



WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

March 2023

Introduction

Blessed George Napier School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We work closely with the Oxfordshire County Council Attendance team and this policy has been written following their guidelines.

We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Everything we do is based on our core Gospel values of compassion, respect, truth, service, forgiveness

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance including e.g. newsletters and end of term reports. Of course, all students can become ill or need to miss school for another reason at some point, but our expectation is that all students will achieve at least **96% attendance** each year. We regularly recognise and reward students who achieve excellent attendance.

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 (DfE). Any student whose attendance falls below 90% in any one year is classed a 'persistent absentee' by the DfE.

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. These will reflect both national and Oxfordshire attendance targets.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it, the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

School Procedures

1. Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised (/ \), unauthorised (O) or as an approved educational activity such as (V) (attendance on an out of school visit).
2. It is the responsibility of the member of staff in charge of a class to complete the register and this should be done as soon as possible once the students have arrived.
3. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unexplained (N).

Lateness

1. Morning registration will take place at the start of school at **8:40am**. The registers will remain open until half an hour after registration time.
2. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate absence code will be entered.

A text explaining a child has received a late mark will be sent to the parents/guardians that day. Tutors will follow up students with more than 2 lates by contacting the parents/guardians to discuss and /or issue a detention.

The afternoon registration will be at **the beginning of Period 4 (Period 5 on a Wednesday)**

The registers will close 10 minutes after the start of the afternoon period.

3. Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late (L) before registers close.

Absence because of illness

1. Parents/Carers must inform the school if their child is going to be absent on or before the first day – contact details: absence@bgn.oxon.sch.uk. Parents/guardians must contact the school on **each day of absence** until the student is well enough to return for safeguarding reasons, unless we receive a letter from the GP/Hospital advising us of the length of absence, i.e recovery after an operation.
2. If no contact has been made by parents/carers by the close of registration, then a 'GroupCall' automated message will be sent to the nominated number to inform parents/carers that the student is not at school. On some occasions, if the parent/carer cannot be contacted, a home visit may be arranged to establish that a student is safe, and this may involve a referral to other agencies if there are significant concerns. Welfare checks may also be carried out in the instance of child absence even when parent/carer has made contact with the school.
3. When making medical/dental appointments, every effort must be made to ensure appointments are outside school hours, but we acknowledge that this is not always possible. Medical/Dental appointments must be accompanied by an appointment card or other written confirmation. Please note, a whole school day should not normally be necessary, and students are expected to attend before and after their appointment.
4. While we will do everything possible to support students who have been absent for a genuine reason, it is the responsibility of the student to speak to their teachers and clarify what work they need to catch up on. There is a large amount of subject information available to students and parents on the school VLE.

Why regular attendance is so important

1. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.
2. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Absence due to prolonged or repeated illness

When a student is absent from school for prolonged periods of time due to an ongoing illness, a letter from their consultant is required which states clearly that the student is unfit for school. The letter should state the date/dates that the student will be absent for and the date when the student will be expected to return to school and a brief explanation as to the reason for absence. We will work closely with medical staff and the student to ensure that we offer appropriate support as far as we are able to. If we do not have appropriate medical evidence then the absence will be unauthorised. In cases where students have been absent from school for prolonged periods of time and they are not under the care of a specialist medical team, the responsibility for day-to-day safeguarding remains with the school. Therefore, we carry out home visits from time-to-time. This has two purposes; firstly to stay in touch with the student and to encourage them to return to school and secondly, we have to physically sight the student and be able to record that they are safe in line with safeguarding policies and procedures.

Frequent and unauthorised absence

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer/Deputy Headteacher for Student progress and Wellbeing, to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve any concerns with parent/s.

Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward. An attendance contract will be agreed at this meeting and the Head of Year will continue to monitor the student's attendance. Parents/carers will be asked to give permission to speak to the student's GP if the absences are related to ill health. If the GP's practise issues a charge for this information, it is the responsibility of the parents to pay this in order for the information to be used as evidence/confirmation to authorise absence due to medical reasons. In order to authorise absence on medical grounds written medical evidence covering the entire period of absence is required.

