

The Ellis CE (VA) Primary School

Policy Title: Attendance and Punctuality

Date of Review: September 2024

Review by: September 2025

Introduction

THE ELLIS CE (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

This policy was created after a period of consultation with relevant stakeholders within school. It sits alongside our Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Offer which follows through a series of specific titles and questions that provides parents with a clear insight in to all aspects of policy and provision for SEND pupils.

This policy is in-line with the (BMBC) Local Authority's Code of Conduct and it has been formally adopted by governors and reflects our approach at The Ellis CE (VA) Primary School.

A. Introduction to the policy

The staff and Governors at The Ellis CE (VA) Primary School are committed to promoting a culture of high expectation, achievement and excellence. Good attendance is crucial if students are to take advantage of the learning opportunities available to them and complete a successful journey through their time at our school and as they move on into higher education or the world of work.

All of our school stakeholders need to work in partnership with relevant parties to ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities in our aim to promote high standards of attendance and punctuality.

The overall aim for all children should be for 100% attendance, therefore any absence should only be for unavoidable and genuine reasons.

B. Registration

Registration is a legal requirement that has to be undertaken at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. This enables us to:

- Monitor attendance regularly.
- Evaluate information and set targets/tackle areas of concern as early as possible.
- Target absence, punctuality and truancy and communicate with pupils and parents about expectations.
- Have the ability to publicise the above data within our school.
- Have the ability to give a clear and accurate picture to parents, carers and guardians.
- Have the ability to encourage and reward good attendance.

The school gates will be open from 8:35am (F2 gate 8:50am) to enable children to get to their designated area near their classrooms. Morning registration is at 8:45am (F2 is 8:50am) each morning. Registers close at 9:00am (F2 is 9:05am). Afternoon registration is 12:30pm in nursery and 1.00pm in the rest of the school.

C. Why regular attendance is important

Any absence, including family holidays, affects the pattern of a child's education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Absence during transitional periods or the start of a new term can also significantly affect a child's friendship group and, therefore, their social and emotional progress. Any pupil's absence can disrupt the learning of others as they try to catch up with skills that have been taught in their absence. This can also have a de-motivating effect on individuals if they are unable to access parts of the curriculum following absences.

D. Rewarding Positive Attendance/Punctuality

We recognise good attendance in school with weekly class attendance awards, a termly class raffle for a £15 voucher and an end of year reward for all children who have achieved our school target of 96.7%.

We aim to recognise excellent attendance/punctuality through praise and rewards but we may also reward improvement over time. Our attendance raffle is designed to celebrate all our children and not penalise children who have missed some school for long standing medical appointments for example, or those who have attended well in general but stayed away to risk the spread of illness to others when they became temporarily unwell.

E. Parental Responsibility

“All parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that children receive an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and to any special educational need they may have, by regular attendance at school or otherwise”. (Section 7, Education Act, 1996).

Ensuring a child’s regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents/carers and permitting absence from school, without a valid and significant reason, is an offence that may result in prosecution. Our school will seek to build on partnerships with parents/carers by informing them about concerns at an early stage.

Where an absence is for a medical appointment, children should attend school for as long as possible before the appointment and/or return to school as soon as possible after the appointment. Appointments for visits to doctors, dentist etc. should, wherever possible, be made out of school hours. Parents/carers are asked to provide a copy of all medical appointment cards/letters for appointments made during the school day. These should be taken to the school office when collecting your child or, ideally, before.

When a child is to be absent from school, parents/carers should contact the school’s dedicated telephone number, select option one and leave a message with the details of your child, class and the reason for absence. Please do not say ‘unwell’ or ‘poorly’ as we require details of symptoms to support our attendance logs. Where possible you should give an indication of a likely return date. If there is no communication from home, parents/carers will be contacted by school under the ‘First Day of Absence’ procedure set out below.

In circumstances where a child has to be absent from school, for example due to limited mobility or recovering from an operation etc. and the child is well enough and able to do school work, school may hand deliver class work for the child to complete at home.

