



June 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Attendance, Absence & Holidays

We understand that parents make choices about their child's attendance at school. We are aware of some of the influences on decision making, for example, the availability of cheaper holidays.

However, all parents have a legal responsibility for their child to attend school. Children with lower attendance find it really challenging when they return to school and subsequently can make less progress in their learning. This responsibility is more important than ever, due to the amount of education children have unavoidably missed due to the pandemic.

We ask parents to support the school and their child's learning by using the 13 weeks of school closure for holidays. With extended hours now available at most medical centres (doctors and dentists) we also ask parents, if possible, to make routine appointments outside of school hours. Appointment cards/letters can be shown to the office if this is not possible.

Should your child be absent for a reason which we cannot authorise, we would still appreciate being informed. Unfortunately, we have had some instances of parents asking their children to be dishonest about their absence – including been told they are going for medical appointments and children then tell us this is not the case. Honesty is one of our key values and it puts the children in a difficult position at school. If we find this is the case we will subsequently mark the absence as unauthorised.

To follow recommendations from both the Bath and North East Somerset Children Missing Education Service (CMES) and Department for Education we follow a consistent approach to attendance and absence. The main reasons for this are as follows:

1. To ensure the welfare and safety of all our pupils
2. To promote attendance and punctuality to support children's learning
3. To limit unnecessary phone calls (and wasting both parents and our valuable time)
4. To ensure our attendance records are accurate – **as part of our move to the Bromcom system you will be able to access your child's attendance records.**

I have a formal meeting every few weeks with our attendance officer at Banes who tracks the children's attendance remotely and looks for patterns – especially children who are not in school on Mondays and Fridays etc.

We are revisiting our letter system to parents, meetings at school for children with unusual patterns of attendance to offer support and home visits from our Attendance Officer for children who are persistently absent.

Lateness

Our gates are open for clubs and wrap around care and the school day begins at **8.50 am**. If arriving late, pupils need to be brought to the school office by a parent and they will be recorded as late.

FROM SEPTEMBER to support this further we will be closing the school gates at 8:50am and class teachers will support children coming in from 8:40am – at 9am if a child is not in school they will be marked down as an unauthorised absence for the morning.

Checking Absence

If children are absent and we are unaware, and we have not been informed by 9.15am, we contact parents. This enables us to account for the safety and welfare of all pupils. To reduce unnecessary phone calls, please inform us of planned absence by 8:45am. If your child is ill it is your responsibility to inform the school. Please call the school before 8.45am. All absence without a reason is recorded as unauthorised.

Absence Form

We have an 'Absence Form' under the school office section of our website. Please use this form when you know that your child will be absent from school e.g.: holiday or attending a funeral or wedding and the office will arrange a meeting with the Head teacher.

Types of Absence: All pupil absence in schools is recorded as either authorised or unauthorised.

UNAUTHORISED: Avoidable absence - when your child's education should be the priority. Parents can choose for their child to be absent. However, the school, with joint responsibility for your child's learning, is not supportive of this absence. Unauthorised absence includes: Family days out; visiting relatives (either in the UK or abroad); oversleeping; long weekends; holidays which overlap with the start or end of term and holidays in term time.

AUTHORISED: Authorised absence means that your child is absent with the school's support. Authorised absence includes: illness; medical treatment - including time spent in hospital; time a family needs during a crisis and holidays under exceptional circumstances (e.g. for armed forces, doctors, ambulance, fire etc). We may require evidence in support of authorising absence.

Penalty Notices

Should you choose for your child to have 5 days (10 sessions) or more of unauthorised absence then your decision may incur a fixed-notice penalty (fine) from the Children Missing Education Service (CMES). The amount is £120 per child for each parent with parental responsibility (even if not living with the child), this reduces to £60 per child if paid within 28 days. For example, this would be £480 for a family with 2 children and 2 parents, reducing to £240 if paid within 28 days.

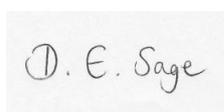
Penalty notices can also be issued for low attendance or continuous lateness resulting in a child missing learning. Expected school attendance is 100%, average school attendance is 96%, and low attendance is below 90% (unless exceptional medical reasons). This is termed as 'persistent absenteeism'. The school informs the CMES if any child's attendance is below 90%, which then will mean they are included as, part of the discussion with the Headteacher. The CMES makes the decision as to any action.

Unpaid fines could result in court proceedings.

Informed Decisions

We hope this information clarifies the school's approach (and the actions the CMES are able to take) and that this supports parents to make informed decisions. Where possible, we always prefer to work in partnership with parents to ensure high-attendance and that all our pupils can reach their potential.

If you wish to discuss any of this information further please contact the school.



Best Wishes,
Dawn Sage

