

Attendance

The Bythams Primary School



Reviewed and updated: September 2017
Next review: September 2020

Signed:

(Chair of Governors)

Date:

Signed:

(Headteacher)

Date:

ATTENDANCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

It is a legal requirement that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually. The school will always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the difficulties of individual pupils and families are recognised;

The Bythams Primary School is committed to providing a full, effective and positive educational experience to all pupils. Our belief (backed up by research into school attendance) is that if pupils are to benefit from their education, good attendance is essential.

Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. The Bythams Primary School is a happy school where all staff show concern and care about each child's welfare. The school will actively promote and encourage full attendance for its pupils. We attach a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home/school links so that problems preventing a child's regular, punctual attendance are resolved as efficiently as possible. This is linked to the school "Home School Agreement" issued to parents at the start of each Academic Year, where the school seeks to encourage parents to understand the importance of arriving on time, in the correct uniform and with the right equipment.

Whilst parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors of our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

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 our Local Authority. 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.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- 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.
- 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.
- Equip children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintain effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties
- Support pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.

COMMUNICATION

We communicate with parents on attendance matters in a number of ways:

- Authorised and unauthorised absences are explained to parents (this attendance policy is available to parents on request).
- Information on lateness, illness and absence is detailed in the Home School Agreement. This highlights the importance of being at school on time, as well as regular punctual attendance and timely notification of absence for any reason.
- The importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained at the induction meeting for all new children joining the Bythams. The importance of arriving at school on time is also stressed so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Parents are also asked to try to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child's education is not disrupted.
- Towards the end of the summer term attendance figures will be published in the child's progress report.
- Attendance figures are reported termly to the Governors in the Headteacher's report.
- Parents are also encouraged to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset a child, which means they become unhappy and may not want to come to school. By knowing these worries, we can work to overcome them.

EXPECTATIONS

From the Pupil

The school expects the following from its pupils:

- That they attend school regularly
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day
- That they will tell a member of office staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

From the Parent/Guardian

The school expects the following from its parents:

- To ensure their child/children attend school regularly and punctually
- To ensure that they contact the school as soon as reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend.
- To ensure their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.

From the school

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing a good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us

DATA PROTECTION ACT

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. The school recognises the importance to have full regard for the requirements of the Act.

The school has a Data Protection Notification which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the police or social services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

RESPONSIBILITIES

To ensure the attendance policy is successful, each member of staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education.

Specific responsibilities

Head Teacher:

- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy.
- To regularly report progress on attendance to governors, pupils and parents.
- To set challenging, but achievable targets for attendance with the governing body.
- To liaise regularly with the Education Welfare Officer when appropriate.
- To oversee the work of administrative staff, the efficient operation of the attendance system, and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- To produce the attendance profile for the whole school.
- To report to the governing body any attendance issues at the earliest opportunity.

Class Teacher

- To complete registers accurately and on time, recording all reasons for absence in the registers with the appropriate code
- To follow up immediately any unexplained absence with administrative staff to ensure parents have been contacted.
- To challenge any suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence.
- To inform the head teacher of concerns in a timely manner.

Governors

- To liaise with the head teacher to set challenging but achievable targets each academic year.
- To ensure regular review of attendance data with the head teacher to highlight any potential safeguarding issues.

Parents

- To contact with school on the first day of absence.
- To keep the school informed of any continuing absence, daily (or give a specific time frame of absence ie: one week as directed by doctor).
- To support their child and the school in achieving maximum attendance.
- To inform the school of any concerns their child may have that may be contributing to their non-attendance at school.

Administrative Staff

- Produce regular reports from the pupil management system, highlighting any patterns in absence and report any persistent absence trends to the head teacher.
- Ensure correct codes are being used by class teachers/supply teachers and amending as necessary.
- Submittal of accurate attendance data via the school census.

Other Agencies

The school will continue to develop strong partnerships with outside agencies that work with children and young people. The following agencies may be used where appropriate in individual cases of persistent absence:

- Educational Behavioural and Support Services
- Educational Psychologists
- Special Education Needs Service
- Social Care
- Connexions
- Youth Service
- Local Police.

CODING

From 1 September 2006, all schools are required to use a common set of codes to record pupil attendance and absence. The schools attendance data, both manually and electronically is audited once per year by the Education Welfare Officer with any incorrect coding challenged.

The use of fixed codes supports the use of electronic systems to record attendance when it is uploaded by administrative staff and underpins the production of data necessary for absence returns to the Department of Education, without time consuming counting up of possible attendance and actual absences. The use of these fixed codes will also assist both Local Authorities and the Department of Education in monitoring not only whether pupils are absent with or without permission of the school, but why pupils are absent from school.