School ends at 3:15pm (F2 at 3:20pm). Parents/carers are reminded to collect to children on time at home time and from after school activities.

Parents/carers must have given written consent to school, for any children who are walking to and from school without an adult.

F. ‘First Day of Absence’ procedure

It is parent’s responsibility to contact school on the first day of their child’s absence, before 9am, wherever possible. This procedure is crucial in our efforts to raise the attendance profile of our school. The ‘First Day of Absence’ system is operated to communicate quickly and effectively with parents/carers regarding the reasons for a child’s absence at the beginning of the first day away from school. When a child is absent and no reason has been given, parents/carers will be contacted by school, normally by telephone.

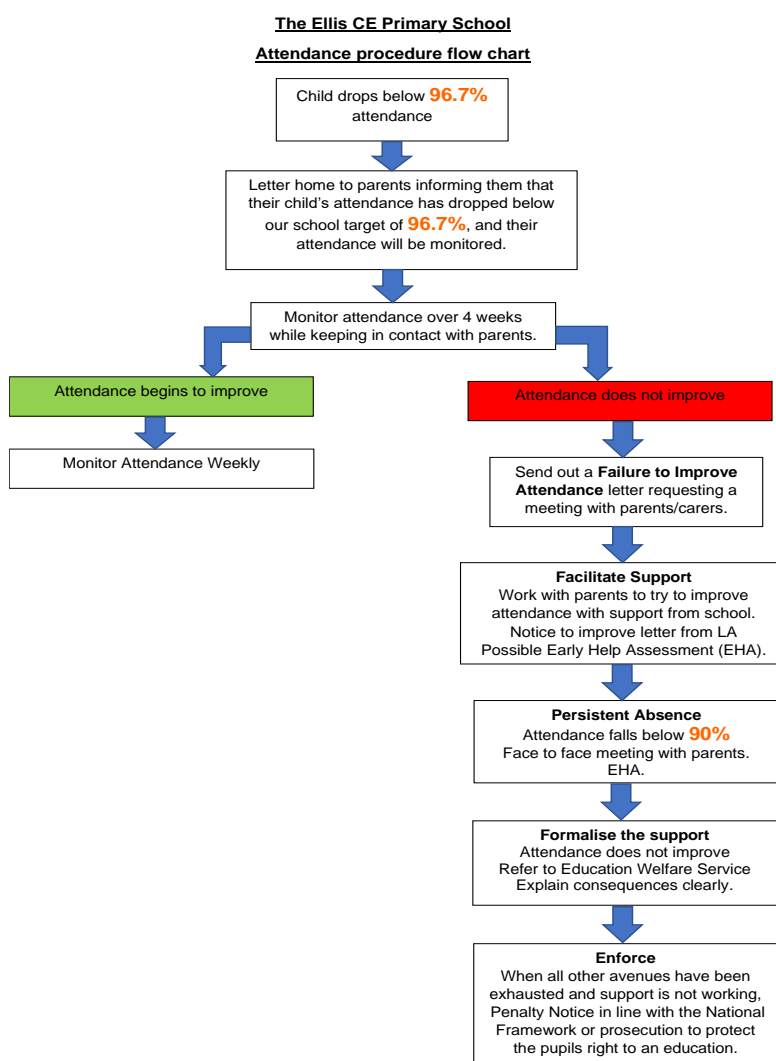
It is a requirement for parents/carers to provide at least two appropriate telephone numbers as emergency contacts, ideally more. It is the parent/carers' responsibility to ensure that these contact details are up-to-date at all times. This is also vital for safeguarding reasons so that we make contact with an appropriate adult quickly, should your child have an accident or become unwell. In cases where we are unable to make contact with an appropriate adult, we would conduct a visit the home address.

Where leaders are concerned about a child's reason for absence or the welfare of a pupil/family the Headteacher, other designated leader(s) and/or Educational Welfare Service (EWS) may visit the family home to complete a safe and well check. This visit will be logged on the school's welfare records in CPOMS (our current online system to monitor safeguarding concerns).