If attendance does not improve then the completion of a Strengths & Needs Form will be offered. This process identifies all the support that the family and student currently have access to and brings all agencies together in a team around the family (TAF). The EHA is managed by the school with support from the LCSS team (Locality and Community Support Service) at Oxfordshire County Council.

Penalty Notices and Legal Action

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] To his age, ability and aptitude and

[b] To any special needs he may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day-to-day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the school reserves the right to issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a referral to The County Attendance Team to issue a fine or take further legal action through the courts, which may end up as a Criminal Prosecution which will result in a criminal record.

A Penalty Notice is a fine that the County Attendance Team may decide to issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates' Court system.

A Parent/Carer can be issued with a penalty notice if:

- they fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as six or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six-week period;
- they fail to return their child to school on the agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence;
- their child persistently arrives late for school after registration is closed;
- they allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation. Please note that from September 2019 all parents/carers will be issued with a Penalty Notice Warning letter at the start of the school year. A fine can be issued at the Headteachers discretion following the first unauthorised absence for holiday during the school year within five days of the pupil's return to school.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and a parenting contract meeting will be offered between parent, pupil and school to try and help resolve any issues. PA cases may be referred to the County Attendance Team and if necessary, they have a range of legal powers open to them to enforce attendance including parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecutions. If convicted of an offence a parent could face a fine of up to £2,500 per parent and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Return from prolonged absence

It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to other pupils. This will be managed by the Head of Year and Pastoral Support Manager/SENCO as appropriate.

Promoting Attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education. Attendance is regularly highlighted in the school newsletter. Tutors support students in completing a record in their planner so they are aware of their percentage attendance. Percentage attendance is included in each school report that is sent to parents/carers. Attendance is a regular whole school focus and at the end of each term there is a prize for excellent attendance in each year group. Certificates are rewarded regularly for excellent attendance whole year to date as well as for specific term(s). The names of students awarded these certificates are entered into a draw and have a chance of winning a prize.

Leave of Absence

As of 1st September 2013, the Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Parents/Carers should seek permission from the Headteacher prior to the leave of absence period in question. An absence request form is available from the attendance officer at the Student Services reception area, or from the school website –

<https://www.blessedgeorgenapier.co.uk/page/?title=Attendance+and+Punctuality&pid=34>

The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school **if** the leave is granted. The percentage attendance of the student in the current year and also previous attendance patterns will be considered when making this decision. Parents/carers who remove their children from school without authorisation or do not return their child to school on the agreed date following an authorised period of leave of absence, may face a Penalty Notice Warning which could lead to a fine/prosecution (see Penalty Notices and Legal Action above). Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any saving you think may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost of your child's education.

What does the law say?

Parents are expected to contact school at any early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out this way, the school may refer the child to the County Attendance Team at the Local Authority. At the school's request, they may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, per child (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice for prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. This can result in a criminal record and a fine of up to £2,500. A Community Order, Parenting Order or ultimately a custodial sentence).

Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court.

“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence”

The legal requirements regarding register and admission roll keeping can be found on the DfE website. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

The guidance summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, head teachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils and parents.

These requirements are contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) governs how information about people (Personal Data) should be treated. It also gives rights to individuals whose data is held. The Regulation came into force on 25 May 2018 and applies to all personal data collected at any

time whether held on computer or manual record. The Regulation is enforced by the Information Commissioner.

Access to attendance information

The law regarding sharing personal data changed when the GDPR data protection regulations came into force. Blessed George Napier is an Academy and part of the Pope Francis Multi Academy Company. Under the current law, Blessed George Napier School is required to share one annual written report of each registered pupil's progress and attainment in the main subject areas taught, to the parents of that registered pupil. Summary attendance data is included in this report. However, we do not share any detailed information regarding the reason for absence, as this data is not part of the 'Educational record'. It is personal data under the GDPR legislation. The school can share attendance data with third parties under the 'Lawful Basis of carrying out a public task' only where the school has concerns about attendance and it is the child's best interest to share information.