

## Blackwell Primary School Attendance Policy



Governors' Committee Responsible: RMC

Policy Originator: Gill Gardner

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### **Introduction**

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. At Blackwell Primary School we expect children to attend school every day, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. Excellent attendance and punctuality is important if children are to benefit from everything school has to offer. Blackwell believes that regular attendance at school is vital for children to be successful. School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life and research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance, punctuality and educational progress and attainment. Parents/carers and the school staff are partners in making this a success and this partnership is very important to the school. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that every child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. As a school we follow guidance from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

### **The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education**

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

### **Aims**

Our attendance policy aims to:

- support children and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;

- ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- enable children to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets

### **Expectations**

Attendance is the essential foundation for positive outcomes for all pupils and is everyone's responsibility in school, this includes their safeguarding and welfare. We understand some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, we are committed to work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships. As a result, we can ensure a child has the correct support in place.

#### **We expect that all children will:**

- attend school every day as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so
- attend school punctually
- attend appropriately prepared for the day
- discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance. (where age appropriate)

#### **We expect that all parents/carers will:**

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day
- ensure that they contact the school **daily** of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school
- contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
- notify school immediately of any changes to contact details

#### **As a school we will:**

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and

understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Accurately complete attendance registers and have an effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence. As listed in 'When to Report Absence to the School' of this policy.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- We are supportive of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide them with additional support.
- If a child's attendance falls below 95% this will be monitored by members of the Senior Leadership Team. Where an intervention is put in place, the school will monitor the impact of the interventions and make adjustments where necessary and discuss with the pupil/parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family to help remove the barriers to attendance.
- Our teachers and non-teaching staff understand the importance of good attendance and are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents.

**We will work with all partners to do the following:**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>EXPECT</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school. |
| <b>MONITOR</b>                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.  |
| <b>LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND</b>                                                                                                                                                                                 |

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them

#### **FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

#### **FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

#### **ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, work with the Local Authority to enforce attendance through statutory intervention, fixed penalty notice or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

### **Definitions**

- Everyday counts as two sessions.
- Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing, telephone/text/email.
- Regular attendance means that your child must attend school every day, unless there are justified reasons, and arrive at school on time.

### **Authorised Absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. The Senior leaders authorise the absence.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Senior Leaders.
- Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation' has been given.

Examples

#### Authorised absences:

- \*genuine illness of the pupil;
- \*hospital/dental/doctor appointment for the pupil;
- \*major religious observances;
- \*visits to prospective new schools;
- \*external exams or educational assessments.

#### Unauthorised absences

- \*shopping / day trip / visit to a theme park;
- \*a birthday treat;
- \*oversleeping due to a late night;
- \*looking after other children / other family member;
- \*appointments for other family members;
- \*holidays during term time

#### **Rewards**

- The main benefit from regular and punctual attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured.
- As a school, we acknowledge good attendance through termly award assemblies and weekly class attendance celebrations. Weekly attendance is displayed in the hall and a reward given to the class with the highest attendance for a full term.
- Certificates awards are given at an individual and group level.

#### **The effect of attendance**

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. Attending on a regular basis is the key to your child doing well at school and will set them up with good routines for later life and the working world, as well as giving them the opportunity to: make new friends and feel included, learn new things and develop skills, increase their confidence and self-esteem, improve social skills, achieve their potential and fulfil aspirations.

Having poor attendance could lead to any number of the following; Poor academic performance, social isolation, difficulty reintegrating into school, mental and physical health issues and in the future, this could lead to lower employment opportunities.

| Attendance      | Absence and days of learning missed                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 100% attendance | No days missed                                            |
| 95% attendance  | 9 days of absence, 1 week and 4 days of learning missed   |
| 90% attendance  | 19 days of absence, 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed |
| 85% attendance  | 28 days of absence, 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed |

### **When to Report Absence to the School**

All absences must be reported **on a daily basis**. In all cases of absence, the parents/carers should:

- only keep your child away from school if really necessary. The school will always call and send home an unwell child;
- telephone the school on 01773 811281 at the earliest opportunity to let them know why your child is going to be absent. Please try and phone by 9.20am at the very latest. The office has an answer machine and messages can be left on here;
- please call daily and keep the school informed if more than one day's absence is necessary;
- if medical appointments are absolutely necessary, please provide proof of this appointment and bring your child to school for the rest of the school day.

### **School absence procedures**

If your child fails to register or is absent and we have not received notification by 9.30am a call will be made to you. It is the parent's/carer's responsibility to call the school each day their child is off school and explain the reason why.

If a child is absent from school with no explanation offered by the parents/carers this will be marked as unauthorised and further safeguarding procedures may be taken, this could entail a safe and well check from a member of the Senior Leadership Team, either by phone or face to face.

If your child is absent from school for 5 school days and has not been seen by a member of school staff even if you are making regular phone contact, then school will carry out a safe and well check. This means a member of our Senior

Leadership Team/Family Support will visit the home to check the child's and parents' wellbeing. If school cannot make contact they may be required to contact other professional services such as children's services/the police.

### **Registers, Punctuality and Lateness**

Punctuality to school is crucial. All schools are expected to proactively manage lateness. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other children in the class. It is paramount therefore that all children arrive at school on time. For school children the side gates are opened, and the main playground is supervised from 8.50am until 9.00am. Children go straight to classrooms on arrival to school. If your child arrives after 9.00am they must enter via the school office where a parent/carer is to sign the child in late with a reason given.

Registration starts at 9.00am and is closed once the teacher has completed it.

- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.
- After 9.20am lateness may be recorded as an unauthorised late mark 'U'.
- Afternoon registration is taken at 1.05pm.
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will be dealt with by a member of the SLT with the support of the Safeguarding Lead person in school and may be referred to Education Welfare at Derbyshire County Council.
- Children's attendance and punctuality is recorded regularly by the admin staff and is analysed termly by the Headteacher.
- A log is kept of attendance and actions taken where attendance is poor and this recorded on individual pupil's reports and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

### **Pupils Leaving During the School Day**

During school hours, the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day.

Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.

Whenever possible, parents/carers should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.

Parents/carers are requested to confirm by phone call, letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, and the expected return time.

Children must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in by an adult on their return.

Where a child is being collected from the school, parents/carers are to report to the school office before the child is allowed to leave the site.

If a child leaves the school site without permission, their parents/carers will be contacted. *Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the child as a missing person.*

### **Leave of Absence**

In September 2013 the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force. These regulations make it clear that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. a parent getting married. These regulations also state that holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Any requests should be on an official school absence request form and handed into the school office for consideration prior to any holiday/leave arrangements being made.

You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996.

If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. From autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

**School attendance lead**

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