Teaching staff may also make telephone calls to families in relation to any issues concerning children. Our Parent Support Advisor and the office staff are responsible for making calls with regard to attendance to parents/carers and for recording absence correctly on the School Information Management System (currently SIMS).

G. Procedures to be followed by attendance leaders

School staff monitor attendance and punctuality daily. Our school attendance target is currently 96.7%, and when a child's attendance begins to drop below the target, without good medical reason/evidence, the procedure is as follows:



Where attendance has fallen below the school attendance target, and school have not already had discussions with parents/carers, they will be contacted directly or invited into school to discuss issues relating to their child's attendance, depending on the context of the absence. At this meeting:

- Senior Leadership Team and, where appropriate external support agencies, will offer any relevant support or guidance to the family and they may make referrals as required for further intervention.
- A clear target will be set for improvement (and monitored in the following period).
- Expectations will be made clear and the impact on future learning.
- A copy of the school policy will be shared either electronically or in hard copy for future reference.
- Parents/carers may be reminded to provide medical evidence for any future absence from school for a set period of time.

The school will refer for support and guidance from the Educational Welfare Service (EWS). The EWS will be in contact with the family to advise them and if no improvement is seen, or attendance levels fall further, the school and EWS will organise a face-to-face meeting to discuss the health of the child and concerns about attendance.

H. Arriving late for school

Letters and/or reminder text messages may also be sent out for incidents of lateness. Our lessons start 8:45am (F2 at 8:50am). Pupils are deemed to be late when arriving after 8:45am and their late mark is recorded at the main reception. Children arriving after 8:45am should be accompanied by a parent/carer to the main reception so that a reason for absence/lateness can be given. The number of minutes late is recorded in order to measure the impact of lost education due to late arrival.

Please note that arrival after 9am (9:05am for F2), when registers have closed, without a reason will be marked as an unauthorised absence for the whole of the morning session.

Where there have been 3 or more instances of lateness during a half term, parents/carers will receive a telephone call from our Parent Support Advisor, unless school are already aware of the reasons. If no improvements are made, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting with our Parent Support Advisor who will support families to improve punctuality.

I. Holiday/absence requests - see Appendix A

All requests for leave must be documented on a school request form (see Appendix A) collected from school. Parents/carers should share details about the request (including the specific dates) and give any special circumstances that explain the need to take your child out of school during term time. The Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' and on a case-by-case basis. School will respond to the request in writing and it is possible that a penalty notice may be issued.

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

If a family is suspected to be on holiday and no leave of absence form has been completed, a reason to believe letter will be hand delivered to their home address.

J. Legal Action

The school and Governing Body do not wish to take legal action against parents/carers for

unauthorised absences or incidents of persistent lateness. However, we may consider legal action as we aim to ensure that every child is in school every day so that they can meet their full potential. Recurring unauthorised absence may lead to a referral to the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) and this can lead to legal interventions and a formal assessment.

The Education Welfare Service Issues Penalty Notices on behalf of all schools and academies across Barnsley as part of the Council's statutory duties. Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority at the request of Headteachers (or designated Deputy). Prior to any request, the school must ensure that they can evidence that there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the parent/carer has committed an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. The offence relates to the unauthorised absence during the period in question and not the non-payment of the fine, therefore, schools must consider each case on its own merits to ensure it passes the evidential test.

Penalty Notices are requested by schools and issued by the Local Authority to the parents/carers of statutory school age children, and can be issued per parent, per child. For example: 3 siblings absent for leave of absence in term time could result in **each** parent/carer receiving 3 separate fines at the below rates.

- **First offence** - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent/carer, per child paid within 21 days. This fine increases to £160 per parent/carer, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28.
- **Second Offence (within 3 years)** - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent/carer, per child paid within 28 days.
- **Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)** - the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent/carer, per child, and may make an order for legal costs.

