

## Attendance Policy

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### Introduction

As a school we recognise the importance of punctual and regular school attendance in order to ensure all pupils maximise their learning and achievement. We also believe that for some children, school provides a much needed stable and secure environment in which pupils can feel safe and thrive. Our aim therefore is to work with parents and carers to ensure the children's attendance is 100%, unless there are unavoidable reasons to prevent it.

### Rationale/Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the school commitment and proactive approach to ensuring good attendance. Therefore, it details the expectations, formal procedures and specific approaches that support good attendance.

### Aims

This policy aims to:

- ensure good attendance by all pupils;
- raise achievement through the promotion of good attendance;
- demonstrate the value and care that the school ascribes to each individual;
- provide clear guidance to staff, parents/carers and pupils on their roles and responsibilities;
- detail the procedures and actions to produce good attendance and punctuality.

### Monitoring

Although the school is no longer required to set targets for overall attendance and persistent absence, we believe that unnecessary absence or lateness is a barrier to learning and progress. As a result, the school will continue to set internal targets for attendance and punctuality and monitor, on a regular basis, the attendance and punctuality of pupils in order to take action where there are concerns.

### Expectations

The responsibility for good attendance is shared between the school, parents/carers and pupils. All these groups need to understand the expectations which this policy makes of them.

## **The Role of the School**

The school will provide a safe learning environment in which all pupils can thrive and succeed. In order to ensure pupils make the progress of which they are capable, we will:

- ensure pupils are able to attend school for 380 sessions each year, i.e. 190 days;
- ensure that accurate records of attendance and punctuality are maintained according to Government legislation and guidance, on a daily basis;
- clearly distinguish between absences which are authorised and those which are unauthorised (it is the decision of the Head of School as to whether or not an absence will be authorised);
- encourage good attendance and punctuality and ensure school staff set good examples in this regard;
- investigate all unexplained or unjustified absences and follow up poor attendance and punctuality;
- keep parents informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record and work with parents should either give cause for concern;
- monitor attendance and punctuality levels termly and report to Governors;
- liaise regularly with the Local Authority appointed Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) over attendance and punctuality issues relating to individual pupils.

## **The Role of Parents/Carers**

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child's attendance and punctuality at school. They are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered. Consequently they should:

- ensure their child attends school regularly and on time;
- ensure their child is properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn;
- avoid arranging family holidays in term time;
- inform the school by 9.15am on the first day of absence and communicate the reason for their child's absence by telephone/letter/email or in person;
- confirm, in writing, the reason for their child's absence, when they return;
- maintain regular communication with school staff, e.g. class teacher through the pupil's planner, about any concerns/issues;
- ensure the school office is notified immediately of any change to contact details;
- take an active interest in their child's school life and work.

## **Role of Pupils**

All pupils are expected to attend school, and all of their lessons, regularly and on time. They should also:

- hand in any absence notes to their form teacher immediately on their return;
- be ready to learn;
- not leave the school without permission and without signing out at reception;
- sign in, if they arrive late or if they arrived back from an authorised appointment, e.g. doctor's appointment.

## Doors open

Parents/carers are asked to have pupils in school by 8.50am, when a bell will be rung, ready to start at 8.55am. The school gates will be locked at 9am. However, pupils can arrive on the playground from 8.30am onwards. They should not arrive before 8.30am except by prior agreement, e.g. an organised visit departing from the school prior to normal start of school.

## Registration

Registration will take place at the start of each morning and afternoon session. This means the registers are taken at 8.55am in the mornings and at 1.10pm in the afternoons.

Pupils who arrive after a registration period, i.e. after 8.55am or 1.10pm, need to sign in at reception before proceeding to their lesson.

Pupils who arrive after registration but before the registers are officially closed (9.10am and 1.15pm) will be issued with a late mark.

Pupils arriving after 9.30am and 1.35pm, without reasonable explanation, will be recorded as 'Unauthorised Absence'.

At registration pupils should be called by name and respond in the prescribed manner – Good morning/afternoon - established by the class teacher.

Registers will be marked in accordance with DfE guidance. (See **Appendix A** – Absence and Attendance Codes.) Attendance records will be stored on the school's Management Information System.

## Absences

Parents/carers must provide an explanation for all absences from school. Where no explanation is provided from home on the first day of an absence, the school will use SMS text messaging (Groupcall) to contact parent/carers on the contact numbers supplied by them, before 10.00 am.

For extended absences beyond three days, parents/carers should contact the school again to detail the reason for continued absence. If this does not happen, contact may be made with home by the staff.

