



Mission Statement

Barbara Priestman Academy is a centre of excellence for students with autism and complex learning difficulties. We offer an innovative and motivating learning environment that meets rigorous external standards. Students work with a range of professionals to complement our outstanding curriculum. We aim to develop students' life, academic and vocational skills and support their sense of well-being. Through research practice and professional development, we promote life-long learning and improve practice. We work closely with partner schools through the Ascent Academies' Trust, Thinking Schools, the wider community and parents to enhance learning and opportunities for all.

Vision of the Trust

To provide outstanding education and support for young people with special educational needs.

Attendance Policy (Student)

Plan reviewed and adopted	January 2015 - January 2017
Version	1.2
Review frequency	2 years
Date of next review	January 2019
Responsible Officer	Denise Murray

Introduction

At Barbara Priestman Academy, we expect all students to attend regularly to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Regular school attendance and educational attainment are inextricably linked. We recognise that regular attendance at school is essential for good learning and continual progress and ensures that students get the best possible outcomes from their period in compulsory education. All school staff will work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually.

We expect all of our students to aspire to 100% attendance and appreciate the full support of parents and carers in encouraging this. **The attendance target for 2016-17 for this school is 95% attendance in line with National expectations.**

Aims of the Policy

This policy is intended to continue to improve the attendance and punctuality of all students at Barbara Priestman Academy by:

1. Ensuring that good attendance is a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents and staff.
2. Providing a framework which defines the respective roles and responsibilities of all interested parties and ensures consistency in dealing with issues of attendance and punctuality
3. Ensuring the maintenance of accurate registers which allows the school to account for the whereabouts of each student at any given time
4. Gathering of reliable data in line with Trust and Government guidelines for the purposes of reporting on individual and whole school attendance

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, students and all members of school staff.

Statement of Intent

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

At Barbara Priestman Academy, we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping students achieve the best that they can be. Students should be at school on time dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including students, parents, governors and staff.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act a student is required to attend regularly at school should a student fail to attend regularly legal action may be taken. A *parent(s)* may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice or could be fined up to £2,500 face three months in prison and receive a parenting order. An Education Supervision Order could be sought.

- The school is required to complete a register twice during the school day. This is once at the start of the school day, 8.50am, and again for the afternoon session at 1.25 pm.
- The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not itself authorise an absence. It is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

Education Law defines a *parent* as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child on a daily basis.

It is important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

RIGHTS AND RESPOSIBILITIES

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including students, parents, governors and staff.

School will:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence wherever possible, including persistent absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence in order to act early to address patterns of absence.
- Keep parents fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record and follow up unexplained absences by text phone calls and letters as necessary
- contact parents on the first day when a student fails to attend school without providing good reason, via the School's electronic messaging system if the parent has not reported an absence
- Take timely action on any problem notified to us and involve appropriate outside agencies in order to support students and their families. This may include a 'home visit' or a request to the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.

Students will:

- Will aim to achieve 100% attendance each academic year
- Attend school daily.
- Will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- Will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.
- Will go to registration and lessons on time.

Parents will:

- support the school and their child in aiming for 100% attendance each academic year
- ensure their child attends school daily and on time (i.e. by 8.50am each morning)
- ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, fully equipped, with a positive attitude to learn
- Notify the school before 930am of any absence **each day of absence**

- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- Ensure the school has updated contact numbers.
- Will actively work with the school staff and relevant multi-agency staff, to solve any attendance issues as and when they occur.

Registration Procedures

Registration

At Barbara Priestman Academy a manual and computerised system are used to register students. Manual registers are marked by class staff and then returned to the office at the end of the registration period at which time the information is entered on to SIMS. The morning register closes at 9.30am.

Students who arrive at the academy after 9.30am will be marked late on the register. After registers are closed this will be marked as 'U' which will count towards an unauthorised absence.

Once the morning attendance register has been closed, the admin officer will complete the attendance report.

Absence response

If we do not receive a phone call regarding an absence and we are unable to contact you or another relative we will carry out a home visit. If we are still unable to reach you we will contact the police to conduct a 'safe and well' check.

Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised Absences

These are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Some students attending Barbara Priestman Academy are more vulnerable and have greater needs than the majority of their mainstream counterparts. Therefore, there may be more absences from school due to medical reasons linked to their diagnosis such as mental health issues.