K. Approved Absence

School leaders may authorise absence that will not affect attendance for visits to a potential new school setting, attending sporting/performance activities (like elite coaching or competition, or musical instrument examinations) or attend school visits or sporting competitions. This absence will be at the discretion of the Headteacher and it will only be approved if a child's attendance and behaviour are exemplary. This absence cannot be taken at key times of the year like formal assessments such as SATS and nor can it be taken during key learning dates like school visits, for example. Where potential absence for sporting talents clash with a school sports event, the school's programme of events will always take precedence. Absence that will affect a child's ability to achieve their potential in end of Key Stage assessments will not be granted. Families must work with us to ensure that children in such a position keep up with any learning missed from school.

L. The role of Governor Monitoring

Attendance data and the overall effectiveness of school attendance procedures are provided to the Governing Body at their termly meetings to support the monitoring of this across school. The governing body will:

- Elect a Safeguarding Governor who will work alongside office staff and Senior Leaders to ensure that attendance systems are effective.
- Ensure that the legal requirements for registration are complied with.
- Review the school Attendance and Punctuality Policy on a regular basis,

- currently annually.
- Have input into school attendance targets.
 - Receive reports and statistics at least termly.
 - Support the need for good attendance through systems, processes and rewards in school.

M. Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The EWS is a Local Authority employee who monitors attendance remotely and is responsible for the general well-being of all school aged children across the borough. Where necessary and appropriate, the EWS will work alongside school staff to address pupil related issues that may be affecting their attendance at school. When a child is referred to Education Welfare, the officers will work within Local Authority and national guidelines to address the issues. School can refer for support from the EWS if families in their care are presenting concern in terms of attendance and/or punctuality.



BARNSELY
Metropolitan Borough Council



Directorate for Children, Young People and Families

Leave of Absence Request Form

Please read the information on the reverse of this form before its completion

I wish to apply for my child/children to take leave of absence during term time.

School and year group	Child Name

Leave of absence dates to be requested

1 st date of leave	Last date of leave

Number of school days missed

Reason for requesting leave of absence:

Parent 1 Full name and Address _/_/_	Parent DOB.:
Will children be with this parent on leave of absence? Yes/No?	
Parent 2 full Name and Address _/_/_	Parent DOB.:
Will children be with this parent on leave of absence? Yes/No?	

From January 2024 both parents may receive a penalty notice per child.

Signed **Parent / Carer** *Must have parental responsibility or day to day care for named child/ren

Date of application /...../.....

If you go ahead with the leave of absence when unauthorised, you may receive a Penalty Notice issued by the Local Authority. Please see reverse for escalation process and fine costs.

• **SCHOOL USE ONLY** **Date Application Received**

Leave of Absence in Term Time

1. Section 444A Education Act 1996 empowers designated Local Authority (LA) officers, Head Teachers (and Deputy and Assistant Head Teachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.
2. The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2013 sets out requirements in respect of leave of absence in term time.
3. No parent can demand leave of absence as a right.
4. A request for leave of absence must be made in advance.
5. The request for leave of absence **should** be made by the parent/carer who is taking the child out of school / academy, the full name and address of all parents /carers of the child should be provided on the form.
6. There is no requirement to authorise the leave of absence just because a request has been made. The amendments under The Education (Penalty Notice) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances*.

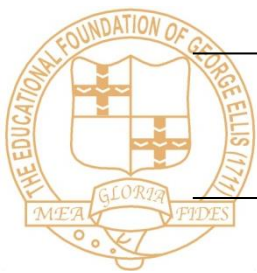
*See Code of Conduct/Guidance relating to Leave of Absence

7. The circumstances of each individual request for leave of absence will be taken into account on a case-by-case basis.
8. **The decision to approve / not approve the request is for the school / academy, not the Authority or the parent. Only schools / academies can authorise / not authorise absence.**
9. If important work has been missed by the pupil due to the parents making a request for leave of absence the parents should not expect special arrangements to be made by the school/ academy for that pupil to catch up that work.

Penalty Notices are requested from schools and issued by the Local Authority to the parents/carers of statutory school age children, and can be issued per parent, per child. For example: 3 siblings absent for leave of absence in term time could result in **each** parent/ carer receiving 3 separate fines at the below rates.

