

# TWERTON INFANT SCHOOL & NURSERY

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

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**Excel at Twerton**  
**- the school that cares**

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**Date Adopted:** October 2018

**Date Updated:** October 2019

**Next Review:** October 2020

## Rationale

At Twerton Infant School and Nursery we require the highest level of attendance from every pupil. Regular attendance is a legal requirement and provides the opportunity for each pupil to develop his or her potential during their time at school. It is important that pupils have the opportunity to experience the full range of a balanced curriculum with its contribution to their daily moral, spiritual, cultural, mental and social development. Irregular attendance and lateness lead to pupils feeling out of touch with school life and falling behind with their work.

Optimum levels of attendance can only be achieved when responsibility is accepted and shared by all concerned. This includes Bath and North East Somerset Council, governors, school staff, parents, pupils and the local community.

## Aims

It is the school's aim to:

- maximise attendance for each pupil in order that they may achieve their full potential academically and socially;
- ensure their safety and wellbeing;
- provide a positive, caring and stimulating environment where children will enjoy coming to school.

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### The Law

All children of compulsory school age who are registered at school must attend school regularly.

### Expectations

Children need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Absence from school can leave children vulnerable to falling behind and tend to achieve less during their school years. **The expectation at Twerton Infant School is that children attend school every day that the school is open; unless the child is unable to attend due to illness or an unavoidable and unforeseen cause.**

The government expects:

- schools to:
  - promote good attendance and reduce absence.
  - ensure every child has access to full time education to which they are entitled.
  - act early to address patterns of absence.
- parents & carers to:
  - perform their legal duty by ensuring their children who are registered at school attend regularly.
  - ensure their children arrive on time.

### Duties and Responsibilities

#### *The Headteacher*

- has overall responsibility for whole school attendance.
- monitors registers for accuracy of marking (in accordance with LA guidelines).
- provides opportunities for class teachers to register concerns about attendance.
- initiates school-level contact with parents.
- liaises with the CMEO (Children Missing Education Officer) and the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
- refers cases of poor school attendance to the Local Authority to request parental support and challenge.

#### *The Class Teacher*

- is responsible for keeping accurate attendance registers on SIMS.
- informs the Headteacher of ongoing concerns.
- keeps accurate records of any contacts with parents.
- on first absence from morning registration marks the SIMS register with a 'N' to inform the office that the child is absent.

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### *Parents*

- are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school and are on time.
- must inform the school and provide an explanation for any absences on a daily basis.

### *The Administrative Assistant*

- will review daily all messages from parents notifying the school of children's absences and update registers on SIMS.
- on the morning of first absence, will attempt to contact the child's parent or carer by telephone (or SMS) to ensure the child's safety, if the parent has failed to notify the school of their child's absence.
- will inform the CMEO, if a child remains absent from school for 48 hours without any communication with the parents or carers.
- will endeavour to find out the reason for any absence so that attendance marks are not kept as 'N' for more than 2 weeks. If no reason for an absence has been established after 2 weeks it will be marked as unauthorized.
- provides attendance statistics for monitoring purposes, including DfE requirements, pupil reports and the annual report to parents.

### *Children Missing Education Officer*

- will liaise with the Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher) regarding concerns over student absences.
- will work with the Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher) on whole school and individual attendance issues.
- will accept referred cases of pupils with poor school attendance, from the Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher).

## Guidelines on the marking of attendance registers

Attendance registers are maintained using SIMS (School Information Management System) and must be marked by a member of the teaching staff at the school. In addition a paper copy of the register is marked with an 'O' against children who are absent and this is returned to the school office after the period set aside for registration. Children are marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session using the codes and procedures described in the separate guidelines for marking attendance registers issued to all teachers. Schools are required to distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences when marking registers.

## Reasons for Absence

If a child fails to attend school, it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to establish, through the Administrative Team, the reason for the child's absence and mark the attendance register accordingly. Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by school staff as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information regarding the reason of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or another unavoidable reason. However leave may be granted on compassionate grounds, in an emergency.

Unauthorised absences are those that school staff do not consider reasonable. Parents may be committing an offence if children are kept away from school.

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Some examples of absences that are 'unauthorised' are:

- keeping children away from school without a good reason e.g. shopping, birthdays, haircuts, waiting for parcels, day trips, visiting relatives;
- absences that have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get their attendance mark in the register;
- taking holidays during term time.

## Resolving Problems

Parents & Carers are expected to contact the school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems. Sharing information is key and can lead to successful outcomes.

If difficulties cannot be resolved within school and the child continues to be frequently or persistently absent from school, the Headteacher will refer the child to the Children Missing Education Officer (CMEO) from Bath & North East Somerset Council.

Wherever possible, the CMEO will try to resolve the situation by agreement. However, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, CMEOs can use legal proceedings if required, including penalty notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Alternatively, parents may themselves wish to contact the CMEO to ask for help or information. CMEOs are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. The Children Missing Education Service number is available from the school reception or by contacting Bath & North East Somerset Council.

