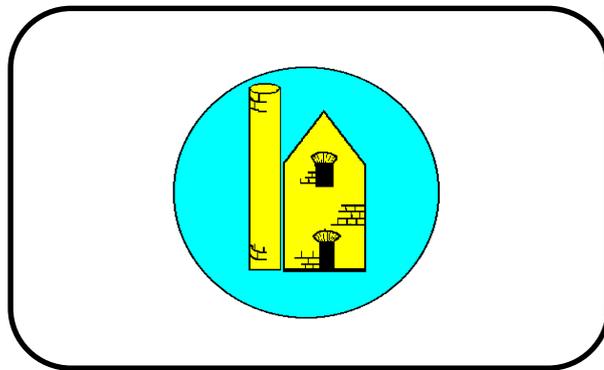


# Biscovey Academy



## Attendance and Absence Policy

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## **Contents**

### Statement of intent

1. Legal framework
2. Roles and responsibilities
3. Definitions
4. Training of staff
5. Pupil expectations
6. Absence procedures
7. Contact information
8. Attendance Officer
9. Educational Welfare Officer
10. Lateness
11. Term-time leave
12. Truancy
13. Missing children
14. Religious observances
15. Appointments
16. Young carers
17. Monitoring and review

Appendix 1: Attendance Monitoring Procedures

Appendix 2-4: Standard Letters in the case of persistent absence

Appendix 5: Leave of Absence Request Form

## Statement of intent

Biscovey Academy believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school and missing education leaves them vulnerable to falling behind. Regular school attendance also plays a key role in the effective safeguarding of children.

We are committed to:

- Following the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that:

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

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

- Promoting a welcoming atmosphere that makes pupils feel safe and valued
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.

Signed by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Head of School                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair of the Local  
Academy Advisory  
Group for Curriculum,  
Wellbeing and  
Safeguarding                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **1. Legal framework**

1.1. This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)

1.2. This policy also has regard to non-statutory DfE and local authority guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2016) 'School attendance'
- Cornwall Council (2016) "Achieving High Attendance"
- Cornwall Council (2016) "Children Missing Education Protocol"
- Cornwall Council (2016) "Reduced Timetables"
- Cornwall Council (2017) "Flexi-Schooling"
- Cornwall Council (2017) "Emotionally Based School Refusal"
- Cornwall Council (2017) "Supporting Children Who Are Unable to Attend School Because of Medical/Health Needs"

## **2. Roles and responsibilities**

2.1. The Hub Council has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Attendance and Absence Policy and procedures of Biscovey Academy

2.2. The Hub Council has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Attendance and Absence policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

2.3. The Hub Council has responsibility for handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's complaints policy.

2.4. The Head of School is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the Attendance and Absence Policy and procedures of the school.

2.5. Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, are responsible for following the Attendance and Absence Policy and for ensuring pupils do so too.

They are also responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently.

2.6. Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, are responsible for modelling good attendance behaviour and implementing the agreed policy.

2.7. Parents are expected to take responsibility for the attendance of their child during term-time.

2.8. Parents are expected to promote good attendance behaviour and ensure that their child attends school every day.

2.9. Pupils are responsible for their own attendance at school and any agreed activities throughout the school year.

### **3. Definitions**

3.1. For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

- **“Absence”** as:
  - Arrival at school after the register has closed.
  - Not attending school for any reason.
  
- An **“authorised absence”** as:
  - An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
  - Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave.
  - Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
  - An absence due to a family emergency which has been communicated by parents/carers to the school and agreed as an authorised absence.
  - Absence which has been requested in advance and granted due to “exceptional circumstances” (see section 11 and Appendix 2 below)
  
- An **“unauthorised absence”** as:
  - Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
  - Truancy.
  - Absences which have never been properly explained.
  - Arrival at school after the register has closed.
  - Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been authorised.

- **“Persistent absenteeism”** as:
  - Missing **10 percent** or more of schooling since the start of the school year for any reason.

