



Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

We have recently sent out attendance letters and want to clarify the protocols for these letters to ensure that parents are clear as to the responsibilities we have as a school.

Firstly, I would like to celebrate the fact that attendance at Burwell is good. It is above national and local rates and I appreciate how hard parents work to maintain this. Thank you.

Unfortunately sickness/diarrhoea and Covid 19 has been prevalent at this start of this term. Therefore we will take this into account in the longer term if we have attendance concerns. However we still need to make you aware if you child's attendance has dropped below 96%. We recognise that three days absence equates to 88% at this stage of the term but monitoring attendance is a legal requirement for schools. We will look carefully at this and hopefully there will be an improvement between now and Christmas and we will take cautious steps when we review attendance at the end of Autumn Term.

There is a recognition that children get ill and will sometimes require time off school, however, this is also expected to be as minimal as possible. It can be tricky deciding whether to keep your child off school when they are unwell. The NHS has published guidelines to support parents make this decision, which can be found by following the link: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

#### DFE Guidelines

- 96% attendance is the minimum expectation. The significant majority of pupils are well above this.
- Any time away from school is included in the attendance figure whether this is genuine illness, holiday, medical appointments or late after registers have closed (8.50 a.m.).
- Where attendance falls below 96% the school has a responsibility to inform parents.
- Where attendance continues to fall or begins to show increasing levels of concern the school is expected to take some form of action. It is the school's decision as to where this level is set and we have set this at 93%. This allows parents to be informed before attendance becomes a significant concern. The action tends to be that no further absences will be authorised without additional supporting evidence of illness, e.g. proof of a GP appointment or 111 advice.
- When attendance drops below 90% the school is expected to take significant further action, including offering attendance meetings to discuss concerns and attempting to find solutions to attendance issues with parents. First and foremost trying to ensure that barriers to attendance are not caused by school and that if this is the case these issues are addressed as swiftly and effectively as possible. The school will always seek support from external agencies such as Early Help or the Education Welfare Service where attendance is a concern. If attendance were to fall further below 90% the school will seek legal action with the Local Authority to improve attendance.

As a school, we cannot just authorise non-attendance regardless of the statements made by parents. We are obliged to follow up any non-attendance as part of our safeguarding commitment. We cannot just accept that there are medical conditions or ongoing mental health issues because a parent tells us (even if we agree this is likely). Whilst we would love to be able to accept that parents are best placed to make these judgements we do not live in a world where this is the case. There are too many examples of where schools have not insisted on additional

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Website: [www.burwellvillageprimary.co.uk](http://www.burwellvillageprimary.co.uk)

evidence or medical support for conditions and children have been harmed or worse. We will work with parents as much as we can to ensure that children feel safe and secure at school and at home and this may mean requiring medical evidence, external agency involvement or regular meetings to ensure that we are exploring all possible solutions to attendance concerns. It remains, however, a parental responsibility to ensure good (96%) attendance at school particularly whilst issues are being investigated and resolved.

I would like to thank you again for your commitment to the school. I would also like to thank the staff for their continued hard work to ensure that children are engaged in learning and therefore want to come to school. For those that are struggling, the class teachers with the support of the well-being team work extremely hard to understand these issues and try to resolve them as quickly and effectively as possible.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antony Kern', written in a cursive style.

Antony Kern  
**Headteacher**