

# BLACKSHAW MOOR C.E. (V.C.) FIRST SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Updated July 2016

### **PRINCIPLES**

We wish to ensure children gain the maximum benefit from educational opportunities available to them. Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The purpose of the policy is to show how pupils are supported and the steps the school will take to avoid a disproportionate number of behaviour and attendance issues involving vulnerable pupils.

### **Aims**

- To promote positive behaviour and good attendance through the use of curriculum and learning materials.
- To recognise good attendance and behaviour by pupils.
- To promote children's awareness of their individual attendance and where necessary a realistic target to achieve.
- To promote parents' awareness of their child's attendance and the effect their attendance has on attainment.

All children should be at school, on time every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up the absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

The attendance and behaviour policy must include procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

### **Rewarding Good Attendance**

There is a strong statistical link between attendance and attainment; schools with high attendance levels tend to have high levels of attainment at all stages but those with low attendance levels tend to have low attainment levels. The attendance register is therefore an important tool in the work of our school to drive up standards and pupils' attainment. We therefore, encourage children to attend daily. Attendance Certificates are presented at the end of each term for those with 100% attendance.

At the end of the year certificates and prizes are presented for 100% and very good attendance.

## Action by schools

1. Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED OR UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing. The school cannot now automatically grant leave for holidays taken in school time. Each case is considered after an application is made and will only be granted if there are exceptional circumstances. Otherwise these are classed as UNAUTHORISED absences and may attract a penalty notice.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause for example;

- Genuine illness of the pupil
- Hospital/dental/doctor's appointment for the pupil which cannot be arranged out of school hours;
- major religious observations (usually of 1 day duration)
- visits to prospective new schools
- external exams or educational assessments.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- shopping/day trip/visit to a theme park;
- a birthday treat
- oversleeping due to a late night;
- looking after other children/other family members.
- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

## Guidance on Lateness

A pupil's punctuality is a LEGAL requirement and the parents/carers of a pupil who is persistently late are guilty of an offence.

Registration time is at **9.00am**. The registration period lasts until **9.15am** lateness within this period is attendance. Avoidable lateness outside this time is unauthorised and can be the basis of an offence by the parent. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if late arrival is not resolved.

Teachers have the discretion to grant an attendance (even if outside the registration period) i.e. a pupil has arrived at the first opportunity after a medical appointment or genuine transport difficulties. This will be recorded as O over marked with / for those arriving within the registration period or with a legitimate excuse and O with a L inserted for those not credited with attendance.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Educational Welfare Worker from the County Council. He/she will always try to resolve the problem by agreement. If other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these officers can issue penalty notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the (EWW) themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the LA.

### *Leave of Absence* during Term Time

Blackshaw Moor First school strongly discourages children being taken out of school during term time. If your child is away she /he will miss important schooling and may not be able to catch up on the work they have missed. The Headteacher and governors may consider refusing to grant any leave at critical times of the school year. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Head Teachers should determine the number of school sessions/days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Clearly there are many situations which may constitute exceptional circumstances, but as a generality the school will interpret 'exceptional' in this context as being unique and significant emotional, education or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will differ from one case to another, and whilst it will be important to look at the whole situation in making decisions about an individual request, the normality will be that requests will be refused.

Please support the school in adhering to these new regulations but if you do need to take your child out of school during term time, you must make it very clear in your request how the circumstances **are exceptions**. If this is not clear, then under the new legislation the school will not be allowed to grant leave.

Parents should be aware that only the school has the right to agree family holidays in term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and in law have to apply for permission in advance. To give your child the best chance in school, try not to make long visits in school time. Every child in state schools in England and Wales must follow all the National Curriculum. If your child is away he/she will miss important schooling. He/she may not be able to catch up on the work that they have missed. Your child may miss important tests.

The school is trying to reduce the number of holidays taken in school time as this seriously affects the children's education. The headteacher and governors may wish to consider refusing to grant any leave at critical times of the school year e.g. SATs weeks in May and transition weeks June and July. Assessments of children's progress take place at the end of each half-term and it is unhelpful to teachers trying to track children's progress if they are absent at these times.

## Leave of Absence Form

Parents must request a leave of absence form from the school office.

Parents must send leave of absence forms in to school in time for the absence to be considered well before the period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise booking arrangements before receiving the school's decision regarding their request.

