

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Purpose:

Good attendance at school ensures that children have the best chance of making progress. Any absence interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning, and will therefore, impact negatively on their educational progress. At Westminster CE Primary Academy we aim to minimise the amount of time lost to absence, through working with parents and families, encouraging punctuality and good attendance, and keeping in regular contact with parents where problems arise. Through the work of our attendance team, we aim to ensure that where at all possible, children arrive at school on time every day.

Aims

The aim of this policy is to further increase attendance and further reduce persistent absence.

Wider school aims / ethos:

Every school day matters

Consultation:

Attendance team, SLT and governors.

Procedures and practice

Daily routines

- School starts at 8.35am for everybody. Children should be lined up and teachers collect them from the playground. Doors remain open until 8.50am.
- Registers are found online and should be marked at the start of each session in class up to 8.55am.
- Children arriving between 8.50am and 9.30am must go to the back entrance with their adults to explain why they have arrived late. The register stays open until 9.30am. Before 9.30am they will be marked as L (late).
- Children arriving after 9.30am should go to the main office and staff there will amend the dinner numbers accordingly, make an entry into the 'late book' and notify the attendance team who will record the child's arrival online. They will be entered as a U which is counted as half a day's absence.

- Parents of children not present by 9.30am will be contacted by the attendance team via text message. For targeted families (persistent absentees, children deemed to be at risk) parents are contacted by phone. Home visits are made on the first day of absence where appropriate (e.g. where contact by telephone has not been possible) and on subsequent days for other children.
- Children who go home to lunch must be back on time for the afternoon session. Children should be collected and brought back via the main office. For Phase 1 and Year 2, lunchtime starts at 11.45am and children are back in class at 12.30pm. Year 3 lunchtime starts at 12.00 and children are back in class at 12.45pm. For Phase 3 lunchtime starts at 12.30pm and children are back in class by 1.15pm. If a child is late back from lunch it will be marked as such on the register.
- When the internet / online register is unavailable, paper registers must be completed and sent to the attendance team each morning by 8.55am and at the start of the afternoon session.
- All classes have a fire registration sheet on the back of the door which must be completed every morning and afternoon, and amended if children leave / return part way through a session. This is the class teacher's record of who is present in the class for the purposes of a fire register, and should be carried when the teacher and class go to another area eg: ICT lesson. This sheet must be taken out when the fire alarm is sounded.

Absence due to illness

- Parents are responsible for ensuring their children attend school every day but where a child is ill and it is not appropriate for them to attend, then absence will be authorised. In the past, a minority of parents have abused the system, resulting in their children having extremely low attendance. For this reason, when children are absent through illness, we ask that they see a doctor and that the appointment card and medication is shown at the school office.
- Illness will not be accepted as a reason for absence where children have regular, minor illness which cannot be substantiated.
- Staff will ask questions when parents telephone about illness so that they can give the correct advice about how long the child should remain absent etc.
- Children who become ill during the day whilst at school will be treated sympathetically and all attempts to ensure that the child's symptoms can be alleviated will be made, e.g. provided with something to eat, water to drink, fresh air etc. The child can wait near the office or in an appropriate place. If it becomes obvious that the child is suffering due to illness then all attempts will be made to contact parents / carers to come to collect their child. If contact cannot be made by phone we will visit the home to make parents/carers aware that their child needs collecting. Parents are asked to keep school informed of any change of phone numbers/addresses.

Fixed Penalty Notices

- After 10 sessions (5 school days), within a six week period, of unauthorised absence, the school will inform the Local Authority who will write to the parents and a fixed penalty notice may be issued. After two weeks with no contact a referral will be made to the ESW, then after 20 days the child will be removed from roll.
- The Penalty Notice is for £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 per parent per child after this date but paid within 28 days.
- Where a child loses his/her school place due to extended absence, parents may re-apply for a place on their return by contacting admissions at Bradford Children's Services. However, there is no guarantee that applications will be successful.