Absence can be authorised if:

- A student is absent with permission granted by the Head teacher
- A student is ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong
- There is a family bereavement
- A student is attending an interview with a prospective employer, or in connection with an application for a place at a post school provider, or for a place at another school
- A student is excluded
- A student is involved in an exceptional special occasion

Unauthorised Absence

It is our responsibility as educators to do all we can to encourage and support regular and frequent school attendance. Where the Academy does not consider the absence as

reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given it will be recorded as 'unauthorised' absence. This type of absence may lead to the Academy using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Absence is unauthorised if:

- parents/carers keep the student off school unnecessarily
- truancy occurs before or during the school day
- absences have never been properly explained or the school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- student arrives at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays are taken in term time which have not been agreed
- a student fails to return after the period of time agreed by the school for a family holiday
- medical evidence is not provided where requested. Examples of medical evidence could be, doctor's certificate, medical appointment slips, or medical prescription

Whilst any student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the students.

If a student misses school without good reason, the school may issue Penalty Notices to parents. These fines must be paid within 28 days and failure to pay will lead to prosecution.

Absence causing concern

Where absence causes a concern (regardless of quantity) parents/carers can expect some or all of the following to happen:

- 1) A phonecall/text home – unreturned calls will be logged with our safeguarding team
- 2) A letter from school stating concerns
- 3) An invitation into school to discuss concerns and support
- 4) home visits
- 5) Referral to the local authority to seek investigation and possible penalty notice/prosecution.

Persistent Absence (PA):

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason has occurred. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any student's educational prospects and we need parental support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the 'persistent absence' mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority.

Illness during the School Day

Should a student become unwell during a lesson, trained staff will assess the illness and make a decision (through the Head teacher or leadership team) about whether parents need to be informed and whether a student will be sent home or collected by parents.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence

Penalty Notices may be issued when a student is absent from school without permission. This can include parents who take their child on holiday during term time without getting authorisation from the school.

The penalty **for unauthorised absence** is £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days. Failure to pay a penalty fine within 42 days, will lead to prosecution.

The penalty for taking child(ren) on **holiday during term time** without authorisation from the school is £60 per parent, per child, per holiday.

Attendance will be referred to the local authority in any instances where there are at least 10 unauthorised absences in a ten week period. You will be notified via a warning letter, this letter will be sent in duplicate to both parents/carers in the house where this is applicable.

Penalty notices can be issued by:

- Local Education Authority
- The Head teacher (other members of Leadership Team authorised to do this)

A maximum of 3 penalty notices can be issued per child per year.

Children missing in Education

The government guidance states:

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority

have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the Academy does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day, they do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the student and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

Registers are marked by **9.30am** and a student will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. At **9.30am**, the registers are closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a student arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows they are on site, but this may **not** count as a present mark and it may mean they have an unauthorised absence. There is the possibility of a Penalty Notice for parents, should the problem persist. Attendance meetings may be scheduled at school to support both parent and student to resolve this problem.

Appointments

Parents should attempt to arrange appointments for their child outside school time whenever possible. When the appointment is local, the student will be expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment.

Improving Attendance

In the cases where a student's absence becomes a cause for concern and falls below the academy target of 95%, the Academy will implement a series of actions in order to address the situation to ensure an improvement in attendance.

Trigger Points for providing additional support may include:

- A change in a medical condition
- A change in the home situation
- A pattern of absence e.g. beginning or end of week
- Three or more unusual/unexplained short term absences for pupils who usually attend well

Case Studies will:

- Identify students causing concern
- Identify current attendance rate
- Give a brief pen portrait including reasons for absence
- Include agencies involved
- Identify strategies used and their impact
- Monitor and analyse data to record results
- Identify any additional support
- Attendance will show improvement

Rewarding Attendance

Students will be rewarded for good attendance throughout the year through a range of rewards and certificates such as:

- Letters/phonecalls home to reward 100% attendance or improvements in attendance at the end of each half term.

- End of term improved attendance certificates for those students whose attendance has improved throughout the term
- 100% attendance certificates from Head teacher at celebration assemblies.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents will:

1. Ensure that the student attends school every day
2. Ensure that the student arrives on time
3. On the first day of any absence, contact the school as soon as possible on **0191 5536000**.
4. Attend all meetings arranged regarding attendance and punctuality

Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.

