

## **Background**

### **Philosophy**

At Broadlands Primary School we promote a culture in which children enjoy coming to school. We are committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embrace the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full potential a high level of school attendance is essential. We consistently aim for maximum attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We aim to provide sensitive and appropriate guidance to parents and carers concerning pupil attendance, taking into account guidance from the Department for Education, which states:

- School attendance is subject to statutory laws and regulations.
- The school should monitor its attendance figures and set targets accordingly.
- The school should review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

Broadlands Primary School has high expectations for attendance. Every child should attend every day that they are required to attend. Broadlands Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest standard for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will pupils be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment and good progress depends on good attendance.

### **Statutory duty of schools**

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

The Government expects that:

- Schools will promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence. Any attendance below 95% is a cause for concern (attendance that is consistently at 90% or below is classified as

‘persistent absenteeism’) and will be discussed with parents or carers as to how attendance can be improved.

- Schools will ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and act early to address patterns of absence, by working in partnership with parents.
- Parents and carers will perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly in accordance with the school’s home/school agreement.
- All pupils will be punctual for their lessons.

### **Purpose of this document**

Pupils, parents and carers, teaching staff, support staff and school governors have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone’s part in this and the policies that underpin it.

The policy has been drawn up based on current Government and Local Authority guidance, and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community have access to this policy.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **School’s responsibilities**

Broadlands Primary School has a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

The Head teacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school’s work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

The school will:

- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued;
- send a clear message that if a pupil is absent the reason for the absence will be pursued;
- work with all members of the school community, the school’s learning mentor and the Local Authority in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy; and

- encourage parents and carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance.

Regular information will be sent to parents and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues.

### **Parents' and carers' responsibilities**

Parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

The school expects that parents and carers will ensure that:

- their children attend school regularly and punctually;
- pupils report to the school office if they are late;
- they support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- they contact school on every day of absence or give the duration of the absence if known in advance;
- their children arrive at school on time and are collected on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day; and
- they work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their children's work and activities; and
- contact the school immediately if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives.

### **Pupils' responsibilities**

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly they should speak to their class teacher or learning mentor.

Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. Pupils also have a responsibility for reporting to the school office if they arrive late.

### **Governors' responsibilities**

The Governing Body will oversee, support and challenge the leadership team in ensuring excellent attendance with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils at the school.

### **Recording attendance**

### **Registration**

The school morning bell will be rung at 8.50am each morning. Pupils arriving after this time must enter school via the main reception area, where the reason for lateness will be recorded. The class registers will remain open until 9.10am and any pupil arriving after this time will be marked late. This is considered an unauthorised absence. Parents or carers will be asked to explain persistent lateness and asked to remedy the cause.

If a pupil is unfit for school, parents or carers are asked to contact the school on each day of absence by 8.55am. If a pupil is absent at morning registration and the school has not received an explanation by the close of registration, the office staff will be informed and will contact the parents or carers to establish the reason for the absence.

In cases where the absence at registration is due to an early morning medical appointment, the absence will be recorded as authorised long as prior notification has been received.

A written explanation must be sent in for all absences on the pupil's return to school. Notes received from parents explaining absence will be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

The school should follow up any absences to:

- ascertain the reason;
- ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- identify whether the absence is approved or not; and
- identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

### **Absence from school**

At Broadlands Primary School we recognise the clear links between attendance and progress and attendance and safeguarding children. Pupil's attendance rates will be monitored on a weekly basis.

If there is a problem with a pupil's attendance, the parents or carers will be informed in writing of the school's concerns and will be encouraged to keep absences to a minimum. The attendance of these pupils will be monitored by the school and if no improvement is noted a further letter will be sent, again expressing concern and offering support. The school

will always work with parents and carers and pupils to try to remedy the problem.

At registration each morning and afternoon, any child who is not present will be marked as an “unauthorised absence”, unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment or correction is distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher. A note or explanation from a pupil’s home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Absence from school may be authorised in the following circumstances;

- If a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority.
- If a pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion.
- In exceptional circumstances where the parents or carers have sought permission in advance.
- Where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend (with medical evidence to support the absence) although persistent illness without medical evidence may not be authorised.
- Where the pupil has a medical appointment. Parents should however be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards, or send them to school beforehand.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student’s parents belong (evidence maybe requested).
- In other exceptional circumstances, such as a family bereavement, and for a very limited period.

### **Illness**

Where illness is of a concern, parents and carers will be asked to grant permission for the school to consult the medical practitioner concerned. In cases of recurring absences through illness parents may be asked to produce a medical certificate or supporting evidence. We like to work in partnership with families and would like to offer support via GP consent.

**Children who have illnesses which lead to diarrhoea or vomiting must not attend school until 48 hours after the last bout to avoid contagious viruses being spread.**

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, the school can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. The school can record the absence as unauthorised if it is not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions or appointment cards.

### **Exceptional circumstances**

If absence is required in exceptional circumstances parents or carers must apply in writing to the Head teacher for permission for that absence. This must be done at least six weeks in advance of the planned absence and include the reasons for absence. The Head teacher will inform the parents or carers of the decision in writing.

Authorised absence will only be granted where the correct procedures have been followed and the permission given. It will not be granted retrospectively and remains at the discretion of the Head teacher.

### **Holidays**

Holidays should not be taken in term time. Absence for leave in term time may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. The application for leave must be made six weeks in advance and the Head teacher must be satisfied that there are truly exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head teacher's discretion. If the Head teacher does not authorise the absence and parents or carers still choose to go on holiday this will then be deemed unauthorised absence. As a result a referral may be submitted to Herefordshire Council, who may initiate legal proceedings.

### **A welcome back**

At Broadlands Primary School we promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence. It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

### **Unauthorised absence**

## **Next steps**

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parents or carers. If this is unsuccessful and the problem appears to be a medical one, the school may liaise with the school health adviser. In other cases the school will work with the family and agree strategies to help overcome attendance and late issues.

If there continues to be unauthorised absences the matter may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. This may result in a referral to Herefordshire Council, who may consider legal proceedings.

## **Penalty notices**

Penalty notices or legal proceedings can only be instigated by Herefordshire Council. They are seen as a last resort after all avenues of support have been exhausted and can be used where the pupil's frequent or prolonged absence has not been authorised by the school.

A penalty notice is a fine imposed on the parents or carers. The penalty is £60 per child, per parent, if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 per child, per parent if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the Local Authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. Parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

## **Children missing in education**

When pupils leave the school and no information has been received by the school regarding their new placement and parents/carers are unable to be contacted, the school has a duty of care regarding safeguarding and must contact the Local Authority. The child will be considered to be a **Child Missing in Education**. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to investigate, which will include liaising with Social Services, the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate the child. By giving the school details of the child's new school and location, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.