



# **Attendance Policy And Procedures**

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Reviewed by: Full Governing Body

# BROOK HOUSE JUNIOR SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

This policy has been developed in conjunction with DfE and LA Guidance

(Reference to Parent/Carer throughout this document also includes any person who has parental responsibility or who cares for children.

Good attendance and punctuality are vital if pupils are to achieve their maximum potential. Westfield F.O.S. are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils to ensure that each pupil benefits from the academic, personal and social opportunities available to them during their years with us. Children who miss out on education are at an immediate disadvantage relative to their peers and at a great cost to themselves and the community as a whole. By working together, with families we can keep absence at school to the lowest possible figure. This will ensure that children get the absolute most from their education at school. The young child, however, is dependent upon the adults in his/her life to get them to school regularly and on time. The school operates within a framework of local schools, including the linked secondary school. We are, therefore, committed to a Family of Schools approach to attendance and a partnership relationship with parent/carers.

### **Aims**

- Ensure that our school maintains good standards of work and behaviour in a positive, welcoming environment to ensure that our pupils wish to attend regularly.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance is the norm.
- Maintain an effective partnership between home and school, the Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST), police, social services and other agencies in addressing attendance issues.
- Recognise and reward pupils who achieve attendance and punctuality targets throughout the academic year
- Ensure all staff and governors understand the procedures and promote and monitor good attendance with support from the SLT.
- Ensuring parent/carers and pupils are informed about the procedures for attendance and encouraging them to take an active role in promoting good attendance and punctuality
- School will take appropriate action to promote and encourage good attendance
  
- Target 97%

### **The Law relating to attendance**

Section 7 of the Education Act of 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) To age, ability and aptitude and
  - (b) To any special education needs he/she may have
- Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

### **The Law relating to safeguarding**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

### **Expectations**

#### **What the school expects of the pupils:**

- To attend regularly.
- To arrive on time, appropriately prepared for the day equipment e.g. PE kit.
- To report to the reception/office when late.
- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school

### **What the school expects of the parents/carers:**

- To fulfil their *legal* responsibility by ensuring their children attend school regularly and on time.
- For parents to inform the school of any reason that will prevent their children from attending.
- To ensure that they contact the school on the first day their child is unable to attend and give a valid reason for absence before 9:00am. After this time if no reason has been provided the school will make every effort to contact parents before 11.00am:
  - Contact parent/carer by parent mail and then telephone
  - Write to parent/carer requesting a reason for absence
  - Second letter if no reason has been given
  - Referred to the school inclusion team who may refer to MAST(Multi Agency Support Team)
- To ensure their child arrives on time and is well prepared for the school day.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.
- To inform the school of any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, arrange appointments outside of the school day.
- To provide medical evidence for absences more than 4 days.
- ❖ Where appointments are booked for say 11 a.m. pupils must attend school first.
  - If the appointment is for say 9:30 a.m. the pupil needs to return to school A.S.A.P, where possible.

*If a pupil leaves the school premises for any reason during the school day, staff will ensure that this is recorded, (together with signing back in if they return) to comply with Health & Safety Regulations.*

**Failing to provide a reason for any absence will result in your child receiving an unauthorised mark on the register.**

- ❖ To ensure the continuity of all children's education, taking holidays during the school holiday period is expected. Only in exceptional circumstances will request of leave in term time be granted and will require a completed planned application request in advance of the leave of absence.

**Legally there is no entitlement for parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Please see Exceptional Leave During Term Time Policy Appendix**

*This policy also responds to the updated guidance and amendments issued from Department for Education (DfE) which states:-*

#### ***Term-time holiday***

*The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006*

*Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday 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 days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.*

*Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.*

*Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.*

### **What Parents and pupils can expect of the school**

- ❖ A broad and balanced education that is dependent on regular attendance at school.
- ❖ The encouragement and celebration of good attendance through certificates, letters home and prizes.
- ❖ Efficient and accurate recordings of attendances and punctuality.
- ❖ First day contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school and hasn't given valid reason for absence
- ❖ Any barriers to attendance, dealt with efficiently.
- ❖ Close liaison with the attendance team to assist and support families where needed MAST (Multi Agency Support Team).
- ❖ When a pupil's attendance falls below 95% to date, parents will be sent a letter saying that their child's attendance is of concern and support will be offered to improve attendance, also saying that failure to attend school regularly and on time could result in prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act and Anti-Social behaviour Act 2003. If there is no improvement parents/carers will be required to attend Attendance Meetings.

- ❖ Notification to parents/carers of attendance through a system of letters and reports home. A tiered letter system for attendance will operate-
  - A letter to parents if their child's attendance drops below 95%
  - A phone call from the inclusion team if the attendance drops below 91%
  - If there is no improvement
- ❖ The issuing of penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Amendments to 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

### Understanding Different Types of Absence

Only school can authorise absence as authorised or unauthorised, not parents. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required to ensure a pupil's attendance is correctly categorised.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for an acceptable reason, for example: illness and/or medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in the school day, emergencies or other unavoidable reasons.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider to be reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to of fixed penalty notices and/or prosecution. This includes:

- ❖ Parents keeping children away from school unnecessarily
- ❖ Truancy during the school day
- ❖ Absence that has never been properly explained
- ❖ Pupils who arrive in school too late to receive their mark
- ❖ Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- ❖ Day trips and holidays in term time

Please remember it is the responsibility of parents or carers to ensure the attendance of a child. Any child may be off school because they are ill; sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

When necessary we engage the support of other agencies such as the School Nurse and Multi Agency Support Team (M.A.S.T.).

