



Bricknell Primary School

Attendance Policy

September 2013

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

Good attendance and punctuality is important if teaching and learning time is to be maximised, and children are to get their full curriculum entitlement. The school aims to achieve good attendance and punctuality by operating an attendance and punctuality policy within which staff, pupils, parents and the Education Welfare Service can work in partnership. The school will monitor attendance and lateness and ensure intervention if a problem is identified. It is therefore important that the school has clear procedures with regard to these two issues.

A Attendance

Although it is the parents/carers legal responsibility to ensure their child/children attend school regularly unless they are ill, the school has a responsibility to ensure this happens.

It is therefore our collective responsibility to impress on the children and parents/carers, that regular attendance is important. This will be done in the following ways:

- ◆ Making attendance a high priority and rewarding complete attendance with certificates and prizes at the end of each school year.
- ◆ Regular reminders in newsletters to parents, making regular attendance a high priority in the school prospectus and raising the importance of attendance issues to parents in meetings for new parents.
- ◆ Standard letters to parents with regard to pupil absence (See appendix 4,5 & 6)
- ◆ Where appropriate, pupil absence will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.
- ◆ The administrative assistant is responsible for attendance and will meet with the school learning links worker and headteacher on a regular basis.

Definition of unauthorised absence:

An unauthorised absence is defined as absence from school without leave from a duly authorised person. It is important to note that it is the school which takes a decision on whether or not an absence is authorised. If the school is unable to obtain a reason for absence (ie note from parents or contact (after 3 attempts) these absences will be defined as **unauthorised**.

Authorised absences:

Only the school can authorise an absence (not a parent). Schools are expected to make a commonsense judgement as to whether or not an excuse

or reason for an absence is justifiable or not. If it is not justifiable then the absence **should not** be authorised.

Schools are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is a reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered. If the school has accepted absences as authorised, this can jeopardise any subsequent legal action against parents.

Excessive amounts of authorised absences can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection. The school needs to be alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence

Roles and Responsibilities

Where a child is absent from school the following procedures must be implemented:

- (i) Class teacher to complete attendance register (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Class teacher to request note or reason for absence on pupils return to school.
- (iii) When received, reasons for absence (Appendix 2) are entered on the Absence Record (Appendix 3). Where office staff receive messages, they should pass them on to the class teacher or record them directly on to the record.
- (iv) On the Friday of each week registers and absence records will be fed into the optical mark reader checked by the administrative assistant. If there are unexplained absences then parents will be contacted - usually by phone. If staff are unable to get a response then a written note will be sent. (Appendix 4)

N.B. A verbal reason from the carer (not pupil) need not be supported by written evidence. However, where a pupil's absence has been identified as a cause for concern, written evidence may be requested.

- (vi) If this does not get a response within the next week then the absence will be regarded as unauthorised and the administrative officer will liaise with the class teacher and headteacher to determine whether the Education Welfare Officer should be involved.

It is the class teacher's responsibility to be proactive in monitoring attendance and implement this system, informing the administrative assistant if reasons for absence are not being received.

N.B. Regular patterns of absence, either authorised or unauthorised may be picked up by class teachers and should be brought to the attention of the Headteacher so that the school learning links worker can become involved or ultimately it can be discussed with the Education Welfare Service.

Persistent absence

From 2011/12 the criteria for persistent absence has increased from 80% absence to 85%. In terms of the number of sessions of absence, this equates to a decrease from 64 absences in one year to 49 absences.

The school will actively monitor and chase up pupils who are in danger of falling into this category (Appendix 6)

B Punctuality

Again it is the parent/carers legal responsibility to ensure their child/children arrives at school on time. However, the school needs a set of procedures to deal with the issue of lateness. Again it is our collective responsibility to inform parents that punctuality is important. This will be done in the following ways:

- ◆ Regular reminders in class and assembly.
- ◆ Regular reminders in newsletters to parents, making punctuality a high priority in the Schools' Prospectus and raising the importance of punctuality at meetings for new parents.
- ◆ As external doors are locked when classes enter children arriving late will need to report to the school office where they will be entered in the late book.
- ◆ Contact will be made with parents when a pattern of lateness or poor punctuality occurs.
- ◆ Parents should be invited into school to meet with the learning links worker or headteacher to discuss punctuality issues if standard letters do not lead to improvement
- ◆ In the case of exceptional lateness the matter can be referred to the Education Welfare Service for a home visit to be made for the issue to be taken up with parents reminding them of their legal responsibilities in this area.

When a child is repeatedly late for school the following procedures must be implemented:

- (i) Administrative assistant to contact parents to seek reason and ask for improvement.
- (ii) If no improvement is seen, second letter to go to parents from Headteacher informing them that the matter is being monitored and must be improved
- (iii) If there is still no improvement, parents invited into school to meet with learning links worker or headteacher.

C Family holidays and extended trips overseas during term time

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers **may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances**. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Following consultation with the DfE, there is no guidance in the amendments as to what constitutes as 'exceptional circumstances'. After consultation with Hull City Council legal team, the Governing Body of Bricknell Primary School have adopted the Local Authority advice and have agreed to define exceptional circumstances as follows:

- Service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time
- Acute crisis within the family, where the family needs to spend time together to support each other
- Court order/formal agreement where parents have separated

As a general rule, requests for holiday absence during term time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. The Governing body of Bricknell Primary School have agreed that if parents request (in writing) leave of absence in term time, then it can only be authorised at the headteacher's discretion if the above 'exceptional circumstances' are deemed to apply.

No parent can demand leave of absence for the purposes of a holiday as of right. The onus is on the parents to justify why they are an exception to the rule. (Appendix 7)

Requests for term-time holiday leave of absence may also be part of a bigger picture that devalues education and must be challenged if attendance is not excellent. The school will therefore ask parents to reconsider requests for holiday if a pupil's attendance rate is less than 90%. (Appendix 7)

The code used for an authorised leave of absence agreed by the school should be **H**

The code used for an unauthorised leave of absence should be **G**
(Appendix 1)

D Attendance Registers

Regulations in this area are as follows:

- (i) Computerised Attendance Registers - Education (Pupils Attendance Records) Regulations 1991.

There is a legal requirement placed upon schools to ensure that all attendance registers are completed properly.

Registers must be called at the start of each session and completed appropriately.

Registers close officially at 9.20am for the morning session and 1.45 for the afternoon session.

Children arriving before 9.20a.m./1.45p.m. are marked as Late Present, and children arriving after 9.20a.m./1.45p.m. are marked as Late Absent.

Absence return sheets are to be completed using the symbols indicated in Appendix 2. Please note that the absence sheet refers to the previous week's absence.

E Target Setting

We strive to ensure that school attendance is at least the national average – 95%.

F Children Missing Education

When there is reasonable evidence to suspect that a child is missing education and the whereabouts of that child is unknown the Local Authority will be notified using the appropriate form (Appendix 8). This form will be used when all possible enquiries have been made to establish the whereabouts of pupils who:

- have moved out of the area or within the area with no destination school
- where a school has been approached for a place directly by a parent/carer
- for agencies other than schools who have knowledge of children not on a school roll.

G Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

The administrative officer who manages the system will evaluate its effectiveness and report any issues or problems to the headteacher. Termly attendance figures will be prepared for Governing Body Meetings and these will be discussed by the Headteacher and administrative assistant.