## Authorised absence

By law, it is only the school that can approve absence, not parents. The circumstances of each particular case are considered individually and coded as to the reason provided.

*Authorised absences are likely to include:*

- illness and medical, or dental, appointments.
- days set aside for religious observance in the religious body to which the parents belong.
- special circumstances such as family bereavement.
- visits to a new school.
- off-site activities i.e. music examinations, special tuition.

## Unauthorised absence

*Unauthorised absence may include:*

- absence through sickness which has not been supported by a note or message from the parent, guardian or another responsible person.
- leave of absence which has been taken without the prior agreement of the school.
- unexplained absence.

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### Lateness

All children are expected to be in school at 9:05am. The school is open from 8.45am and parents are encouraged to help their child settle by dropping them off at 8:45am, prior to the register opening at 9:05am. The class registers are taken between 9.05am and 9:20am. Any child who is not in school when their name is called is marked absent. If the child arrives after the register is closed and before 9.20am, a late mark 'L' is entered in the register. If a child arrives after 9.20am it will be deemed as an unauthorised absence 'U' for that session.

### Procedures

Twerton Infant School has a responsibility to promote and maintain the regular attendance of all children and to prioritise the reduction of the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. This level of absence adds up to missing more than half a term out of the whole school year. Children who miss this much school are called '**persistent absentees**' by the government, whatever the reason for their absence.

90% attendance might sound good, but really indicates poor attendance and means that your child misses:

- one half day each week
- nearly four weeks every school year
- over one school year in a school career

**The expectation of the school is that children attend every day that the school is open, unless they are unable to do so because of illness or an unavoidable and unforeseen cause.**

Every three weeks, the Headteacher reviews the attendance of all children in the school.

To reduce the level of children who are persistently absent the school actively intervenes when a child's attendance falls below 94%. For children whose attendance is **94% or below**:

### Stage 1

- There will be an assessment of the situation.
- Parents will be informed of their child's attendance rate, by letter.
- Parents will be informed that any further absences from school will not be authorised, unless supported by the appropriate medical evidence.
- The Attendance Team will monitor the child's attendance and review it again after a 3 week period.

### Stage 2

- After the period of monitoring, typically 3 weeks, the child's attendance will be reviewed again.
- If the child's attendance has improved, a letter will be sent to parents noting improvement.
- If the child's attendance has not improved or worsened, parents will be invited to a school level attendance meeting, to discuss the issues impacting on the child's attendance and to agree any actions needed to address the poor attendance.

If the child's attendance has not improved or worsened due to illness, parents will be invited to a meeting with school and health care professionals to draw up a Medical Action Plan (MAP) in order to improve attendance.

Following these meetings, regardless of whether or not the parents/carers have attended, a letter will be sent to them detailing the actions that were agreed. This letter will also advise parents that; if their child incurs further

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unauthorised absences from school by the time of the next review, Twerton Infant School may refer their case to the Children Missing Education Service, or may request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice as a sanction to address the unauthorised absences from school.

### Punctuality

All children are expected to be in the classrooms ready to learn by **9:05am**. The school is open from 8:45am at which time children can arrive and settle prior to the register being taken. The register opens at 9:05am and children not in school at this point are late.

Persistent lateness can be as damaging to a child's schooling as persistent absence. Parents and carers who allow their child to arrive late disrupt not only their own child's education but also that of others.

Arriving on time for the start of the school day is very important for all children as it allows them to start school calmly, ready to focus on their learning.

If children do arrive late (after 9.05am), parents should first report to the school office and provide a reason for their lateness before joining their class. Children arriving after 9.05am will be marked as late in the attendance register. If a child arrives after 9.20am, they will be marked as late after the register closed which will mean an unauthorised absence for that entire morning session. Ten unauthorised absences in a ten week period may result in the school requesting that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice as a sanction to address the unauthorised absences from school.

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parents and carers of a child who presents as persistently late may be guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance.

### Term Time Leave (Holidays)

It should be noted that authorisation of a request for a family holiday during term time is not a parental right. Taking a child out of school without prior permission will be classed as an 'unauthorised' absence and can be subject to a penalty notice or other legal proceedings by Bath & North East Somerset Council.

Any requests for leave during term-time must be made in writing to the Headteacher at least two weeks prior to the proposed period of absence. The application for leave of absence will be considered and parents will be notified of the outcome in writing.

If a child is absent from school in term-time for a family holiday, the parents will receive a warning letter from the Headteacher. If a second period of unauthorised absence is taken while the child is on the school roll, the school may then issue a penalty notice.

Once a penalty notice has been issued, the penalty to be paid shall be:

- £60 where the amount is paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice;
- £120 where the amount is paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice.

Penalty notices are issued to each parent for each child.

The penalty shall be payable to Bath & North East Somerset Council. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice.

### Medical and Dental Appointments

Wherever possible, parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, school staff should be informed in advance if

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possible. A 'present' mark may still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.



