

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Ethos Statement

Blakesley CE Primary School is proud to be a Church of England School where every child, and adult, matters. We provide a happy, caring environment, based on our Christian values. We recognise that we are all created unique individuals; we support, value and celebrate these differences. We are committed to a high quality education which develops the potential of all.

Aims

The aims of this policy are:

- To emphasise the importance of good attendance in helping pupils to take full advantage of their educational opportunities
- To make explicit to all parties the school's expectations over attendance levels
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance.
- To communicate to all parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised"
- To stress the need for home and school to work together to achieve high attendance rates.

1.0 Introduction

At Blakesley CE Primary School we believe that it is important for parents, in partnership with the school, to encourage their children to develop a respect for education. To this end parents must ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive punctually. Parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age (i.e. 5 to 16 year olds) receive a suitable education.

Attendance is a national priority. Figures are reported to the Governors via the Headteacher's report and to parents via their child's school report. Data is submitted to the electronically to the Local Authority (both in an aggregated form and on an individual basis). It is a key indicator of how effective a school is and, as such, will be scrutinised by OFSTED.

2.0 What is an acceptable attendance rate?

We expect an attendance rate of 95% as a minimum. OFSTED views 90% as an absolute minimum acceptable attendance rate. Any attendance below 90% is considered cause for concern and parents will be notified of this at the end of each term. Continued poor attendance will be followed up. Pupils should not have more than one or two broken weeks attendance in the course of a year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school. (see Appendix 1)

The school will work with parents to promote good attendance by: disseminating information e.g. induction meetings, parent/ teacher meetings, fliers and letters, asking pupils and parents to sign a Home School Agreement, offering pastoral and educational support and a climate of opportunity to discuss concerns.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum. Routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible. Where pupils are clearly unwell they should not be sent to school. If pupils become unwell at school parents will be contacted. In the event of accidents; the school has trained First Aiders on site. Parents will be contacted in the case of serious injury. (Refer also the Medication Policy)

2.2 Blakesley CE Primary School follows the Department for Children and Families (DCSF) guidelines detailing valid reasons for absence from school. Attendance at the following is not classified as an absence from school, and notice should be given in advance (where practical) and in writing for:

- Medical or dental appointments (where unavoidable)
- Approved musical, sporting or other educational activity
- Approved education offsite
- Visits to other educational establishments prior to transfer. (may apply only to Primaries)
- Where a child is ill or receiving medical attention
- Days of religious observance (notified in advance)
- External music exam (notified in advance)
- Approved family holiday (notified in advance)

3.0 Authorisation of Absences (including Holiday Absence)

Authorised absence is absence with permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes instances of absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided (e.g. illness, days or religious observance notified in advance, absence due to family circumstances e.g. bereavement). There are other absences such as 'approved sporting activity' which can be authorised and there will be other events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will be used in these cases.

4.0 Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes all absences where no letter or suitable explanation has been provided or where the absence does not fall into one of the categories above. The DCSF guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as unauthorised:

- Minding the house
- Caring for relatives
- Awaiting repair of delivery people
- Shopping
- A birthday or family celebration

4.1 There are clearly some 'grey areas'. The DCSF guidelines make it clear that in only truly exceptional occasions should be authorised e.g. attendance at a sibling's graduation. Each case will be regarded on its individual merits and the school will exercise professional

discretion on these cases.

4.2 Absence resulting from a pupil attending a 'Special Occasion will be judged on its merits.

4.3 The school has the final right to refuse authorisation of absence (DCSF guidelines) i.e. a note from home does not automatically mean that an absence is valid or will be authorised; this includes absence for holidays during term time.

5.0 Holidays

The law states that holidays of up to 10 days during term time may be authorised, however, as outlined in our flier which is given to all families new to the school, parents are strongly urged **not** to book holidays in term time. Holidays during term time are discouraged as they disrupt learning.

Regulation 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'a pupil may be granted leave of absence from school to go away on holiday where –

- a) an application has been made in advance to the proprietor by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. **Applications should be made at least 4 weeks prior to the event wherever possible.**
- b) the proprietor, or a person authorised by the proprietor in accordance with paragraph (1), considers the leave of absence should be granted due to the special circumstances relating to that application.

5.1 Government guidance states that parents should not normally take pupils on holiday in term time. The school cannot authorise up to 10 days unless there are 'special circumstances' e.g. for service personnel and other employees who are genuinely prevented from taking holidays outside term time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education or when a family needs time to support each other during or after a crisis (DCSF 'Keeping Pupil Registers')..

