



Hannah Freeman
Headteacher
Old Tye Avenue, Biggin Hill TN16 3LY
01959 575 846
www.bigginhillprimary.com
admin@bigginhillps.com

11th October 2021

ATTENDANCE AT BIGGIN HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you in relation to attendance as this is a major school development priority for us this year. Every school in the country is trying to make up for precious lost time caused by the pandemic - it is now more important than ever that children are in school every day and on time. In addition to this, our attendance figures (even pre-pandemic) are not considered to be good. For the academic year 2018-2019 our overall attendance was 95.2% and unfortunately this puts us in the bottom 20% of similar schools. In addition to this, persistent absenteeism (that is children who attend less than 90% of the time) was much higher than the national average. In the same year our persistent absentee figure was 10.8% and the national average was 8.2%.

We really need your help to improve attendance across the school. Not only is it critically important that children attend so that gaps in learning, created by school closures, are narrowed and closed but we will also not be able to achieve an Ofsted rating of outstanding - which as you know is our aim for the next 3-4 years - unless attendance improves.

I have created a short presentation for you to watch which explains why attendance is critical and also describes some of the measures that we have put in place in an effort to improve it. I thought a video for you to watch from the comfort of your own homes would be easier than inviting parents and carers to attend a meeting about this.

<https://youtu.be/Te2atOIdqSY>

In addition, I have laid out in this letter, most of the information from the presentation for those of you who prefer to receive information in a written format.

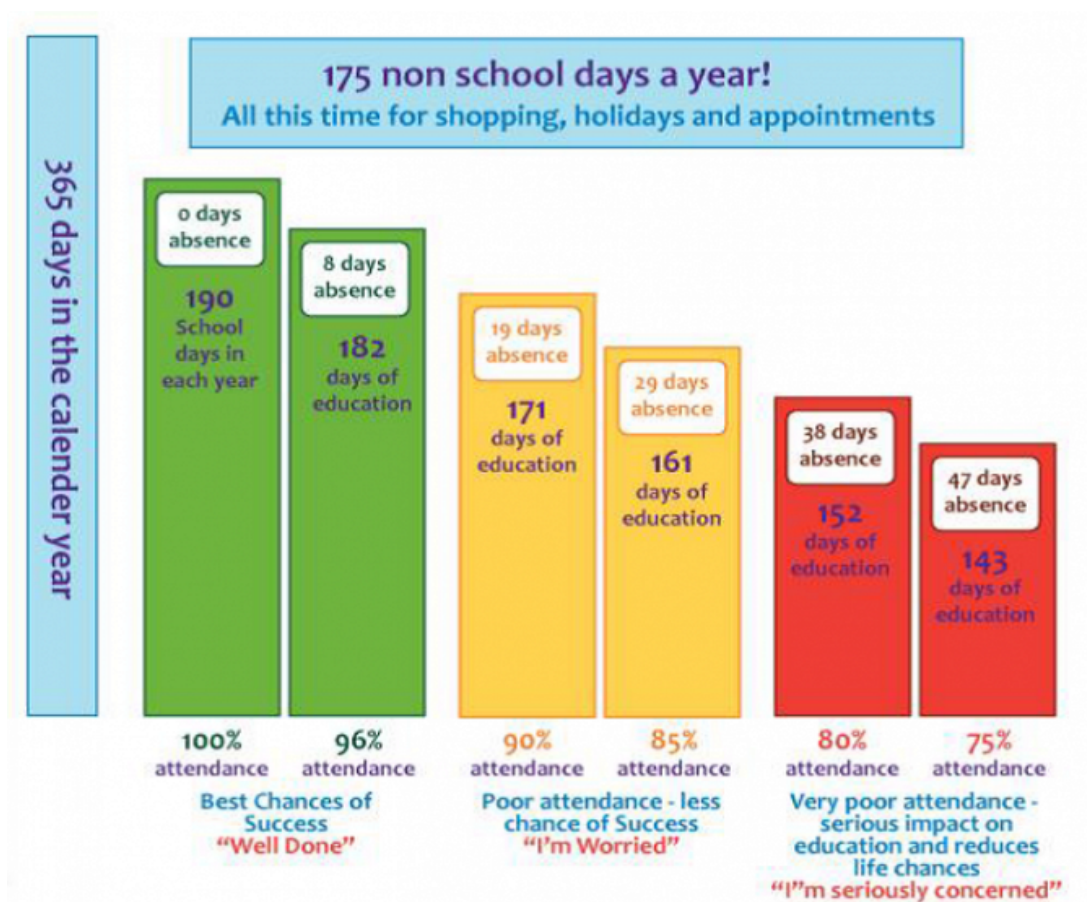
WHAT IS GOOD OR BETTER ATTENDANCE?

98%- 100% is what we consider to be excellent attendance; though this should be what everyone strives for, we recognise that this is a challenge!!! We therefore expect every child's attendance to be good - that is at least 96%. 96% attendance allows for 8 days of absence per year.



Please see below a very useful chart which is a visual representation of attendance percentages and what these equate to in terms of days.

Term time holidays will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. This is because a holiday of 5 days significantly increases the chances of a child becoming a persistent absentee.



WHY DOES ATTENDANCE MATTER?

There is a clear link between attendance and attainment. The following statistics come from research carried out by the DfE (please note that the research was carried out before the new numbered grading system for GCSEs was introduced).