- ❖ Each day counts for two (a.m./p.m.) marks of attendance or absence.
- ❖ The fact that a parent has sent a note or other notification (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a child's absence does not mean that the absence is automatically coded as authorised.
- ❖ If your child has a medical appointment within the school day medical evidence is needed e.g. appointment letter/ card or confirmation appointment on parent's mobile phone

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA) less than 90% attendance.** All our PA pupils and their parents have regular meetings with the school and participate in an action plan and the plan that may include allocation of additional support

A pupil is classified as a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education prospects and we need parent/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school will monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately

### The School Day

- ❖ The school day begins at 8.55 for all pupils with the children collected from the playground at 8.50.
- ❖ From 8.50 the only entrance will be through the main reception where parents and carers/children will be required to sign in and provide a reason for lateness. Time of arrival and reason for lateness will be recorded. School gates are locked at 8.55 am.
- ❖ School gates are locked at 8.55 and the only entrance to the school will be from the school driveway to the main entrance.
- ❖ The school day ends at 3:20 pm and children should be collected promptly by a responsible adult unless parents have given permission to walk home.

- ❖ If for any reason you are unable to collect your child on time you should contact the school office so that staff can be informed. If children are consistently picked up late staff will record this and it will be reviewed by the safeguarding team.
- ❖ Responding to Lateness (Punctuality)
- ❖ Pupils arriving after morning or afternoon registration will report to the school office, where the late records will be completed with the time and reason for the lateness. After 5 recordings of lateness a punctuality reminder letter will be sent. If no improvement is seen following the first letter a further letter will be sent to the parents/carers. If there is still no improvement parents/carers will then be invited to an attendance panel meeting.
- ❖ When pupils are late for school they are late for learning. Late arriving pupils also can disrupt lessons and can cause embarrassment that can also encourage absence.
- ❖ Pupils who are late at our schools will have this logged and the class teacher may discuss this at the parent/teacher interviews. M.A.S.T. will become involved where there are constant issues around lateness.

#### **Response to Attendance Issues**

- ❖ The school will identify and monitor pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. This being the school target of 90% or less. A tiered letter system will operate for any child whose absence falls below the school 90%.
- ❖ Returns on persistent absences will be monitored by Governors.
- ❖ Appropriate strategies will be employed in order to address the attendance of individuals.
- ❖ Attendance data will be collected, analysed and monitored. The school will respond to any areas of concern identified.

#### **Responding to absence - criteria for requesting support from the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST)**

- ❖ Home/school contact has not prompted an improvement in attendance
- ❖ Poor overall attendance (e.g. below 90%) and no mitigating circumstances or acceptable reasons for absence provided to school
- ❖ If attendance continues to give cause for concern strategies will be considered and steps taken in an attempt to improve attendance and punctuality. This could include home visits from school staff, meetings in school with other professionals if deemed appropriate
- ❖ When a pupil has not attended for 10 school days the school has a statutory responsibility to inform the Local Authority.

#### **Promoting regular attendance:**

It is the responsibility of the parent or carer to ensure a child's attendance at school. We will always work with parents and carers to support the attendance of a student.

#### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- ❖ Celebrate good attendance;
- ❖ Attendance display and trophy awarded in weekly assemblies to the class with the highest attendance figure.
- ❖ Reward good or improving attendance through certificates.
- ❖ Have a school attendance display which celebrates children with 100% attendance with leaves on trees for each class.
- ❖ Work in partnership with parents/carers where attendance or punctuality is a concern.

#### **Safeguarding**

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: -

Attendance

Behaviour Management

Health and Safety

Access to the Curriculum

Anti-bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis must be considered as a safeguarding matter

### **Children Missing from Education**

The Attendance Officer is the nominated member of school staff to liaise with the children and Young People's Directorate Children Missing from Education Team. Students who cannot be located will be considered missing. The Children Missing from Education Team will be informed and will pursue the matter in accordance with Local Authority procedures.

### **Children Looked After**

The nominated Looked After member of school staff liaises with the children and Young People's Directorate Children Looked After Team. Looked After Children will be set up as a discrete attendance group on the school motoring system and individual attendance checked each half term.

### **Parent and Carers Telephone Numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number.

### **The School Attendance Officer:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. We will always try to resolve the attendance issues by agreement, however if efforts to improve trying to improve the child's attendance fail and unauthorised absences persist, sanctions such as fixed Penalty Notices and or prosecutions will have to be pursued.

### **Request for leave of absences**

Headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence to pupils in exceptional circumstances. Department for Education guidelines are clear that taking term-time holidays will not be considered as an exceptional circumstance.

If leave of absences is declined by the school yet parents or carers still remove their child then this would be classed as unauthorised absence for which a fixed penalty notice and/or prosecution could be pursued. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

All applications for leave of absence must be made in advance. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually. Parents/carers who do not request term time leave and take their child on 'unauthorised leave', could be liable for a fixed penalty notice and/or prosecution and even potentially lose their place at their school.

Requests for exceptional term time leave must be made at least 20 school days in advance of any arrangement being made. This will allow sufficient time for the request to be considered by the school. The request must be made in writing (letter or email) by the parent/carer using Leave of Absence forms that can be collected from the school office or from our website. One form per child per request should be completed. All schools within the Westfield family have the same leave of absence policy.

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its 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.

The Headteacher, or staff delegated by him / her will be responsible for analysis of attendance data and for the administration of procedures deemed necessary following any unusual trends in attendance. If possible data should be used in a positive way to help form class or whole school targets. Wherever possible positive action will be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to Local Authority.