



Birchwood Attendance Policy

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Statement of Intent

Birchwood is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Management Committee, Head Teacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Birchwood.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent and each day thereafter. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning. It is the parents responsibility to provide the school with medical evidence for absences that have been unauthorised, absences are unauthorised if a pupils attendance is below 95%.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.45am. All pupils that arrive late must report to the school office or to a member of support staff where the reason for lateness can be recorded.

The Role of the School Staff

At Birchwood there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Business and Inclusion Manager has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues and will ensure a register is completed at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session.

Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late.

It is the responsibility of the Business and Inclusion Manager to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call or absence text if a phone call is not answered.
- Where there has been no communication after 3 days, school will conduct a home visit to ascertain a reason for absence
- If only text communications are received, the school will conduct a home visit to ascertain a reason for absence
- Appropriate letters are sent to parents/carers to raise concerns regarding attendance
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Pupils are informed weekly, in assembly, of their attendance figure
- Termly Attendance Letter is sent to parents/carers

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance – The designated member of staff to contact parents if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - School intervention letters/meeting with parents
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Reduced Time Tables

There may be occasions when a reduced timetable or the offer of Twilight Sessions for a limited period of time would be beneficial for a student on roll at Birchwood. Twilight sessions are when a pupil attends after school has finished and works with a member of staff.

A reduced time table will only be considered in exceptional circumstances for the following reasons.

1. As part of a planned re-integration into school following an extended period out of school due to exclusion, non-attendance, school refusal or to facilitate a managed transfer between schools.
2. As a temporary fixed-term, closely monitored intervention to address and manage the impact of significantly challenging behaviour or emotional or social needs, whilst alternative arrangements are being made to meet the individual needs or to coordinate with therapeutic intervention or other services.

At Birchwood we will aim to use reduced time tables only when absolutely necessary and parental permission will be sought before implementing it. The absences will be coded as C which is an authorised absence.

If a pupil has an EHCP, a discussion will be held with SEN Service in order to confirm they are in agreement with the plan. A looked-after child should not be placed with a reduced timetable unless the Social Worker or Virtual School Kent agrees to it.

All reduced time tables will be logged through the Digital Front door.

Lateness

At Birchwood the register is taken at 9.00am and 12pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school and report to a member of support staff, where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L')

The register will close at 9.30am and 1.00pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence. The 'U' code will be given after 9:30 unless the reason for lateness is authorised by the school, this is at the school's discretion.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

If a pupil arrives at school between 9am & 9.15am, they will receive a 15 min late detention. If they arrive after 9.15am, they will receive a 30 minute late detention. This is recorded in Classcharts as well as in SIMS.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

Authorising Absence

Only the Head Teacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Head Teacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

Students' attendance that is below 95% will automatically be unauthorised by the school unless medical evidence is provided. Examples of medical evidence can include but is not limited to:

- GP appointment card
- Hospital Letter
- Copy of prescription given by GP
- Text from GP as proof of telephone consultation

If a student is sent home by a member of staff due to illness, this will be authorised by the school no matter what the attendance percentage is.

Students are only authorised to leave the school premises early when permission has been sought and approved by the parent/carer. This may be sought prior to starting a flexible reduced timetable where only a red point indicates the student goes home. This flexible approach to reduced timetables ensures that students remain in school for as long as possible each day.

If a student is ill, suspended, attending a medical appointment or there is another genuine reason for leaving the premises early, they are unable to leave the school site until the parent has confirmed that they give permission for them to leave. There may be instances where students are not permitted to leave the school site or make their own way home without an appropriate authorised person collecting them; this is at the Head Teachers discretion and on an individualised basis.

Where a student chooses to leave the premises without permission the school will endeavour to make immediate telephone contact with the parent/carer.

Absence during term time can only be approved in “exceptional circumstances”. The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child’s/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child’s Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings need to be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council’s Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.

- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Head Teacher can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Head Teacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Management Committee (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Head Teacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

