



# **Birch Hill Primary School**



## **ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR PARENTS**

**September 2015**

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## INTRODUCTION

Good attendance at school is essential for a pupil's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. 100% attendance is certainly possible, but in the event of your child being away from school it is essential that you, the parent inform the school of the reasons for absence.

### WHY?

- There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem.
- The achievement and maintenance of high levels of attendance is the shared responsibility of parents, guardians or carers, the school with its Governing Body and the Local Authority.
- The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence have to be reported to the Schools Governing Body, Local Authority (LA), and the Department for Education (DfE).
- Parents, guardians and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy as any absence will have a huge impact on your child's learning. Regular school attendance is essential and parents, guardians and carers, together with our school staff all have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved.
- Pupils are expected to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:
  - Authorised Absence: Absences can be authorised for illness ,religious observance in the religion to which the parents belong ,school visits, external examinations and other circumstances including family bereavement, at the discretion of the Headteacher. **Please note that all holidays during term time will be recorded as 'unauthorised'**
  - Unauthorised Absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request.
- Please be aware that when a parent telephones the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness, or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. Your child's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.
- Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold is not acceptable. Repeated absences will require us to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit, or prescription or medicine bottle. Any of the above is to be shown to a member of the

school office. (Please note: that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost.)

## AIMS OF THE POLICY

To promote regular attendance thus offering all pupils equal access to learning.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

- Meet the Government attendance targets set for us.
  - Create a clearly understood attendance procedure that is effectively communicated to and understood by parents/carers.
  - Ensure pupils are in school for the maximum number of days.
- This Policy is designed to help all concerned adults to enable children to attend school regularly and thus be offered the most consistent access to learning as is possible.

## SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

- To communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school.
- Maintain appropriate attendance data.
- Have appropriate registration processes in place.
- To follow up absences and lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school: initially with a first-day absence telephone call.
- Inform parents/carers of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.
- To have systematic and consistent daily records which chart absence and lateness.
- To report to the EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) and support their work with pupils as necessary.
- To report to the Government on attendance twice a year.
- To consistently administer the attendance procedure.
- To ensure that registers are taken twice daily: at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions
- To promote good attendance

## PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- To have children in class ready for teaching by the start of the day at 8.50 a.m.
- To inform school on **every** day of any absence.
- To request leave as far in advance as possible.
- To make applications for leave in writing on the school's *'Leave Of Absence Form'*, giving the reason for the request.
- To work with the school and EWO to improve lateness and attendance.
- To avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day.

If parents, guardians or carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should:

- Talk to their child; it may be something simple that needs your help in resolving
- Talk to your child's class teacher in the first instance.

## THE PROCESS FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE

The school Attendance Officer will log instances of absence and lateness and discuss weekly with the Head Teacher. Where issues persist the following will be initiated:

- Stage 1: Where there are concerns about attendance and punctuality the school will make verbal contact with home.
- Stage 2: If the concerns persist the school will write to the parents/carers.
- Stage 3: If the concerns persist the school will arrange a meeting between the parent/carer, school representative and the EWO.
- Stage 4: If the concerns persist the school will make a formal referral to the Local Authority Educational Welfare Service to deal with the on-going issues.

Should concerns persist the EWO will agree action (as above) and where necessary meet with the parents/carers. Please note that ultimately the Local Authority can take legal action. *See Appendix 1.*

## CLASSROOM ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

- ; Registers must be taken as soon as possible at the start of the morning and the afternoon sessions.
- ; If a child is not there for registration teachers should enter N.
- ; Only the Attendance Officer will enter lates onto the system: U will be entered if the child arrives after 9:15.
- : Teachers should send any absence letters to the school office immediately.

## ABSENCES DURING TERM TIME

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

*Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.*

*Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.*

AS OF 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2013, THE RATE PER PARENT PER CHILD WILL BE £60 IF PAID WITHIN 21 DAYS AND RISING TO £120 IF PAID BETWEEN 22 AND 28 DAYS

If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

- Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed 'Application for leave of absence during term time'. These may be obtained from the school office.
- Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parent will be informed within 7 school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.
- There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

## LATENESS

**Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite.**

- Children must be in class by 8.50 a.m. each day. Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time. Children will be marked late if they arrive at school after the registers have been taken.

The school gates will be shut by 9 am. Children who arrive after that time must come into the building via the main office.

- Lateness will be monitored and the E.W.O. (Education Welfare Officer) will follow this up.
- If the arrival at school is after the registers have closed at 9.15, the pupil will receive a 'U'. This equates to an absence although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem with the Attendance Officer.

### SICKNESS

- Please notify the school on each day of the absence.
- We reserve the right to request a doctor's/consultant's letter regarding recurring and frequent illness.
- A 48hr absence from school is required following sickness and diarrhoea.
- There is no reason to keep your child off school with head lice. Please treat and send them in to school.

### PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

We celebrate good attendance throughout our School by

- Awarding a shield for any class with 100% for the previous week.
- By awarding a certificate to the class with the highest attendance if there isn't one with 100% attendance.
- By awarding individual certificates to individual children who have 100% for each half term.
- By awarding LA certificates to individual children who get 100% attendance for the whole academic year (September to July).

### THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER

The Education Welfare Officer strives to support schools, parents and pupils with the aim of ensuring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. However, the Education Welfare Service also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

Section 444 of the Education Act states that "if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence."

Bracknell Forest Council, through the Education Welfare Service, may issue a Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly.

A Fixed Penalty Notice when requested by a Headteacher can be issued as long as the following criteria apply:

- At least 10 sessions (equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence by the pupil during the current school term, or 20 sessions (ten school days) in the previous 4 months
- Other than in specific circumstances, the parent will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given 15 school days to affect improvement.

Within the 15 day period, further unauthorised absence will trigger the issue of a notice without warning.

- No more than two Penalty Notices will be issued per pupil per academic year.

In exceptional circumstances the Local Authority reserves the right to:

- issue a Penalty Notice for a first offence
- issue a Penalty Notice without warning

The Fast Track framework promotes early intervention and aims to ensure that appropriate action is taken to tackle non-attendance as soon as attendance problems become apparent. Fast Track involves engaging the parent and specifying what improvements need to be made over a fixed time-frame (usually 12 weeks). Parents have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates Court.

### **GOVERNORS**

It is the Governors legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in their schools. The schools attendance figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.



## **Application for Leave of Absence during term time (Effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013)**

Birch Hill Primary School, the Local Authority and Government believe that absence during term time should be avoided as they can have a damaging effect on pupils' education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that there may be exceptional reasons that may justify authorisation of the absence by the Headteacher.

**The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:**

**Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application**

As a result of the changes at Birch Hill we have revised our attendance policy, which from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 will include the following:

- Application is to be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed 'Application for leave of absence during term time'. These may be obtained from the school office.
- Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parent will be informed within 7 school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.

**AS OF 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2013, THE RATE PER PARENT PER CHILD WILL BE £60 IF PAID WITHIN 21 DAYS AND RISING TO £120 IF PAID BETWEEN 22 AND 28 DAYS.**

If the penalty notice is not paid, each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to a maximum of £1,000, plus costs.

Note: Parent also includes guardian/carer