Under the 2006 Education Regulations **it is a legal requirement that a register is taken at the start of the day**. Not only does the process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a student checklist in respect of health and safety issues – e.g. Fire Drill the school

School starts at 8.50am when all students should be in their tutor room in preparation for the register being taken at 8.55am. At this time students should collect items for the day and make sure that they are aware of any changes / arrangements to the day's activities. The afternoon register is taken at between 1.25pm and 1.30pm. It is essential that all students are registered on both occasions.

Any student who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Residentials

Under the 1996 Education Act parents commit an offence if the child does not attend school regularly. If your child cannot come to school because of illness you should advise the school on the first day of absence by telephone. If no message is received we will make every effort to contact you.

It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned about a child's safety we may make a 'home visit' or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and

Well' welfare visit. We may also carry out home visits to keep in touch and offer support or work to be sent out.

The school will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. If a parent rings the school to confirm the student is unwell the school may request supporting evidence: medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence.

The school may choose not to authorise absence without this supporting evidence as it is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance and submit a copy of the appointment card.

We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue. The school undertakes a range of measures to support students where attendance is an issue. Where we fail to see an improvement in a student's attendance it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the student receives the support required it is important that parents work with the relevant external agency in order to improve their child's attendance.

If your child is experiencing difficulties you should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving the difficulties. This is nearly always successful.

If the difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service they will assess the case to determine the appropriateness of use of statutory enforcement procedures i.e. Fixed Penalty Notices, Magistrates Court or seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment a parenting order can also be imposed.

Punctuality/Lateness

Students who arrive after registration **must** sign in accordance with the school procedures at the main office. Arrival after the close of registration with no valid reason will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded “U” in the register. Parents of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, will be invited to attend a meeting in school and discuss the problem. If the lateness continues a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Service and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued or ultimately the parent could be prosecuted.

It is important to note that any student who arrives to school after 9.30am will be marked with a letter ‘U’ in the register. This means that, despite being in school, they will technically be marked absent from school for the morning sessions. It will be recorded on the register as an unauthorised absence and could result in the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notice.

Holidays in term time

Time off school for family holidays cannot be authorised. The Head Teacher has the discretion; in exceptional circumstances to authorise short periods off school.

Applications for Leave of Absence where dates can be known ahead must be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the requested date.

Consideration is given to each request before a decision is reached by the Head Teacher; on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its individual circumstances.

Any leave of absence that has been declined or the parents has not sought approval for will be recorded as unauthorised. These cases will be referred to the Local Authority and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued to each parent for each student.

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Administrative staff will:

1. Telephone or text parent on the first day of student's absence if no reason has been given. This system is known as 'First Day Calling'.
2. Maintain accurate record of student attendance on SIMS including logging reasons for absence
3. Log communication with parents to show 'follow up' strategies
4. Pass on information re attendance to the relevant staff
5. Send out letters to parents where necessary
6. Store notes from home in the individual student file

Class Teachers will:

- Pick up and mark registers at the start of the day and after lunch and return to the office promptly
- Keep an accurate and up to date attendance register of their group (see details above on Registration)
- Correct any inaccuracies which may occur in the attendance register
- Monitor student attendance and punctuality and check for any patterns of absence
- Liaise with relevant senior leader about attendance
- Inform office staff if they receive any communication that a student will need to leave the school premises part way through the day by prior arrangement e.g. medical appointment
- Ensure parental letter/copy of home school diary confirming absence is given to the office for filing
- Encourage student to attend, engage and enjoy school e.g. reward systems, certificates
- Provide homework/activities/resources as appropriate when pupils are absent

Identified Senior Leader will:

- Liaise with Head teacher
- Contact parents/carers by phone to monitor attendance
- Liaise with Admin staff over any queries
- Notify the safeguarding team where necessary of absences of vulnerable students
- Analyse attendance data and act upon any concerns
- Make home visits where appropriate in consultation with the Head for attendance
- Send out letters where appropriate and sensitively, at the end of each term (or earlier if needed) to those families whose child's attendance is causing concern, falls below 90% or who has hit identified trigger points

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Supporting Documents

- 1) First day response**
- 2) Planned absence form**
- 3) Holiday request form**

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