**Introduction**

It is a legal requirement for children to attend school. Boltons C of E school places great importance on good attendance as consistently high levels of attendance promote higher educational achievement.

From 1st September 2013 legislation prohibits any school from authorising leave of absence, including holidays, unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of morning session and once during the afternoon session; these are done by the class teacher using the school’s electronic registration system. The register must show whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised. It is the school and not the parent who authorises absence. Parents must inform the school on the first day of any absence.

**It is illegal to take children out of school during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to any leave of absence**

**during term time.**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on:

a) What might be defined as ‘exceptional circumstances’; and

b) the procedures for applying for leave of absence.

c) The importance of good attendance

**Criteria for Exceptional Circumstances**

It is not possible to define all exceptional circumstances, but examples of what might be considered as such are:

**a) Where it is company or organisation’s policy for an employee (who is a parent/guardian) to take compulsory leave of absence at specified times of year, and there is no opportunity for a family holiday during school holidays. This must be supported by documentary evidence from the relevant company/organisation.**

**b) Service personnel returning from, or shortly embarking upon a tour of duty**

**overseas.**

**c) Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent/guardian or child’s**

**rehabilitation programme, supporting their recovery from a medical or emotional issue. Documentary evidence must be provided from a qualified healthcare professional, such as a doctor.**

Where other factors exist which the Head teacher believes may constitute ‘exceptional circumstances’ this will be referred to the Local Authority for advice.

**Procedures for Applying for Leave of Absence**

* Applications for leave of absence should be made in advance using the correct form or by letter. Forms can be obtained from the school office.
* The nature of the exceptional circumstances that apply and which prompt the request for leave of absence during term time should clearly be stated.
* The head teacher will decide whether the leave of absence can be

 authorised and will contact the parent to inform them of the outcome

Even where there are exceptional circumstances no leave of absence will be

granted during any period of external exams such as SAT’s, which are usually taken in May and June. Multiple or conflicting requests from separated parents or other relatives such as grandparents will not be considered.

**Authorised Absence from School**

If a child is ill or unable to attend school for some reason, parents should provide an

explanation for this non-attendance.

 In the following situations the school will determine whether the child’s

absence will be authorised or not.

* Genuine sickness for up to ten days (continuous or intermittent), after which the school may contact parents to discuss the situation if this has not already been done. For repeated or regular periods of illness the school will request verification, such as a medical certificate from the family doctor, is provided prior to authorising any absence.
* “Unavoidable causes”, which cover unexpected crises in the child’s circumstances (e.g. the sudden death of a close relative), major domestic upsets (eg flood, fire) or severe weather conditions, which make travel impossible.
* Religious observance, involving significant holy days or festivals of their faith.
* School beyond walking distance (i.e. 2 miles) and regular mode of transport is unavailable at short notice (eg breakdowns).
* Advance permission should be sought for:

 a) approved public performance or external examinations.

 b) extended visits overseas for family reasons (up to a term), with

 arrangements about the return agreed with the school.

 c)  **exceptional** family reasons. (e.g. hospital visits, funeral of close relative).

 d) interview at another school.

Routine medical appointments, such as sight and dental checks should be made out of school hours whenever possible.

**Cumbria County Council’s Enforcement Policy**

Cumbria LA policy is that if the child’s absence falls below 85% and there is no sustained improvement despite school intervention the school should consider a referral to Children’s Services following the Attendance Protocol. Should the child’s attendance fail to improve the Access and Inclusion Team will consider the use of legal sanctions and may in accordance with the Prosecution Policy decide to prosecute the parent(s) for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

Penalty Notices will not be used as an automatic sanction against parents who take

unauthorised holidays in term time.

Where schools can evidence clarity and due process to communicating with

parents and the child already has poor attendance (as agreed by the school and the

 Access and Inclusion Officer), and parents have failed to attend meetings or have disregarded school advice, the school can request the Access and Inclusion Officer to consider issuing a penalty notice.

**Promoting Good Attendance and Improving Poor Attendance**

Boltons C of E School will:

* Work closely with families to offer support and advice.
* Encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to inform school of the reason for absence the same day.
* Through the School’s home school agreement encourage parents to adopt a positive attitude by showing an interest in their child’s day at school.
* Contact parents on the first day of any absence if no telephone call has been received.
* If contact cannot be made by telephone school will send a letter home.
* Actively encourage good communication between school and parents to promote punctual and regular attendance.
* Keep up to date and accurate records of reasons for absence and meetings with families.
* If attendance drops close to 85% parents will be contacted by class teacher to discuss the reasons for absence.
* Support the family in trying to improve attendance. The format of support will depend on the reasons for poor attendance. Requests for support may be made to outside agencies eg school nurse, health visitor, GP, Access and Inclusion team.
* Report attendance levels to parents and promote good attendance with

certificates and awards.

School is aware that some pupils have severe difficulty attending school due to emotional factors and, in such instances, we would work with parents and external agencies to support pupils and their families and to put plans in place.

**Lateness**

Lateness after school closes the register (i.e 15 minutes into the session) will be regarded as “unauthorised” absence.

**Reports**

All individual absences will be placed on the pupil’s yearly report, denoting authorised and unauthorised absence.

The school’s figures for unauthorised absences will be published annually on the school website.

**Local Authority Responsibilities**

* To provide appropriate advice to parents, pupils, schools and other agencies.
* Produce supportive material for use in or by schools (i.e. behaviour support materials/attendance workshops).
* Investigate and assess referrals for unauthorised absence.
* Take appropriate action to ensure pupils return to school, including where appropriate legal action.

Established October 1997

Reviewed annually

February 2011 – No changes

January 2012 – No changes

January 2013 – Minor changes

Rewritten October 2013

January 2014 – No Changes

January 2015 – Minor Changes

January 2016 – No Changes

January 2017 – Minor changes

January 2018- No Changes

January 2019- No Changes

January 2020- No Changes

March 2021 – Minor change.

July 2022- No Change

January 2022- Minor Changes