



BIGGIN HILL
PRIMARY SCHOOL
*Part of the Charles Darwin
Academy Trust*

Policy for Attendance and Punctuality

2014

Policy for Attendance and Punctuality

At Biggin Hill Primary School we believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell.

Biggin Hill Primary School is a happy school. Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All staff show concern and care about each child's welfare.

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents.

This policy provides the framework within which all staff, parents, pupils, carers and external agencies can contribute to the development and maintenance of a learning environment with high attendance and punctuality. It is Biggin Hill Policy not to authorise holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Aims of the policy

We aim for all our children to have 100% attendance but we recognise that some absence due to ill health or other circumstances can be unavoidable. We aim:

- To improve overall percentage attendance and reduce unauthorised absence
- To establish a clear system for maintaining high attendance and excellent punctuality which is communicated clearly to the school community
- To encourage pupils to attend school and to be punctual
- To have an effective administration system for monitoring and intervening with issues relating to attendance and punctuality
- To offer parents and carers advice and support on the importance of good attendance and punctuality

Expectations

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

We expect that pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually

We expect that all parents and carers will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- To be fully supportive of the School with regard to attendance and punctuality as part of signing up to the Home-School Agreement
- Follow the School procedures for dealing with attendance through making contact with the school of the first day of absence
- Support the school by not requesting authorised absence for holidays during term time and minimising where possible all other unauthorised absence, for example dental appointments during the school day

We expect that school administrative staff will:

- Oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually
- Liaise with the EWO fortnightly
- Monitor pupil's attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents by telephone on each day of absence when a pupil fails to attend school and when no message has been received to explain the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes authorising the absence
- Encourage good attendance
- Make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's expectations with regard to regular and punctual attendance
- Refer irregular and unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

We expect that Class teachers will:

- Complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice a day
- Record all reasons for absence in the register using the correct codes
- Inform the Head teacher of any concerns

We expect the School Leadership Team to:

- Co-ordinate and monitor the policy and procedures for attendance and punctuality throughout the School.
- Raise the profile and importance of attendance and punctuality, for example, through the assembly programme and the reward systems that are put in place.
- Analyse and act swiftly in response to report data on attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that the learning environment on offer to students, through the curriculum, personalised learning, behaviour policy and reintegration procedures, create the foundations for excellent attendance and punctuality and low levels of fixed term exclusions.
- Ensure that School expectations in regards to this policy on attendance and punctuality are communicated clearly to all stakeholders.
- Carry out home visits on any child who has been absent for 5 days with no contact from a parent or carer

We expect Governors will:

- Annually review and agree the Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Annually agree to attendance targets
- Take a lead role in supporting the School in the implementation of its approach to attendance and punctuality especially in our response to parents in supporting unauthorised absence

Timings of the School Day

Playground

The Playground is supervised from 8.40am, gates will not be opened until this time. Children must arrive on the KS1 playground by 8.50am and on the KS2 playground by 8.45am, when the bell is rung and the class lines assemble. This is the signal for all parents/carers both in KS1 and KS2 to say goodbye and leave the school grounds. To ensure that all children arrive safely in their classrooms teachers will not move off the playground until all parents have departed.

Registration

Registers are taken promptly on arrival in class (8.55-9.00) Any child arriving between 9.00 and 9.15am, when registers close, will be coded as L (LATE BEFORE REGISTERS CLOSE) Registers close at 9.15am, after which if children arrive for the session, they are coded as U (LATE) which is an unauthorised absence.

Late Book

A child arriving after the register closes sign in on the pupil signing sheet at main reception. Admin staff will update the class register, ensuring that the U code is used.

Absence

Under Section 7 of the Education Act (1996), parents/carers have a legal duty to make sure that their child(ren) attends the School on a regular and full-time basis. Every half day absence has to be classified by the School as either authorised or unauthorised. The School must record the reason for any half day absence. Unauthorised absence such as truancy will lead to sanctions being taken against students or in exceptional cases, extended periods of unauthorised absence may lead to legal action being taken against parents.

Under normal circumstances, the only reason a pupil should miss any lessons is if they are too ill to attend. This is an example of an authorised absence, i.e. pupils have missed a morning or afternoon session for a valid reason. Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. This includes keeping pupils away from lessons unnecessarily, truancy and absences, which the school considers to have not been properly explained.

Grant for Leave of Absence

Holidays in term time:

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. The School holiday dates are published a year in advance and we therefore do not see any reason for parents to take their child(ren) out of school during term time.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Amendments 2013 state that Headteachers may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances (see below).

Exceptional circumstances:

Applications can be made by parents for **Leave of Absence** on compassionate grounds to enable a child to attend a wedding, funeral, religious observance etc. Family holidays and celebrations are not considered to be exceptional circumstances. Such applications will be considered by the Head Teacher. In the case of an application for compassionate leave of absence being received, it will only be considered if the child has an attendance rate of 96% or above in the previous 12 months and will not fall below 96% as a result of taking leave. This applies to each child in a family.

All requests must be made in writing to the Head teacher and the leave of application form completed not less than 3 weeks before the intended period of leave. A form will be returned to the parent/carer clearly stipulating if approval has been given. If approval has been given it will be made clear that it is only given in these exceptional circumstances and that **no** further requests will be considered.