- **First offence** - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This fine increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28.
- **Second Offence (within 3 years)** - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.
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Failure to pay a Penalty Notice will render you liable to criminal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.



September 2024

Attendance and Punctuality

Dear Parents and Carers,
These are the procedures in place to deal with attendance and punctuality.

Punctuality

In the morning the gates will be open at **8:35am** to enable children to get to their designated area near their classrooms ready for an **8:45am** start. **Anyone arriving after 8:45 will receive a late mark. All registers will close at 9:00am (F2 9:05am) and anyone arriving after this time will receive a U mark and the full session will be classed as an unauthorised absence.**

Y3, Y4, Y5 and Y6 will have access via the main gate (off Garden Grove) so that they can walk around to their classrooms for a prompt start.

Y1, Y2 and Y3 will use the School Street entrance.

F2 gate opens at 8:50am and Registers will be closed at 9:05am

All Gates will close at 8:55am and anyone arriving after this time must come in to school through the main entrance. The reason for the late arrival at school will be entered into the electronic registration system which the Education Welfare Service sees at regular intervals throughout the year.

If your child is late more than **3** times in a half term you will receive a phone call from Mrs Gay. If your child continues to be late then you will be invited to a meeting with Mrs Gay to find a solution to enable your child to arrive at school on time.

School finishes at **3:15pm**. Parents should ensure that they are at school by **3:15pm** to collect their child(ren). If parents are not able to collect their child(ren) at **3:15pm** then alternative arrangements must be made by the parents so that children are collected on time.

Please ensure that school are aware who will be collecting your child(ren) from school. **Parents are also asked that they ensure their child(ren) are picked up on time from after school activities.**

F2 finish at 3:20pm.

In the interest of safeguarding your children, **written consent** is required if you are allowing your child to walk home unsupervised. A form will be sent out for you to sign at the start of each academic year. (**Years 4, 5 and 6 only**).

F1, F2, Y1, Y2 and Y3 must be brought to the playground and collected from the classroom by an **adult** at all times. If they are late, they **must** be brought to reception by the **adult** who has brought them to school.

If for any reason you need an older sibling, who is not an adult, to collect your child, please arrange to speak to Mrs Edwards so school can ensure that safeguarding procedures are being followed.

As pupils are of primary school age it is the parents'/carers' responsibility to ensure that children **arrive at and are collected from school on time**. We do accept that there are odd occasions when parents will be unavoidably delayed in picking up their children. If this happens you must contact the school office as soon as you are aware that you will be delayed so that arrangements can be made to keep your child at school until you arrive.

If your child is ill, school should be contacted as soon as possible on the first day of absence to give the reason for your child's absence and a possible return to school date. If school have not received a phone call to give a reason for the absence, you will be contacted by Mrs Gay, Attendance Officer. If we cannot contact you, **we will** conduct a home visit.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Wherever possible, medical/dental appointments must be made out of school hours.

It is important that children are present at registration to get their attendance mark. If your child arrives at school after 9.10am following a doctor or dental appointment they are marked in the register as 'out for the whole morning'.

Please note: children should always be collected and returned to school by a parent/carer. This is for safeguarding and health and safety reasons. A telephone call, email or note should be sent in to school to inform the teacher that a child is to be collected for an appointment along with confirmation of the appointment.

Absence from School

Good attendance is a learned behaviour.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

***"Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school."* (Working together to improve school attendance)**

Our school attendance target is currently 96.7% and the parent/carer of any child dropping below this will receive a letter stating that their attendance will be monitored. If attendance does not improve then a meeting will be arranged to discuss any barriers to attending school and we will work alongside you to find a way to improve your child's attendance. *(Please see flow chart)*

From September the 1st 2013 the DfES Statutory requirements states that parents **do not** have the right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time. **Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

If you wish to take your child out of school under these circumstances the '**Leave of Absence in Term Time due to Exceptional circumstances**' form should be collected from Mrs Gay, **completed fully** and handed in to the office.