#### **4. Training of staff**

- 4.1. The school recognises that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, teachers will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils.
- 4.2. Teachers and support staff will receive training on this policy as part of their new starter induction.
- 4.3. Teachers and support staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

#### **5. Pupil expectations**

- 5.1. Pupils are expected to attend school, on time, every school day. This is made clear within the terms of the Home/School agreement which is signed at the beginning of each school year.

#### **6. Absence procedures**

- 6.1. Parents are required to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of any period of absence. Parents should ensure that if they are leaving a message on the School’s answerphone to explain a child’s absence, they should make clear the reasons for the absence e.g. “ill by reason of...” rather than simply stating “sick” which could be misunderstood.
- 6.2. Parents are required to send a note in on the first day that their child returns with a signed explanation of why they were absent. Alternatively, parents may call into school and report to the school office where arrangements will be made to speak to a member of staff.
- 6.3. A phone call will be made to the parent of any child who has not reported their absence on the first day that they do not attend school. If a pupil is absent for more than three days without an explanation we will write to you, as parents, requesting an explanation for your child’s absence.

#### **7. Contact information**

- 7.1. Parents are responsible for providing accurate and up-to-date contact details including at least one emergency contact.

7.2. Parents are responsible for updating the school if the details change.

## **8. Attendance Officer (School Based)**

- 8.1. Biscovey Academy understands that absenteeism and persistent absenteeism can arise for a number of reasons and the School prides itself on building close working relationships with parents and carers to offer support and guidance, where appropriate, on how to reduce absence levels and promote good levels of attendance.
- 8.2. At Biscovey Academy we have a school based Attendance Officer who will meet with parents at an early stage where trends or patterns of absence are identified and discuss how we can help by providing support and guidance in reducing these levels of absence and promote good attendance.
- 8.3. At these meetings, the reasons for absences are discussed, strategies for improvement planned and a plan of action agreed. Further details of these meetings and associated procedures can be found in our Attendance Monitoring Procedures at Appendix 1.
- 8.4. Further strategies for promoting high attendance and reducing absence may involve in-school referrals to our Pupil Wellbeing and Behaviour for Learning Leader and SENDCo, as well as working with other outside agencies who can provide another layer of specialist support and guidance.
- 8.5. Our Attendance Officer will also be able to advise on the consequences of further absenteeism, including statutory local authority intervention through the Education Welfare Officer.

## **9. Education Welfare Officer (Local Authority Based)**

- 9.1. As a local authority, Cornwall Council must ensure that there are sufficient school places available for the children in its area and that parents secure full-time education for their children.
- 9.2. If they are persistently absent, pupils will be referred to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer who will work with the pupil's family to attempt to resolve the situation by agreement.
- 9.3. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the Education Welfare Officer has the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices.
- 9.4. The Education Welfare Officer visits the school at least termly to support attendance monitoring and provide advice and assistance to the school in how to promote good attendance and tackle persistent absenteeism.

## **10. Lateness**

- 10.1. Punctuality is of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated.
- 10.2. The School site is open from **8:40 am**. At this point children are permitted to either enter their classrooms under the supervision of their class teacher, or play on the playgrounds (also under supervision) until registration at 8:50 am. For reasons of safeguarding, it is very important that your child does not arrive at school before 8:40 am.
- 10.3. The school day starts when registration is opened at **8:50 am**. Pupils should be in their classroom at this time.
- 10.4. Registers are marked at **9:00 am**. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time. Any child arriving at school after 9:00 should report directly to the school office to ensure they are not marked as absent for the remainder of that session. Lateness before the close of registration is an authorised absence.
- 10.5. Registers close at **9:20 am**. Pupils will receive a mark of unauthorised absence if they do not attend school before this time. If a child is persistently late after the register has closed and does not have genuine reasons, the school can refer to the Education Welfare Officer who may take legal action including issuing a penalty notice if appropriate.
- 10.6. After lunch, registers are marked at **1:00 pm**. Pupils who are not present for afternoon registration will receive an "N" mark, which will subsequently be changed to a late mark or an unauthorised absence when the child arrives.