Any requests for a leave of absence that is not authorised will be communicated to parents in writing. The communication will include a paragraph, making it clear to the parents that Biggin Hill Primary School will consider the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60 per child (per parent). A Penalty Notice is a fine imposed where a parent fails to ensure that their child is in education or has an unacceptable period of unauthorised absences. The penalty notice is £60 that must be paid within 21 days increasing to £120 to be paid within 28 days.

Rewards

The School encourage regular attendance in the following ways:

- By providing a stimulating working environment
- By responding promptly to a child's parents/carers concerns
- Through rewarding pupils with special certificates each term for good attendance.
- By special assemblies
- By monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance and arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the EWO if the irregular attendance continues

Responding to Parents when a pupil is absent

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- All parents are asked to contact school if their child is absent. This can be done by telephoning or by email. This information will be passed to the class teacher
- Each morning the answer phone is checked and any messages of absence are recorded in the school diary
- On the first day of absence if a child is absent and there are no messages a phone call will be made to establish the reason for the absence. If there is no reply a message will be left and the school will continue to try to call them throughout the morning.

If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If by the end of the second day, there has still been no contact made, (third day if waiting for a response to a letter), the school will send a letter of concern to parents/carers or invite them into school to discuss child's absence. The school will tell parents that if the absence persists a referral will be made to the EWO.

- Even when communicated by telephone, pupil absences should be supported by a parental letter, giving a reason for the absence.
- We expect that children should have a consultation with their GP if their absence is longer than two days. School may request to see an appointment card, prescription or similar.
- Persistent non-attendance, where absences cannot be justified in law, may result in the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices in accordance with the Local Authority's penalty notice protocol. In addition, the School will support the EWS in prosecutions

brought under Section 444 Education Act 1996, or in applications in the Family Proceedings Court for Education Supervision Orders.

Registers

If a child persistently arrives at school after the close of the register, consideration will be given to (a) the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice in the sum of £60.00 or (b) a referral to our EWO for a prosecution. Lateness not only affects the learning of the student in question, but also affects the learning of others.

Teachers and office staff are mindful of the fact that school registers are “legal documents” and as such, should be maintained responsibly and marks entered with accuracy.

All data relating to attendance will be kept for a minimum period of three years from the last date of entry.

Changing schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school that they inform school as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- the address of the new school;
- the new home address, if it is known.

The pupil’s school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Reasons for a pupil changing school will be reported to school governors as part of the Head Teacher’s report. This is to enable any trends, such as “high mobility” to be identified.

According to the Education Act, any pupil who has unauthorised absence for 20 consecutive days can be removed from the school roll under certain conditions. The school reserves the right to evoke this aspect of the Education Act, should circumstances dictate.

Communication

A pupil’s individual attendance record is reported to parents as part of the child’s annual school report. Parents are notified of their child’s current attendance percentage during the intervening period, if the child appears to be “at risk” of falling below 95% attendance.

Monitoring – informs parents that their child’s attendance has fallen below 95%

Letter 1 – no improvement in response to above or their child’s attendance falls below 92%

Letter 2 – no improvement in response to above, warning of referral to EWO

OR

Letter 2 (Medical) – no improvement in response to letter 1, warning of referral to EWO and absences are for medical reasons

Letter 3 – no improvement and request for a meeting with the school and EWO

Parents or carers can request information on their child’s individual percentage from the school Office. Partner agencies may request attendance information from the School. This

will be provided to bona fide partners, as part of our commitment to safeguarding the pupils in our care.

Information on whole school absence is given to parents in the School Prospectus. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.

At the Afternoons for children about to enter the reception class, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also emphasised, especially for young children who can be upset if they are the only ones left.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have. Sometimes little things upset children resulting in them not wanting to come to school. Parents need to be aware of this. The school's Inclusion Officer can advise, or signpost parents to support partners.

New parents are asked to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, so that their child's education is not disrupted. Pupils are admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Head teacher or the Deputy Head teacher. At this meeting the importance of regular attendance is highlighted along with other school routines.

Concerns

The Educational Welfare Officer meets with the Deputy Head teacher each fortnight to discuss attendance issues, and offers advice and support. Letters are sent to the parents of pupils whose attendance falls below 95%, to remind them of the school's attendance aims and to inform them of their child's current percentage.

Subsequent letters are sent if no improvement is seen. At this point parents may be invited to attend a meeting with the EWO. The purpose of this meeting is to ascertain whether there is an underlying difficulty, issue or reason for the absence. This meeting can lead to referral to The Inclusion Officer, The School Nurse or a Common Assessment Form being completed. Parents may be asked to supply "evidence" that an absence has a specific cause, such as a prescription or hospital appointment letter. This is a voluntary sharing of information between school and parents.

Similar letters are sent to the parents of children with a significant number of lates, particularly when there is a regular pattern to the late arrivals.

Truancy

All the staff at Biggin Hill Primary School are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness. Although it a very rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a concern that a child might be truanting then action is taken straight away.

If truancy is suspected, the Head teacher is notified, who then contacts the parent, either by phone, or by visiting the home address and advising the Educational Welfare Officer. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. In the event of not being able to talk to the parent then the Head teacher talks to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these are discussed with the class teacher and appropriate action is taken.

APPENDIX 1 The registration system:

The School will use a computerised system for keeping the school attendance records. The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years.

APPENDIX 2

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

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006