When a parent submits a leave of absence form during term time, the school will adopt the following procedures:

- Is the request based on "exceptional circumstances"?
- Where parents have children in more than one school, a separate request must be made to each school. The Headteacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school , However, the Head teachers in the Leek Educational Partnership have agreed to liaise with each other and if a request is refused in one school it will be refused in the sibling's school.

-Should the school decide to grant leave of absence, but the child does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to, (ie following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence, this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

-Should the school decide not to grant leave of absence and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised which may be subject to a penalty notice fine of £60 per parent per child. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within 28 days will lead to Court proceedings.

For Parents' guidance schools in the LEP use the following % to gauge the impact on a pupils' education of absence from school.

Excellent Attendance	Good Attendance	Satisfactory Attendance	Unsatisfactory Attendance	Serious Concern
100%	99%-95%	94%-90% 90% attendance = 19 days of education missed	89%-85% 85% attendance = 29 days education missed	Below 85% 80% attendance = 35 days absence

Blackshaw Moor's First School has an attendance target of 96%.

Staffordshire County Council understands the challenges some parents face when booking holidays particularly during school holidays. However, SCC believes that in order

for children to receive the best education and prospects , that they should be in school during term time.

### **Procedures for informing school of pupil absence**

All procedural referral agreements are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- If a child is absent from school, parents/carers should telephone school early on the first morning of the absence to explain its cause. A record is kept of telephone calls regarding absence.
- In the event of a child being unexpectedly absent from school and the parent/carer failing to inform school of the reasons, school will initiate a first day contact: the office manager will contact parents by midday if there has been no telephone contact from parents to explain the cause of a pupil's absence. By contacting parents the school also ensures that the parent is aware that their child is not in school enabling the parent where necessary to establish that their child is safe.
- If it is not possible to telephone school, then the parent should supply a note explaining the absence on the first day the child returns to school.
- The administration assistant will follow up individual pupils and analyse attendance data to identify trends for individual pupils' classes and year groups enabling schools to target efforts. School will monitor children who are having large amounts of absence.
- The school will, where possible, take action to improve a pupil's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to the Local Authority. Before making a referral, schools will first make 'reasonable attempts' to contact the family regarding the absences and try to work with them(e.g. facilitate contact between the parents and the EWO who can advise on attendance) to resolve any problems they are aware of, before referring to the EWW.
- From September 2015, when a pupil's attendance level falls below 90% in any term without good reason, or a pupil is persistently late a referral to the EWS will be made by the school. Following investigation, any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a fixed term penalty notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s 444.
- Behaviour and progress reports are sent out termly with the % attendance by each child for the term.
- All non-attendance can be a cause for concern, whether covered by a parent's note or not. It is the head teacher's responsibility to authorise or not authorise an absence. The EWW should be aware of concerns teachers have about irregular attendance that is covered by parents - this is 'condoned absence'.

That is the offence in law. Reducing this type of absence is where the improvement in attendance rates can be made

### **Distribution and collection of registers**

The following procedures will be followed in order that the registers are available at all times in case of fire or any other emergency

- The registers are delivered to the office so the necessary checks can be made.
- The registers are then taken back to the classrooms for the classroom teacher.
- In the event of a fire or other emergency the Class teacher will bring the registers with her/him when she evacuates the building. They are then used in order that all children can be accounted for.

### **Penalty Notices for leave in term time may be considered appropriate if the following criteria is met:**

- For unauthorised leave of absence, there must be a minimum of 20 sessions (10 school days) of unauthorised absence from school during the period of two consecutive half terms.
- This absence must include at least 10 sessions of unauthorised leave - (G Code) in the specified time period, however, the remaining 10 sessions may relate to other unauthorised absence. The absences do not have to be consecutive.

### Penalty Notice for persistent absence

-Parents whose child is repeatedly absent will now only receive one warning notice period to bring about improvement in attendance in a single academic year. If attendance deteriorates again then no further formal warning notice will be issued and the Local Authority can automatically consider other statutory actions if unauthorised absence re-occurs.

### **Individual school targets.**

The school has adopted the following attendance target: for 2016/17 is 96%

### **Responsibility for behaviour and attendance:**

- Head teacher, School Administrative staff are responsible for the day-to day implementation of the policy.
- The Governing Body for monitoring and formulation of the Policy, setting attendance targets.

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.