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Bradleys Both Community Primary School Attendance Policy

At Bradleys Both Community Primary School we take the attendance of school by our children as most important. We have systems in place to ensure that attendance and lateness is monitored closely. Any absence is followed up to clarify the reason for missing school.

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law.

Bradleys Both C P School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 98% attendance for all children.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age, however this only become statutory for reception aged children after their 5th birthday.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.

- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised Absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to NYCC LA and the DfE where requested.

- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Headteacher who has the responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class Teacher

Class Teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the HeadTeacher where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the EWO service.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration Staff

Staff in the school office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the *Absence/Late Book* is completed.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

- Registration is taken individually in each class.
- Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance.
- Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.
- The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher at 9.00am and 1.00pm. These registers are then returned to the school office and our attendance is updated on SIMS.
- All attendance records are documented using SIMS software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used

Lateness

- Our gates are locked at 9.00am, any pupil who comes into school after 9.00am will be marked as late in the attendance record.
- Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil .
- Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.00am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence. Appointment cards are requested and held on children's records.
- Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.
- Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absence/Illness

- Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.
- Parents are requested to call the school absence line and leave their child's name, class and reason for their absence.
- In the event that a child has not arrived at school and no notification or reason for this has been given, the office staff will telephone the child's parents by 9.15am to enquire. If the parent is un-contactable then the office staff will telephone the emergency contacts to ascertain the child's whereabouts. This is particularly important for children who travel to school on their own without an adult.
- In some circumstances contact with Social Services or Child Protection will be sought if for any reason the events of the day seem unusual or unfamiliar. The safety and well-being of our children is always of the upmost importance.
- A 'Return to School' form will be sent out when your child is poorly on their return to school. This form is required to be completed and returned to the school office where it will be kept on your child's record.
- Wherever possible and unavoidable, please make medical appointments and routine checks outside of school hours.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

There is no facility to authorise holidays other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Regulations and Guidance

- Requests for holidays in term time must be made 6 weeks prior to the holiday and in writing on the holiday request form which is available from the school. It is strongly advised that you do not book your holiday until approval has been given.
- **The Headteacher is only able to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and this will still be at the discretion of the Headteacher.** The Headteacher would not be expected to class **any** term time holiday as exceptional.
- **No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as of right.** The Education Regulations state that applications must be made in advance by a parent/carer with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each leave application is considered individually by the school taking into account any factors presented by the family. Application forms are available from the school and on the website. The Headteacher will also welcome early discussion with you around potential applications.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional'.

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis

This is not an exhaustive list and the Headteacher will consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter. Leave is only acceptable against exceptional circumstances and should not be granted on the basis of attendance record, academic performance or the 'experience' offered by being out of school. Where the HeadTeacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which does not fit the criteria, they may refer to

the local authority for advice. The decision of the Headteacher is, however, final.

Please note that the ability to access a reduced cost of a holiday does not constitute an exceptional circumstance

Parent/carers will be notified in writing of the decision for a holiday in term time within 10 school days of the date of the application.

Bradleys Both C P School will not authorise a request for a holiday in term time.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

Our school expects higher than national attendance and sets a whole school target of 98%. It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns.

Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer.

The Education Welfare Officers (EWO's) will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

The Education Welfare Officer visits to check and monitor attendance. They carry out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 90%). They work with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support

meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

Definition of a parent

A parent means:

All natural parents, whether they are married or not;

Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,

Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

The local authority and school will need to decide who comes within the definition of parent in respect of a particular pupil when using the legal measures, but generally parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.