Religious Observance

- The school recognises and respects all faiths and the importance of celebrating significant festivals.
- Absence for religious observance will be authorised on the day of the festival for that day only.

Leave of absence

- This is where parents plan in advance for their child to be absent from school. School does not encourage this as it disrupts the continuity of teaching and learning and puts children at a disadvantage.
- The Principal has a discretionary power to grant a pupil time off school during the term due to exceptional circumstances.
- **It should be noted that the Government will no longer grant holidays during term time and has therefore taken the decision not to approve any holiday requests.** Requests for absence during term time will only be approved if they are due to extenuating circumstances.
- Requests for leave of absence must be made in advance. A 'Leave of Absence' form is available to be used if desired, but a letter stating the reason and the dates for absence is acceptable.
- Requests for absence will be treated on a case by case basis within the following parameters:
 - *No holiday absence will be authorised for children.*
- Requests for absence due to other reasons will be considered on a case by case basis. The request must be based on extenuating circumstances, for example, if the child's health could be affected (which must be evidenced by a medical professional.)
- Requests for leave of absence to visit ill relatives will not be granted. Please arrange these visits in school holiday times.
- It is extremely unlikely that any leave of absence will be granted for children in years 2 or 6
- Where attendance has previously not been good enough – e.g. below 96%, the absence will not be authorised
- Depending on the request, the Principal may approve all of the absence, part of the absence, or none of it. Any period of absence approved will be marked as authorised and any period refused will be marked as unauthorised.
- Requests for absence due to extenuating circumstances will be moderated before a decision is reached on whether to approve them or not.

- A letter will be sent to the parents who have requested leave of absence from school outlining the decision that has been made. If the absence has been approved, this letter will clearly state the expected date of return of the child, that parents should contact the school if anything delays the child's return and what will happen if this is the case. If the absence has been refused, then the letter will clearly outline the reason for this and the consequences of then ignoring the decision and keeping the child away from school.
- Families who take leave of absence without prior permission will receive a letter explaining the consequences of doing this.

Extended Leave of Absence

- In exceptional circumstances, the headteacher can authorise more than 10 days of absence and this is called 'extended leave of absence'. It is something that is exceptional, and therefore, the circumstances around the request will be considered carefully. Parents will be asked whether their plans could change or alternative arrangements could be made in order that their child(ren) does not miss school. Parents will also be informed that they risk losing their school place if they fail to return on the agreed date and also that they risk being fined by the Local Authority.

Recording holiday absence

The following codes will be used for holiday absence

- H family holiday (approved) – authorised absence up to 10 days
- G family holiday (refused or in excess of the 10 days approved) – unauthorised
- F extended family holiday (approved) – authorised absence

What happens if a child is due to return and does not come back?

- The Pupil Registration Regulations 2006 state that school can delete pupils who fail to return on the date they were expected back from leave of absence or extended leave of absence if they fail to do so within 10 school days. However, school will consider any communication that parents have had with school and any reasons provided for the delay, eg, disrupted travel arrangements or illness, before deleting the pupil. School and the Local Authority should make reasonable enquiries as to why the child has not returned before deletion is made and the case must be referred to the Education Social Work Service who can then make additional enquiries and try to locate the child.
- If the pupil has a good reason to be absent, he/she should be marked authorised absence using the relevant code. If the school views the reason as inadequate to excuse the continued absence, parents should be reminded of the following:
 - The date school said it expected the child to return
 - The responsibility of parents to ensure the child attends regularly
 - The possibility of legal sanctions against the parents
 - The possibility of the school deleting the child from the school roll
 - The child must be marked unauthorised absence.

Children Missing from Education

In the first instance an attempt at contact is made between home and school. The Attendance Officer and Parental Involvement Officer will complete home visits. Where there is evidence that the home is empty, or there are new tenants in the housing, a CME (Child Missing from Education) referral will be made immediately. Where there is uncertainty, repeat home visits will be made, a letter left at the property asking for the family to contact school and after 10 missing sessions, a CME referral is made.