## Rewarding & Celebrating Good Attendance

As a means of promoting high attendance, we present Attendance Achievement Certificates to children in assembly, at the end of every term, as follows:

- Gold Certificate (100% attendance)
- Silver Certificate (97-99.99% attendance)
- Bronze Certificate (95-96.99% attendance)

In addition, three times a year we reward children with good attendance across two terms.

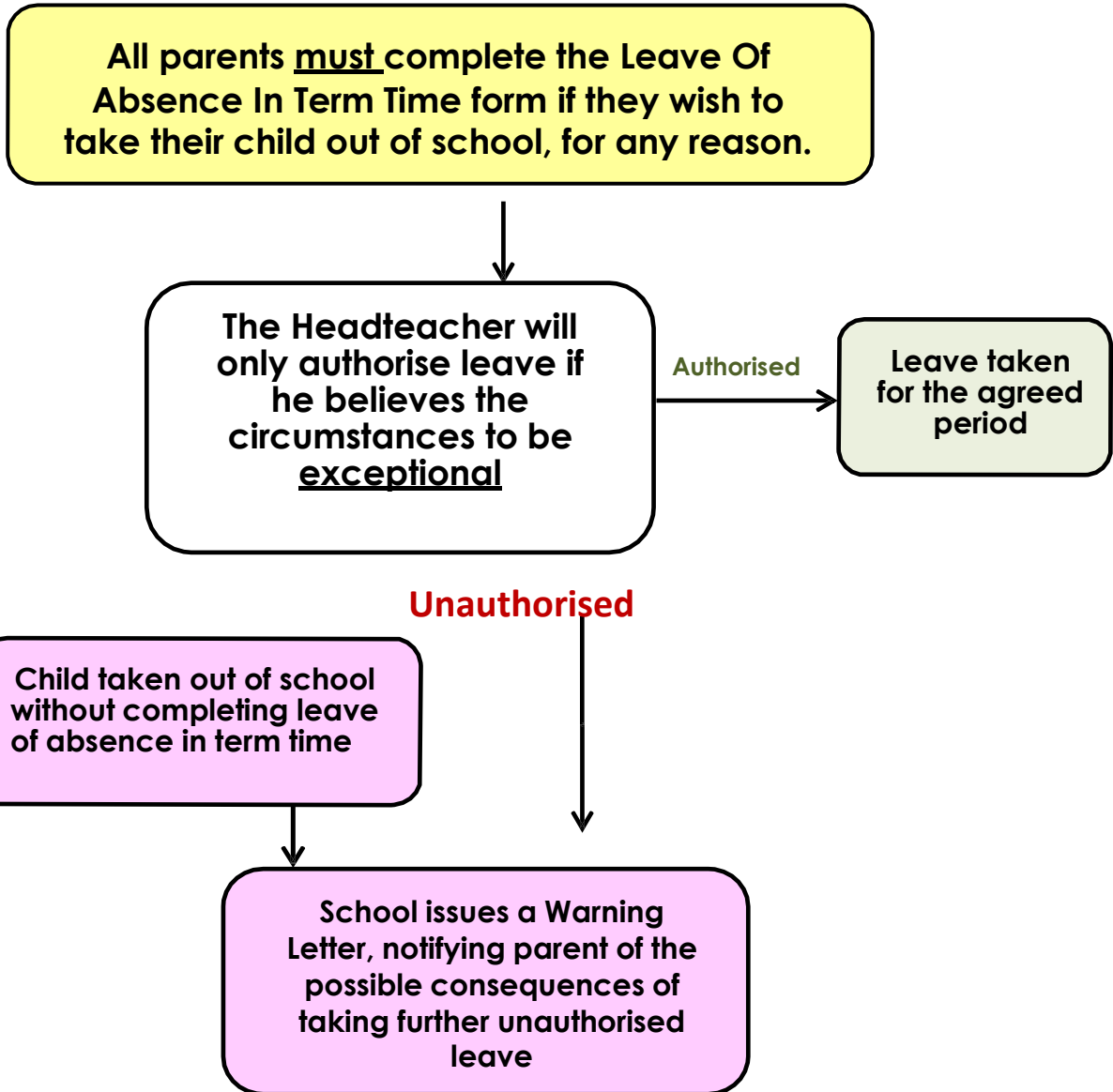
At the end of:

- **Term 2**, we provide a **Christmas Selection Box** to children with attendance above 97% for both Term 1 and Term 2.
- **Term 4**, we give an **Easter Egg** to children with attendance above 97% for both Term 3 and Term 4.
- **Term 6** we provide a **Gift Voucher**, to children with attendance of 100% for the academic year.

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### Leave of Absence Flowchart



**Consequences of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Unauthorised leave in term time taken while the child is at Twerton Infant School and Nursery**

**The school may apply to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice of £120 per child to each parent (reduced to £60 if paid early)**

**Consequences of not paying the Penalty Notice**

***Parents receive a summons to appear at Bath Magistrates Court***