Only the school, in the context of the law can authorise absence, a note or explanation from parents does not guarantee authorisation. If a class teacher does not accept the explanation offered for absence as a valid reason, then the matter must be referred to the head teacher.

AUTHORISED OR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as unauthorised.

The following may be reasons for authorising absences:

- Illness
- Family bereavements
- Medical and dental appointments where proof is available.
- Days of religious observance
- Fixed term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

1. LATENESS

For attendance purposes, the school day is divided into two sessions, a morning session and an afternoon session. Morning sessions commence at 08:50 and afternoon sessions 1:00.

Morning registration closes at 09:15. Should a child arrive between 08:50 and 09:15 they will be marked as late. If arrival in school is after 09:15, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. This is in line with guidance from the Education Welfare Officer.

We will follow up persistent lateness in the same way as persistent absence, and will work in partnership with parents to identify and resolve the issue

2. ILLNESS

Parents/carers are asked to **contact the school via telephone (01780 410275) on the morning of the first day of absence due to illness.**

Where absence is authorised, the school will remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance.

Please note: In the case of vomiting/diarrhoea, parents are asked to keep their child off school for a full 48 hours since the last bout of illness, in line with guidance from the NHS. Parents should also consult with a doctor regarding the recommended length of absence from school where a child has an infectious illness/contagious condition/notifiable disease.

Please refer to the Sickness-Absence Policy for further information.

3. MEDICAL/DENTAL APPOINTMENTS

Advance warning of dental / medical appointments is required (where possible) and should be reported to the office in order to be noted and authorised.

Any child who has to leave school during the school day must be collected by an adult and must leave school via the school office, having signed out.

4. FAMILY HOLIDAYS

Parents are asked to arrange annual holidays in school holiday time, where possible, so that their child's education is not disrupted. With effect from 1st September 2013 there has been an amendment to the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration – Regulation 7) (England). This amendment prohibits the Headteacher granting any leave of absence during term time, unless the circumstances surrounding the request are considered to be **exceptional**. Where holiday absence is requested, parents are asked to write to the school outlining the 'exceptional circumstances'.

When considering whether a request is 'exceptional' the school will also take into account the attendance percentage for the preceding 12 weeks, the current academic year and previous academic year. If any child's attendance falls below 96% it is a cause for concern as it can have a significant impact on their academic progress.

Any request for leave of absence during May will not be authorised as SAT's and other tests take place for all children during this time. Holiday absence will also not be authorised during September due to the impact that absence at this time may have on academic and social progress.

5. OTHER LEAVE OF ABSENCE

From time to time, exceptional circumstances may occur which will necessitate a child's leave of absence from school. These may include such things as: religious festivals; family bereavements; family weddings; special occasions; events or other out of school activities; public performances. Requests for leave of absence should be submitted to school, giving as much notice as possible.

Each request will be considered on its merits and is at the discretion of the Headteacher. In reaching a decision, consideration will be given to the effect the leave of absence might have on the child's education, taking into account the child's attendance pattern and punctuality record to date, the nature of the event, the amount of notice given and achievement and progress to date. The school will develop a close and clear working procedure with the Education Welfare Service in order to promote regular school attendance.

6. PROCEDURE WHEN UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE HAS BEEN HIGHLIGHTED

Where a child has been marked as absent and the school office have not been notified by the parent/guardian using the schools absence voicemail, the school will endeavour to contact the parent by sending an initial parentmail text to request the parent/guardian contact school to advise the reason for the absence. Should there be no response from the parent/guardian, this will be followed by a telephone call, again should the parent/guardian not be contactable by phone, the school will write to them.

If there has been no communication from the parents/guardians as to the reason for absence, if the school is concerned for the child's wellbeing, a meeting may be convened, with relevant staff, to discuss options for ensuring the safety of the child. One option may be to contact the police for further assistance in locating the child, as the school's paramount concern is for his/her welfare. If non-attendance continues the school will notify the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who will liaise with the head teacher to discuss further action.

After 10 days, unless other action is planned, the parents will be invited to attend a meeting in school. This meeting will include the appropriate staff, parent and pupil and possibly EWO who will aim to identify and solve the problems that are preventing the pupil from attending school.

If there is no improvement, the case will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer, with a view to a formal referral being made to the Education Welfare Service (if one has not already been made at an earlier stage). If a referral had already been made then the case will be reviewed and further action planned.

There is a mandatory legal duty for all schools and local authorities to report children missing education (CME)

MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE

The registers are monitored regularly by the Headteacher. If patterns of absence or lateness are noted, the Educational Welfare Officer will be informed. A meeting will be arranged if appropriate to discuss strategies to resolve the absence or lateness patterns.

The Educational Welfare Service acts on behalf of the Local Authority and has responsibility to enforce school attendance and will take court action where necessary. Legal proceedings may be brought in severe cases of irregular, unauthorised absence.