Generally, the DfE DOES NOT consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

If we have reason to believe your child is on holiday, and no form has been handed in, you will receive a 'Reason to Believe' letter.

If a leave of absence form is not handed in then your child could be classed as a child missing education.

Attendance and punctuality will be taken into account prior to a decision being made with regards to **exceptional circumstances**.

Please note that attendance and punctuality are monitored rigorously both by school and the Education Welfare Service. When a child's attendance level drops below 96.7% parents will receive a phone call and may be asked for evidence of a doctor's appointment regarding any further absences. Mrs Gay will work with parents to improve attendance as poor attendance at school **can result** in fines for parents.

If attendance does not improve then a referral to the Education Welfare Service will be made as they may be able to offer different strategies that may work for you and your family.

If your child's attendance drops below 90%, it is classed as persistent absence and you will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss how we can improve your child's attendance.

From September 2019, there is a revised code of conduct for issuing penalty notices please read the following:

Revised Code of Conduct for the issuing of Penalty Notices to parents for unauthorised pupil absence or leave of absence from school September 2019.

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) has now received Council Cabinet approval for changes to the Code of Conduct regarding the issuing of Penalty Notices which are to be implemented from the 2nd September 2019. (See appendix 1). The proposed changes to the Code of Conduct were circulated to Schools, Academies, Governing Bodies, Chief Executives of Academy Trusts and the Chief of Police for Barnsley as part of the consultation period which commenced on the 18th January 2019 and concluded on the 15th February 2019.

The changes to the Code of Conduct are:

The removal of the following criteria which Headteachers were required to consider under the current Code of Conduct when assessing the merits of a **leave of absence** request during term time:

- previous periods of leave of absence
- leave of absences taken in the first term
- exams and assessments
- employers' letter(s)
- removal of school attendance target

Under the new Code, Penalty Notices **will** be issued if **any** of following three conditions applies:

- A pupil has accrued **five or more** consecutive days of unauthorised leave of absence for a holiday in term time
- If due to sporadic unauthorised absences (**10 sessions in a rolling period of 10 weeks which can be a combination of Holidays in term time, Unauthorised absence and Lates after register closed**), The period of 10 weeks can also span different school years and terms e.g., 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the summer term and a further 8 in the autumn term.
- Support to improve attendance where needed is in place and is not working and a notice to improve letter has been issued.

- An **excluded** pupil present in a public place without justification, during the school hours of the school day where the pupil is on roll, during the first five days of each fixed period or permanent exclusion

Legal Context

The Education Welfare Service Issues Penalty Notices on behalf of all schools and academies across Barnsley as part of the Council's statutory duties. Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority at the request of Headteachers (or designated Deputy). Prior to any request, the school must ensure that they can evidence that there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the parent/carer has committed an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. The offence relates to the unauthorised absence during the period in question and not the non-payment of the fine, therefore, schools must consider each case on its own merits to ensure it passes the evidential test.

Section 444(1) Offence: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil.

(1) If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence

Impact on Attendance

The changes will provide clarity across the system which has been lacking since the Supreme Court hearing in April 2017 and the continued delay in the issuing of revised guidance from the DfE. The proposal will ensure that Barnsley is aligned with other Local Authorities across the country that have amended their respective Codes. The proposal will further promote to families the importance of consistent attendance and this will support the ongoing efforts of schools and the Council in raising awareness of children, young people and families of the impact that attendance has on their education and longer-term outcomes. The proposal is part of a strategy across the Council and the Barnsley Alliance to improve attendance.

Please remember all holidays in term time are classed as unauthorised absences unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been discussed with school, and; failure to inform school with a reason for any absence is classed as an unauthorised absence, which can also lead to a fine.

Attendance statistics are collected regularly throughout the year by the DfES and in order for school to achieve a good attendance record we rely on the support of parents/carers. If you are experiencing any issues or need some support, please contact Mrs Gay. Thank you for your support in ensuring that we have good attendance and punctuality rates.