Higher overall absence leads to lower attainment at KS2 and KS4

- The higher the overall absence rate across Key Stage (KS) 2 and KS4, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of KS2 and KS4
- At the end of KS2 pupils with no absence are 1.3 times more likely to achieve at the expected level or above, and 3.1 times more likely to achieve above the expected level, than pupils that missed 10-15% of all sessions



- Pupils with no absence are 2.2 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*- C or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils that missed 15-20% of KS4 lessons

There's a clear link between poor attendance and lower academic achievement

- Of pupils with absence over 50%, only 3% manage to achieve 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including maths and English
- 73% of pupils who have over 95% attendance achieve 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C

In addition to all of this research, we are working very hard to ensure that gaps in learning that have been created by the pandemic are narrowed and ultimately closed. We teach all subjects in a sequence of lessons that build upon knowledge and skills that have been taught before. It is very difficult for children when they are absent, as they miss out on learning that is needed for subsequent lessons. We also know that socially it can be difficult for children who have a lot of time off as they can feel "out of the loop" and sometimes find it difficult to reintegrate themselves - this can be the case even for short bouts of absence.

HOW IS ATTENDANCE MANAGED AT BHPS?

We have introduced a number of new incentives to encourage children to take responsibility for their own attendance (as much as is possible for a primary aged child to do). We know that if children are motivated to attend school, then they are less likely to put pressure on parents and carers to keep them off when they do not need to be.

The Attendance Wheel of Glory - this is a new initiative that has been added to our celebrations in a Friday Celebration Assembly. Every child who has had 100% attendance for the previous 5 days (Fri-Thurs) has their name entered into a prize draw. We spin the wheel (this is up on the big screen so that children can see it happening) and whoever the wheel lands on, wins a £5 voucher. We will spin the wheel twice every week! This is NOT cumulative so every week children have a fresh chance at having their names added to the draw.

Attendance Stars in the Jar - every day our whole school attendance is recorded on posters in the classrooms. Every time our whole school attendance is 96% or above, a star is put in the jar. In the celebration assembly we will share with the children how many stars are being added to the jar that week. Once the jar is full the whole school will earn a Golden Hour on a Friday afternoon where children can play and take part in a number of different creative and physical activities of their choosing.

Class Attendance - every day individual class attendance is also recorded on posters in classrooms. Every time a class has between 98-100% attendance, the class will earn a certificate. The class with the most certificates at the end of the half term will win an extra playtime. Weekly attendance percentages will be published in the newsletter when they are 96% or better.



Any child who has 100% attendance for the whole academic year will be awarded with a special certificate and badge in the final assembly of the year.

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure that their child has good attendance and we have a statutory duty to monitor this and to take action when attendance drops. We have a number of systems in place to monitor attendance. Every week we meet with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to look at attendance across the school as well as individual attendance.

Monitoring Letter - we will send a monitoring letter to any child whose attendance drops below 96%. The purpose of these letters is to ensure that parents and carers are aware that their child's attendance has fallen below the level that the government considers to be good.

Medical Evidence Letter - this letter will be sent when a child's level of illness related absence is causing concern. This is usually because there is a high number of unrelated illnesses or because we have not been given a reason for a child's absence. The letter requests that medical evidence (such as a Dr's appointment card or prescribed medication) is provided in order to authorise any future illness related absence.

Referral to the EWO - if a child's attendance is causing concern and little or no improvement is seen, the attendance will be referred to the EWO and parents and carers will be invited to attend a meeting at school with myself and the EWO. The purpose of the meeting is to establish ways that the school can support families to ensure that their child's attendance improves.

As stated earlier, term time holidays are not authorised apart from in exceptional circumstances. Unauthorised holidays of five days or more will be subject to fines issued by the Local Authority. See our attendance policy for more details.

We are here to offer support to any family who is struggling to ensure that their child/ren attends well. Please get in touch with Mrs Sargeant k.sargeant@bigginhillps.com if you are in need of any support, advice or assistance.

PUNCTUALITY

As you know, we operate a soft drop system from 8.40am. During the first 20 minutes of the day before registers close, there is work available for the children. We use these 20 minutes to provide additional opportunities for children to practise their basic skills which are critical to their learning. We would encourage parents and carers to get children into school for 8.40am so that learning opportunities are not wasted. Registers close at 9am and after this point a child will be recorded as late. If lateness is causing concern we will be in touch with parents and carers to support them to ensure that this improves.

We have recently updated our safeguarding policy and it now includes a section about what happens when children are collected late. We expect that all children are collected promptly at 3.15pm (unless they are attending a club or After School Club). We recognise that there



are occasions when parents and carers are delayed and this is not possible. Our policy now states:

If a child is not collected at the end of the session/day, we will:

- Call all of the emergency contacts to try to ascertain why the child is being collected late. If we are unable to contact a parent or carer by 3.45pm (30 minutes late), the child will be placed in the after school club and the parent or carer will be charged for this service.
- If we have been unable to get hold of a parent or carer by 4.30pm, social care will be contacted for advice.

We are committed to working in partnership with families to ensure that all pupils attend well. We know that good attendance affects every child's life chances which is why we are so passionate about making sure that attendance across the school improves.

If you have any questions or concerns about anything in this letter or about attendance and punctuality in general, please do not hesitate to make contact with either:

Mrs Lineker - (Attendance Officer), for enquiries about attendance systems, special leave requests, general attendance enquiries etc. s.lineker@bigginhillps.com

Mrs Sargeant - (Family Liaison and Support Worker) for support or advice about attendance related issues. k.sargeant@bigginhillps.com

Or myself at h.freeman@bigginhillps.com

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Freeman
Head Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead

