Parents must always e-mail the House Head to request any time off from school for special events.

In all situations, professional discretion will be taken and close liaison with the pupil and parents will inform the school's decision. Where an absence is beneficial to the pupil's success in his/her chosen field and unlikely to significantly harm the pupil's education, then special permission will be granted to have time away from school.

Long Term Absence

Where a pupil has long term absence, due to an independent professionally diagnosed medical condition, the school will work closely with parents and all relevant outside agencies (GP, consultant, counsellor etc.) to ensure a programme is in place to provide appropriate educational provision (within the limits of the school's funding and staffing).

Rewards

Rewards are regularly used to encourage good attendance. The following are some of the rewards used by the school:

1. The tutor groups with the highest attendance over 99% will be given a free tutor group breakfast every month
2. At the end of term assemblies, the list of all pupils with 100% attendance will be displayed on the board and congratulated
3. At the end of term assemblies, a draw will take place, in the form of names of pupils with 100% attendance will be chosen from a hat, for a voucher (usually to the value of £20, although this could change). Usually there is one voucher per one or two year group(s).
4. Assemblies will regularly display names of pupils with 100% attendance and celebrate their success.

For pupils who manage 100% attendance over 5 years, at the end of Year 11 a reward will be awarded.

Prefects

Prefects are selected in the spring term of Year 10. There are a number of criteria used for prefect section. One of the main considerations is that prefects must have an attendance rate of over

96% for the academic year so far, and must maintain this attendance rate or risk losing prefect status.

The school will view each student on a case-by-case basis, and in exceptional circumstances (backed up by official medical documentation provided by the parents), prefect status may be awarded even if attendance is below target.

Registration

All pupils will attend registration twice each day. This will take place at the following times:

am registration

8:55 – 9:00am (Mon - Fri)

Pupils should be heading towards their tutor rooms at 8:50am and be sat in their chair when the register is taken at 8:55am.

pm registration

2:15 – 2:35pm (Mon – Thurs)

1:50 – 2:10pm (Fri)

Pupils should be heading towards their tutor rooms at 2:10pm (1:45pm on Fri) and be sat in their chair when the register is taken at 2:15pm (1:50pm on Fri).

The school's Register Policy details requirements for completing registers.

The register will close **30 mins** after the start of the registration session as detailed above. Pupils who arrive after the above registration times but whilst the register is open will be marked late (L). Pupils who arrive after the register has closed will be given an unauthorised absence code (U).

Roles & Responsibilities

Attendance Officer

A full time attendance officer works in the school. The role involves:

1. Ensuring the registers are taken every am and pm registration
2. Accepting phones calls and e-mails from parents when pupils are absent
3. Contacting parents between 9:00am and 10:00am on the first day of absence if no reason has been received (although all parents should contact the school before 9:00am whenever their child is absent). Contact will usually be made via e-mail to the parents e-mail address.
4. If further absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made by the attendance officer to ensure safeguarding.

5. Checking the pm registration to see if any pupil is absent who was present at am registration, and take the necessary action, including informing the Head of House and parents.
6. Monitor for patterns of absence and keep HoHs informed if a pupil's absence is falling into a pattern
7. Liaise between the pastoral team and the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) about pupils whose attendance is a concern and further intervention is required
8. Liaise between the pastoral team and the County Inclusion Team about pupils whose attendance is a concern and further intervention is required
9. Send appropriate letter to parents when poor attendance is recorded.
10. Producing an accurate list of all absences. This will be printed and stored at main reception by 10:00am for each day, to be used in the event of an evacuation.
11. Producing accurate data, at regular intervals, to monitor attendance across the school

The attendance officer will produce the following data weekly:

1. List of pupils with attendance below 93% from 1st September
2. Attendance percentage for the week for each Tutor Group/House/Whole School
3. Attendance percentage since 1st September for each tutor group
4. Attendance percentage for each House since 1st September
5. Produce a list or pupils who are persistent absentees

This information will be disseminated to Headteacher, Deputy Head, Assistant Head i/c pastoral, SENCO, HoHs, EWO.

EWO (Education Welfare Officer)

The school employs a part time Education Welfare Officer. The role of the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) is:

1. Liaise with the school's pastoral team and the attendance officer to ascertain which pupils have poor attendance and need further intervention
2. Attend regularly the pastoral meeting on a Wednesday lunchtime.
3. Visit pupils' houses when requested; when a pupil is absent from school or when attendance in a concern.
4. Conduct meetings with parents whenever attendance is a concern and discuss strategies for improving attendance of their child in the future

5. Attend AIM (Attendance Improvement Meetings) held by the school with parents and ensure that the legal position is made clear.
6. Support the school in the creation of any necessary paperwork needed for prosecution for poor attendance.
7. Ensure the school is kept aware of any changes to legislation regarding school attendance.

Heads of House

HoH have oversight of the attendance for the pupils in their house. HoH have responsibility to:

1. Promote and encourage outstanding attendance within their house
2. Ensure that all suspected truancy is followed up and dealt with
3. Contact parents over student absences where appropriate
4. Liaise with the attendance officer about concern pupils and ensure that the attendance officer is alerted to which pupils are on the concern list and HoH are informed immediately when they are absent
5. Liaise with the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) over visits to parents' houses whenever pupils have concerning attendance
6. Organise and conduct meetings with parents whenever attendance becomes a concern
7. Organise AIM (Attendance Improvement Meeting), alongside the Education Welfare Officer, whenever necessary, and ensure that paperwork from AIM meetings is accurate and promptly sent to parents
8. Monitor attendance in the light of targets set at AIM meetings
9. Ensure the necessary letters are sent out by the attendance officer based on attendance figures

Strategy for Improving Attendance

The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' statutory guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, and recognises that 'the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families... [It] is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.'

The senior team led by The Attendance Champion will regularly review attendance figures for the school and for individual groups of students. Based on this data the Senior Staff and the Pastoral

Team will develop a range of strategies to help improve attendance. These may involve, but are not limited to:

1. Communication with parents
2. Inviting parents in for a meeting to discuss attendance
3. Communication with pupil from the tutor and the Head of House
4. Involve the EWO with visits to the house
5. Involve the EWO with meetings with parents and the pupil
6. Letters sent to parents
7. Involve the inclusion team
8. Involve the SENCO and consider placing the student on the graduated pathway
9. Involve the Educational Psychologist and Advisory Teaching Service
10. Discuss reasonable adjustments in light of any barriers (including part time timetables, phased return, alternative provision etc) and ensure flexibility around the specific needs of pupils with SEND.
11. Access Early Help and wider support services
12. Facilitating Attendance Focus Groups with specific year group cohorts who need a more targeted approach to improve their attendance.

Legal sanctions (Penalty Notices)

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, we will work with partners, including the local authority, to formalise and intensify the support.

As part of the attendance measures introduced in statutory guidance (August 2024), if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within 10 school weeks, the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s) may receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification sent via email on behalf of the school and issued by the local authority (LA). Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon). Unauthorised absences include:

- unauthorised absence (where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place),
- arriving late after the register has closed, (after 9.25am for morning registration and after 2.40pm Monday pm registration, 2.45pm Tuesday-Thursday pm registration, and 2.20pm Friday pm registration)
- or a combination of these with holidays taken during term time

These 10 weeks can span different terms, academic years, and even different educational settings, such as transitions to secondary school or in-year school changes. For instance, if a child misses 3 days of school for a holiday in July (6 sessions) and is late after the register closes on 4 occasions (4 sessions) between September and October, a parent/carer may be issued a 'Notice to Improve' notification.

The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations and period notice for the improvement of attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may then be requested by the school and issued by the LA to each parent/carer responsible for the child.

Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand.

The penalty amount has increased to £160 (from September 2024) and reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days for the first offence. If a parent receives a second penalty notice within a rolling three-year period, the fine is £160 and there is no option to pay the fine at a reduced rate.

Parents with parental responsibility, and adults residing with the child, including for example, stepparents who have day-to-day responsibility for the child, may be fined, and this applies to each child who is absent. For example, if two adults take two children out of school, the total fines would be £640 (reduced to £320 for a first offence paid within 21days).

If a Penalty Notice is not paid within the time limits set out in the letter to the parent, the Local Authority may proceed the case to court.