Examples of circumstances when holidays will not be authorised: availability of cheap holidays, desired accommodation, poor weather experienced during holiday periods, overlap with beginning or end of terms (DCSF 'Keeping Pupil Registers')

In accordance with DCSF guidance each application will be considered on its merits and approval is not automatic. Such matters as: the amount of time requested, the age of the pupil, the general attendance record of the pupil, the proximity of SATs or public examinations, the pupil's ability to catch up on work, the frequency of the request etc (see DCSF 'Keeping Pupil Registers paragraphs 52 – 59), will be taken into account. Parents can expect to be asked to explain why their child needs to be absent and will be given a written response detailing the reasons for the school's decision.

In conjunction with other schools in the county and our Cluster of schools (the Sponne Learning Partnership) we ask parents who feel it is unavoidable to take their annual holiday in term time to write explaining the circumstances to the Headteacher at least 4 weeks in advance. Any requests for term time holidays may necessitate an interview with the Headteacher or Senior staff. A Holiday Request Form must be completed. The school cannot authorise ten days (or the duration of the holiday) unless there are justifiable circumstances. The school will not authorise holidays retrospectively.

5.2 In exceptional circumstances holidays of more than 10 days may be authorised.

6.0 Reporting Absences and Late Arrivals/Home School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together.

To this end we ask parents to:

- Do all they can to ensure that their child arrives on time for morning and afternoon school. Morning registration is at 8.50 and afternoon registration is at 1.10. Pupils will be marked a 'later before close of register (L) or 'later after close of register' (U). The register closes at 9.30. .
- Notify the school on the first day of absence (see appendix) either in writing, by telephone, by electronic means or in person to give the reason for absence and to estimate the like period of absence.
- Supply a written note on the pupil's return to school and this must be handed to the class teacher or the school office.
- Get in touch at an early stage to discuss any concerns they may have about a child's attitude to school.

In return the school will:

- Contact home on the first day of absence if no message has been received from home
- Contact home over any unexplained absences
- Follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on to us that may be affecting a child's attitude to, or well being in, school.
- Monitor late attendance and will follow up persistent cases. If there has been no contact with school to give a reason for the absence; after 2 days the school will contact the Education Welfare Officer to register concern.
- Involve the School Support Services to help students reintegrate into school after illness or other difficult circumstances.
- Regularly remind pupils of the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Our expectations are outlined our Home School Agreement
- Reward good or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.
- Class teachers will ensure that the correct symbol has been used to code the register for every absence.
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6.1 Pupils arriving late will be requested to sign in. A book is provided for this purpose. Late marks are recorded on the register. Parents/carers of persistently late pupils are sent a

reminder letter reiterating the start time of school and the importance of punctual attendance. Persistent lateness may be reported to the Education Welfare Officer.

6.2 If a child on the ‘Child Protection’ register is absent from school, the Headteacher must be informed immediately, even if a reason for absence has been provided.

7.0 Child Protection and Family Welfare

On rare occasions a child may be reluctant to come to school. The child or family may be experiencing problems and need support. The school will undertake to work with the family to resolve the difficulties and a meeting may be convened. If improvement is not evidenced then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officers and the school may contact any other support agencies which may be able to offer further help. Long term absentees may be offered a Pastoral Support Plan to aid a return to school.

Our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits our school if requested and will work closely with pupils and families where there are concerns. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) can be contacted on 01604 259599. The EWO will be able to assist parents where difficulties arise. Our school also has a Parent Support Advisor.

7.1 In extreme cases the EWS can also initiate legal proceedings against parents who do not fulfil their responsibility in sending children to school. Before a case goes to court, Parenting Contracts are drawn up setting targets for attendance levels. There may be interviews leading to a fixed penalty notice.

In all cases the prime aim of all actions is to get a child attending school on a regular basis

8.0 Flexi-schooling

We recognise that there may be instances where flex-schooling arrangements may be in the best interests of the pupil. In such cases an agreement will be drawn up between the school and the pupil’s parents/carers reflecting the arrangements made. All arrangements will reflect Local Authority Guidelines and will be regularly reviewed. Unlike full time home schooling any agreement between a school and a pupil’s parents/carers for a pupil to be flexi-schooled is at the Headteacher’s discretion. (see ‘Keeping Pupil Registers: 2006’)

9.0 Truancy

If the school suspects that a child may be truanting then action must be taken. Class teachers must inform the Headteacher senior staff in the headteacher’s absence) who will contact the parents/ carers. The Headteacher and parents/carers will decide how to proceed. Options include invoking the school’s Behaviour Policy or, in cases causing major concern, contacting the Education Welfare Officer, the police or social services. A panel of professionals may draw up an Action Plan to address the problem.

9.1 Rewards for good attendance

These include merits, team points, Golden Time and a cup for the pupil who has had the best attendance throughout Primary School.

The class with the best attendance is rewarded weekly.

We take attendance very seriously at school and have put a lot of time and energy into getting our procedures as efficient and effective as possible. We urge you to give this matter the priority it deserves.

Appendices:

Attendance Monitoring form

Pupil Profile

Individual Pupil Attendance Action Plan

Attendance Roles and Responsibilities