If a pupil has had diarrhoea or sickness, they must not return to school for a period of 48 hours after the last episode. These are County guidelines and all parents must adhere to them.

When a pupil returns to school, after an absence, they should bring a note from their parents/carers to hand in to their form teacher. This can be either a letter of explanation or an entry, detailing the reason for absence, in the pupil's planner.

The absence will not be authorised until this has been received and even then authorisation is at the discretion of the Head of School. Absences that the Head of School will authorise are detailed in **Appendix B**.

Following Hertfordshire County Council's policy and depending on the pupil's individual circumstances the school, at the Head's discretion, may grant some days to pursue a modelling/filming task.

Pupils' attendance figures, including Unauthorised Absence, will be recorded on their annual report.

### **Following-up Absences/Lateness**

The school will follow up all absences and contact parents/carers if their child's attendance falls below 95% in a term.

The AIO will also review attendance once a term. Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% at any time during the year will automatically be referred to the AIO. Subsequent action recommended by the AIO will then be followed through by the school, e.g. letter home from school, letter home from AIO, home visit by AIO, penalty notice issued by Local Authority.

### **Penalty Notice**

We always strive to work with parents/carers to address attendance and punctuality issues. However if a pupil has at least 15 sessions (i.e. 15 half days) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term (including unauthorised holidays), the Head of School may ask the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice. If paid within 21 days, the fine is £60, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid, the Local Authority may subsequently prosecute the parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance.

All those defined as a parent under section 576 of the Education Act 1996 are considered to be parents for the purpose of these provisions. As with prosecutions under The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 a penalty notice may be issued to each parent liable for the offence in respect of each child.

### **Family Holidays and Other Absences**

For absences other than sickness, parents/carers must seek the Head of School's prior approval.

The school will not authorise family holidays, except in very exceptional circumstances. The Governors have, in conjunction with other Berkhamsted schools, agreed what constitutes exceptional circumstances that may be authorised by the Head of School. These are detailed in **Appendix B**.

Requests for such leave must be made at least three weeks before the planned absence (except in the case of funerals). Requests need to be submitted on the 'Leave of Absence' form obtainable from the school office or school website. See **Appendix C** – Leave of Absence Request. The Leave of Absence Request form will be used as evidence of the absentee with the AIO.

Parents/carers may be invited to meet with the Head of School to discuss the request.

### **Lateness**

Any pupil arriving after 8.55 am or 1.15 pm, should report to reception and sign in using Inentry, supervised by the receptionist. Entries in Inentry will be transferred to the computerised registration system by the receptionist / attendance officer.

During a fire drill / evacuation, Inventory plus the 'known absences' list will be checked against class registers called during the drill.

### **Following-up Lateness**

The names of pupils who arrive late will be entered into the computerised attendance record from which a report will be produced on a regular basis by the data manager.

Parents/ carers whose children are regularly late for school will be contacted by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), in order to bring about an improvement in punctuality.

### **Incentives**

The school will maintain an individual and collective record of 100% attendance on a yearly basis in order to issue commendation certificates to pupils.

As a school we work with other agencies to ensure that our pupils receive all the support available, to achieve good attendance.

This means on occasions sharing information, using the Families First Assessment, or staff taking on the role of Lead Professional and working with other agencies as part of 'teams around the family'.

### **Publication of Information**

As a school we share information on an individual pupil's attendance, as necessary, with parents/carers, pupils and staff. We also provide aggregated attendance information and statistics to school Governors as part of the termly Head of School's report.

Also on a termly basis we submit attendance levels and percentages of unauthorised absences and authorised absences to the DfE through the School Census.

## Appendix A – Attendance Policy

## ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

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. present at another school or PRU)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> 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	Other unauthorised absence (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience (not work based training)	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to all pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

## **Appendix B – Attendance Policy**

### **Absences that the Head of School will authorise:**

- Medical/dental appointments
- Approved PE/sporting activity
- Days of religious observance linked to the faith of the parents
- Absence under licence issued by the CSA for theatrical/other performances
- Sickness
- School educational visit
- Educated off site
- Approved examinations / tests e.g. Music exams
- Immediate Family/carer trauma or funeral
- Weddings (immediate family members, 1 day maximum)
- Visits to new schools prior to re-location
- Immovable holidays due to business rotas (verified by the employer)
- Visits to the child's or parents' country of origin

### **Absences that the Head of School will not authorise:**

- Holidays in term-time and certainly not after the event for which no leave of absence has been granted
- Staying at home because a sibling or parent is unwell
- Birthdays
- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences lacking a proper explanation
- Late arrivals at school after the register is closed