## **11. Term-time leave**

- 11.1. The Head of School is only allowed to grant a leave of absence during term time in "exceptional circumstances". Applications must be made in advance using the prescribed format (a copy of which is included at Appendix 2).
- 11.2. The Head of School must be satisfied by the evidence which is presented that the circumstances are "exceptional", before authorising term-time leave.
- 11.3. Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.
- 11.4. In granting a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, the Head of School will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school.

11.5. If parents take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the Head of School their absence will be deemed as unauthorised and could lead to sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecution.

## **12. Truancy**

12.1. Truancy means any absence of part, or of all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

12.2. All staff will be concerned about the regular attendance of pupils, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning.

12.3. All pupils are expected to be in their classes by **8:50 am** and **1:00 pm**, where the teacher will record the attendance electronically.

12.4. Any parent who has permission to collect their child during the school day must inform the School Office when they collect their child and, if necessary, inform them of their return if this is before the end of the school day.

12.5. Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a child might be truanting.

12.6. If truancy is suspected, the Head of School is notified, who will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the child not attending school.

12.7. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a meeting will be offered with the School's Attendance Officer who will be able to provide support and guidance and, where necessary, signpost further support from outside agencies, in order to improve attendance and prevent further truancy.
- If further truancy occurs, a formal warning letter will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the further truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, the school may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer.

## **13. Missing children**

13.1. Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they are accompanied by a parent/carer and they have obtained prior permission from the Head of School.

13.2. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the Head of School immediately.
  - The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
  - A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the Head of School.
  - The following areas will be systematically searched:
    - All classrooms
    - All toilets
    - Changing rooms
    - The library
    - Any outbuildings
    - The school grounds
  - Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
  - If the pupil has not been found within the school site and a search of the area immediately outside the school premises is initiated, the parents of the pupil will be notified immediately.
  - If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, then the police will be contacted.
  - The missing pupil's teacher will report the incident on the school's MyConcern safeguarding record, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- 13.3. If the missing pupil raises specific safeguarding concerns or any special educational needs, then the appropriate personnel/outside agencies will be informed.
- 13.4. When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- 13.5. The Head of School will take the appropriate action to ensure the pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary.
- 13.6. Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

- 13.7. The Head of School will carry out a full investigation, and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred.
- 13.8. Appropriate disciplinary procedures are followed in accordance with the School's Behaviour for Learning Policy.
- 13.9. A written report will be produced and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome.

## **14. Religious observances**

- 14.1. The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days required for religious festivals.
- 14.2. Parents are required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance and complete the prescribed leave of absence authorisation form.

## **15. Appointments**

- 15.1. As far as possible, parents will attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- 15.2. Where this is not possible, notification of the appointment will be sent to the school office.
- 15.3. If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out at the school office by a parent.
- 15.4. Pupils will attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

## **16. Young carers**

- 16.1. The school understands the difficulties that face young carers.
- 16.2. The school will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity from enrolment at the school and throughout their time at the school.
- 16.3. The school takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

## **17. Monitoring and review**

- 17.1. The school monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year.

17.2. Biscovey Academy's attendance target is **96 percent**.

17.3. This policy is reviewed every three years by the Head of School; the next scheduled review date for this policy is November 2020.

17.4. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff and parents.

## Appendix 1

### Attendance Monitoring Procedures

Biscovey Academy has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

**A.** The School ensures familiarity with the content of the document "Achieving High Attendance" and follows its recommendations. We keep as a key focus the importance of maintaining high attendance and communicate this to parents, pupils, staff and Hub Councillors.



**B.** Day to day attendance is monitored by the School Office and classroom teachers. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil whose absence is unexplained. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided. Contact is made with the parents of any pupils marked using the N code. Any N codes not established after a week are recorded as an unauthorised absence. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are recorded on MyConcern and are flagged up immediately to the Attendance Officer, Head of School and DSL.



**C.** A meeting is held every three weeks between the Head of School, Office Staff and Attendance Officer. At this meeting, attendance data is shared detailing weekly and annual attendance to date. Trends and patterns concerning groups and individuals are identified early so that appropriate plans can be put into place immediately.



**D.** During that meeting, any pupil whose attendance has fallen to **95%** or below will be identified. The Attendance Officer will review the reasons behind these absences and establish whether there is a cause for concern. This may include entering into a dialogue with the pupil's class teacher to make themselves aware of any other relevant information which may be impacting on the pupil's attendance.

Where necessary and appropriate, the Attendance Officer, or the Class Teacher if so directed, will contact the parents/carers of the child, to discuss any issues or problems and to provide support and guidance on how the school can help to improve their child's attendance. Often, no further action is necessary to improve attendance.



**E.** At the following three weekly meeting, the pupil's attendance will be reviewed. If a pupil's attendance has fallen further to **90% or below** they will be considered a "persistent absentee". A **first letter** (Appendix 2) is sent home raising concerns that the child's attendance has fallen below the school's expected standard. The letter will explain that the School will be monitoring the child's attendance over the following three-week period to see if there is an improvement. The letter will invite parents to get in touch with the school should they wish to discuss any issues or problems and to provide support and guidance on how the school can help to improve their child's attendance.



**F.** At the following three weekly meeting, the pupil's attendance will be reviewed. If a pupil's attendance has not improved, or has fallen further below **90%**, a **second letter** is sent home (Appendix 3). The letter asks parents to come in to school for a meeting with the Attendance Officer to discuss any issues or problems and to provide support and guidance on how the school can help to improve their attendance, including forming a Persistent Absence Plan. It warns of the implications of further persistent absenteeism, including referrals to the County Education Welfare Officer (EWO).



**G.** At the following three weekly meeting, the pupil's attendance will be reviewed. If a pupil's attendance has not improved, or has fallen further below **90%**, a **final letter** is sent home. This letter will confirm that the school has referred its attendance concerns to the EWO. The EWO will formulate a plan necessary to improve attendance which may include enforcement action including final written warnings, fixed penalty notices and, ultimately, prosecution.

## Appendix 2

### First Letter

Date

Dear Parent or Carer,

**Re: Attendance Information for \_\_\_\_\_**

At Biscovey Academy we recognise that good levels of attendance and punctuality are key in supporting a child's development and allowing them to fulfil their academic and social/emotional potential.

Studies have shown that high levels of absence can have a direct impact on overall achievement and progress, due to lost learning time. Children who miss school regularly may also find this impacts on their ability to build positive relationships and friendships with other children and staff.

Our school attendance target is 96%. Currently, \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance is \_\_\_% and causing us some concern.

Biscovey Academy is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved.

Whilst we recognise that some absences are unavoidable (e.g. for ill health, medical appointments or leave for exceptional circumstances agreed in advance with the school), they do all add up. We hope you will support us in supporting your child's learning and development by ensuring they attend school regularly and on time.

We will be monitoring \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance over the next three weeks to see if there is an improvement.

If you are having difficulties in getting \_\_\_\_\_ to school, please do not hesitate to contact me for support and guidance on improving your child's attendance. We are very happy to help.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Officer

**Appendix 3**  
**Second Letter**

Date

Dear Parent or Carer,

**Re: Attendance Information for \_\_\_\_\_**

Following our previous letter dated \_\_\_\_\_ in which we raised concerns about \_\_\_\_\_'s levels of attendance at school, we have now had the opportunity to review \_\_\_\_\_'s current attendance record as part of our Attendance Monitoring Procedures.

Currently, \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance is \_\_\_% and continues to be a concern. Please find attached a copy of his/her attendance record for your information.

We are sure that you will agree that good levels of attendance and punctuality are key in supporting a child's development and allowing them to fulfil their academic and social/emotional potential. You should also be aware that regular attendance at school is a legal requirement. We have enclosed a useful leaflet entitled "Is your child in school today" which highlights the importance of regular school attendance.

We would like to meet with you so that we can work together to find a way forward, to tackle \_\_\_\_\_'s levels of absence and to improve his/her attendance.

The meeting will give you an opportunity to speak to us in person about any particular circumstances that we may not be aware of which are having an influence on \_\_\_\_\_ attending school regularly. The meeting will also give us the opportunity to offer you support, guidance and signposting to outside agencies as well as putting together a Persistent Absence Plan with clear, achievable targets for the future.

Please could you contact the school as soon as possible to make an appointment to see myself, so that we can discuss this matter further. Please also be aware that should you not attend this meeting, and your child's absence remains at 90% or below, we will have to refer this matter to the Education Welfare Officer.

In the meantime, if further absences are due to medical reasons, please ensure that we are provided with the relevant doctor's notes and appointment cards.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Officer

## Appendix 4

### Final Letter

Date

Dear Parent or Carer,

**Re: Attendance Information for \_\_\_\_\_**

Following our previous letter dated \_\_\_\_\_ in which we raised concerns about \_\_\_\_\_'s levels of attendance at school, we have now had the opportunity to review \_\_\_\_\_'s current attendance record as part of our Attendance Monitoring Procedures.

Currently, \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance is \_\_\_% and continues to be a concern. Please find attached a copy of his/her attendance record for your information.

We are writing to inform you that we have now referred \_\_\_\_\_ and the concerns around his/her attendance to the Education Welfare Service. The attached leaflet, aimed at children and young people, explains the role of the Education Welfare Service and how they can help.

An Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will contact you in due course to arrange an appropriate course of action, which may involve an initial meeting with you either at home, or at school. The EWO will then work with you to make a plan for the future.

Following the meeting, the EWO would remain actively involved in monitoring \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance at school and will arrange to meet again if further support is needed.

Our hope is that, by working together, positive steps can be made to improve \_\_\_\_\_ attendance, however, it is important that you are aware that if more formal enforcement action is required to tackle persistent absence, this could include final written warnings, fixed penalty notices and, ultimately, prosecution.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, or have any questions you wish to ask, please do get in touch with me at the school.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Officer

## **Appendix 5**

### **Leave of Absence Request Form**

# Request to Authorise Absence from School due to Exceptional Circumstances

At Biscovey Academy, we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise a child's absence, such as when a pupil is too ill to attend school, has a medical appointment which cannot be taken outside school hours, or a request for leave in exceptional circumstances.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 (2013 amended) prohibit Schools from granting a pupil a leave of absence during term time, except where an application has been made in advance and the School considers that there are **exceptional circumstances** relating to the application. Please use this form to apply for a leave of absence during term time, ensuring that it is submitted at least 14 days prior to any intended period of absence.

In making a request for an authorised absence from school you will need to explain why the circumstances are exceptional. Generally, this will mean that they are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Please note that there is no general right to authorise absence for a family holiday during term time and such absences will not normally be authorised.

In granting a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, the Head of School will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school.

You are advised not to make any arrangements until your request has been considered.

## Section A

To the Head of School, I wish to apply for

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

To be authorised as absent from school (please include dates):

from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (inclusive dates) Total number of school days absent: \_\_\_\_\_

If your child has siblings in another school for whom you are also requesting a leave of absence, please enter their name and school below:

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section B

Please explain why you are requesting an authorisation for absence during term time and the circumstances which make this absence exceptional. If you require additional space, please continue on the other side of the page.

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**Section C**

I am the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides. I confirm that the information I have provided on this form is correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed (parent/carer): \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section D – for school use only.**

**Current attendance:**

**Tick as appropriate:**

Request granted for \_\_\_\_ number of days from the dates \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (inclusive).

A further discussion with you about your application is requested, please contact the office to arrange a telephone appointment or meeting in person.

Request not approved. Unfortunately we are unable to authorise this absence.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Head of School

**PLEASE NOTE:**

This leave of absence form serves as a Penalty Notice Warning letter to parent/carers.

If you decide to still take your child/children out of school, without permission, during the above dates the absence will be unauthorised and you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer the matter to the County Education Welfare Service who may decide to take legal action against you. A penalty notice may be issued, under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996, to each parent for each child taken out of school. This carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this, but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice fine may result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court, leading to fines up to £2,500 and/or custodial sentences. You may also be liable for the costs the Council incurs in taking the matter to Court.

You are welcome to contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have regarding this. Biscovey Academy is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved.

**Section B (additional space/additional evidence in support of your request)**

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