When a child is removed from the school roll:

School will inform the LA in every circumstance when they are about to delete a pupil's name from the admission register.

The pro-forma will require school to provide:

- Basic details of the child, name, DOB, UPN etc...
- Details of the child's current and new address (if known), parents names and contact details
- The reason that they have been removed from roll
- Details of the new school if known.

In the case of a missing child it will prompt you to make a Child Missing from Education referral to the LA.

What are the legal sanctions that parents could face by keeping their child away from school?

- **Penalty notices of £60 per parent per child may be issued under the following circumstances:**
 - to parents who have not gained permission for leave of absence from the Principal.
 - if permission has been refused for leave of absence but the child is absent regardless
 - if a pupil has not returned to school by the agreed date without a satisfactory explanation and the pupil remains on school roll
 - where a child on leave of absence has been unauthorised absent on at least 10 sessions (5 days) within a six week period
 - The Penalty Notice is for £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days and £120 per parent, per child if paid after this date but within 28 days.
- **Prosecution**

If the penalty notice is not paid, Bradford Children's services will submit the case for prosecution in the magistrate's court and parents face additional fines.

Punctuality

Good punctuality at school ensures that children have the best chance of making progress. Any lateness interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning and will therefore, impact negatively on their educational progress. At Westminster Primary Academy we aim to minimise the amount of time lost to lateness, through working with parents and families, encouraging good punctuality and attendance, and keeping regular contact with parents where problems arise and we ask parents to make us aware of any problems they are encountering. Through the work of our attendance team, we aim to ensure that where at all possible, children arrive at school on time every day.

Collection of children at the end of the day

Introduction

- Under Section 457 of the Education Act 1996 and relevant Regulations the school governing body has the power to impose a charge on parents or carers who fail to collect their child from school within a reasonable time after the close of the school day or after school activity.
- The governing body accepts that it is the responsibility of the school to ensure parents and carers are notified of the timing of the school day or after school activity and also when those times are varied for a specific event or date.
- The governing body has decided where children are not collected from the school after fifteen minutes, after the school day has finished, or after an after school activity ending, then a charge will be made to the child's parent or carer. This charge will be increased each 30 minutes thereafter that the child is not collected.

The Charging Arrangements

- Within the first fifteen minute parents/ carers will try to be contacted using the numbers on the school system. Parents should therefore check that we have all up to date numbers for each contact for the child.
- In cases where a child is not collected after these fifteen minutes of the end of the school day or after school activity a charge of £5.00 will be made to the parent/carer for the first 30 minutes of non-collection and then £10.00 thereafter for each thirty minute period that the child is not collected. The parent will be issued with an invoice and expected to pay within the date set on the invoice. Failure to pay will lead to further action being taken.
- Should the parent fail to collect the child within one hour then the head teacher will contact the local police to notify them that a child has been left at the school.
- The purpose of the charge imposed is to meet the additional costs in salary and resources that the school incurs from the late collection.

Persistent Late Collection

- If a family is persistently late in collecting a child then the Principal will consider taking further action that may include a referral to the Education Welfare Service or the Children's Trust Social Services team.

Delegation to the Principal

The governing body recognises that in an emergency situation the late collection of a child may be unavoidable. Therefore the governing body delegates to the Principal the discretion not to impose a charge where they are satisfied that the late collection is due to an emergency or unforeseen event.

Concluding notes

Monitoring and review:

Attendance will be recorded by the Attendance team and reviewed by the SLT, ESW and Governors.

Other documents and appendices:

Appendices include: Holiday form, letter templates

NOTE: Once approved the office will retain a copy which has been signed by a governor. Any previous versions on the network will be archived.

This policy will be reviewed on a three yearly basis or earlier if legislation should change.

December 2016