Nationally, Headteachers are not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and are to consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making our decision.

The law clearly expects Headteachers to enforce these penalties strictly.

The statutory guidance also states that all schools must consider issuing Penalty Notices if the criteria are met. This is a national statutory process and will be followed by all English state funded schools.

In Education Law (Section 576 of the Education Act 1996) 'parent' means:

All natural parents, whether they are married or not

Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or pupil

Any person who has care of a child or pupil i.e. lives with and looks after the child

Referral to the Local Authority

If a pupil fails to attend school regularly and progress is not made, the school will refer to the Local Authority (LA) who may take legal action against the parents.

https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/oqif1ku0/gcc-nti-and-pn-information.pdf

Balcarras will follow all of the guidance from Gloucestershire County Council

(see further information web address at the top of this policy)

with regard to absence from school, holidays in term time and punctuality requirements.

Attendance Monitoring

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and implement a targeted approach to addressing this.
- Download and review weekly attendance comparison with Fisher Family Trust national benchmarks.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to form tutors and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

- Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school.
- Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

These are national definitions.

The school will:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Ensure a flexible approach to addressing the particular attendance needs of pupils with SEND.

Retaining Registers

Registers are legal records and in accordance with statutory guidance Balcarras preserves every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date the data was entered.

Appendix 1 – Absence Request Form

REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

PLEASE REMEMBER: Absence from school can seriously disrupt your child's continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less well prepared for lessons upon their return. There is a consequent risk of under-achievement, which together we must seek to avoid.

Please read carefully the information overleaf before completing this form.

Child's name		Tutor Group:		Child's Date of Birth	
From:	(date)	To:	(date)		

Reason for absence*: Include destination. Continue on another sheet if necessary.

Name of parent** 1		Name of parent 2	
Address of Parent 1		Address of Parent 2	
e-mail		e-mail	
Accompanying child during leave of absence	Yes No	Accompanying child during leave of absence	Yes No
Signed		Signed	
Relationship to child		Relationship to child	
Date		Date	

This form must be completed and returned to school no less than 2 weeks before planned absence

Dear (full name)	**Dear (full Name)**
Re (Child's name):	Current Attendance **%**

Further to your recent request for leave of absence between

start: _____ end: _____

☐ **Leave of absence authorised.** Please ensure that your child returns to school promptly following your absence as failure to do so can result in their removal from school roll.

☐ **Leave of absence refused.** Any absence from school between the above dates will be marked as unauthorised and referred to the Local Authority who may issue a Penalty Notice of up to £160 (Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996)

☐ **Other**

Signed …… (Headteacher) Date……

** The reasons given above will be used to establish if your motives for the above absence are for exceptional circumstances, so please include as much detail as possible (including your destination). The decision will be based on the information you provide on this form (please continue with additional information on a separate sheet if required)*

***Parents – Parent means: all birth parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; any person who has care of a child or young person i.e., lives with and looks after the child.*

Information for parents/carers

- 'Improving attendance is everyone's business', and it is important that we, as your child's school, work together in partnership with you, your family, your child, and the wider community.
- Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice.
- The penalty amount is increasing to £160 from September 2024 (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days for the first offence). If a parent receives a second penalty notice within a rolling three-year period (following 1st September 2024) the fine is £160 and there is no option to pay the fine at a reduced rate.
- Parents with parental responsibility, and adults residing with the child, including for example, stepparents who have day-to-day responsibility for the child, may be fined, and this applies to each child who is absent.
- If a Penalty Notice is not paid within the time limits set out in the letter to the parent, the Local Authority may proceed the case to court.
- Nationally, Headteachers are: not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and are to consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making our decision.
- The law clearly expects Headteachers to enforce these penalties strictly.
- Parents/carers do not have the right to take children out of school for a holiday during term time. Any requests are considered on an individual basis following guidelines issued by the DfE and LA.
- Holiday absences will not be authorised if they are not considered to meet exceptional circumstances.
- If a pupil goes on holiday without permission, the absence will be classed as unauthorised. Absence will also be unauthorised if a child does not return to school on the agreed date. Unauthorised absence could result in referral to the LA to begin legal proceedings.