



## Bagshot Infant School

### Attendance Policy

#### **Commitment to Attendance**

The governing body and staff of Bagshot Infant School are committed, to working in partnership with the parents/carers, pupils, and the Local Authority (LA), to maintaining a school which serves the community and of which the community is proud.

Regular attendance is key to achieving good educational outcomes for children. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. We are committed to encouraging and supporting parents in ensuring their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

#### **Parent Responsibility and the Law**

##### **The School Attendance Regulations 2006 were amended with effect from September 2013**

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] to his age, ability and aptitude and
  - [b] to any special needs he may have
- either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act. Part VI Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

#### **As a result our expectations are:**

- All children will:
  - attend school regularly,
  - attend appropriately prepared for the day,
  - discuss promptly with their child's class teacher/Phase Team Leader/Deputy Headteacher, any problems that may affect their school attendance.
  
- All parents will:
  - ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities,
  - ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day,
  - ensure that they contact the school on the first day of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school,
  - contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school,
  - notify the school immediately of any changes to contact details,
  - notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child,
  - provide evidence, if required, where the length and frequency of absence through illness is giving cause for concern.
  
- The school will:
  - provide a welcoming atmosphere,
  - provide a safe learning environment,
  - provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's or parent's concerns,
  - keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality,
  - monitor individual pupil's attendance and punctuality,

- contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence,
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested,
- encourage a system of reward and recognition,
- regularly inform the parents of the % attendance of all the pupils,
- make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly,
- meet regularly with the Education Welfare Officer to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality,
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to LA Education Welfare Officer. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by the LA Education Welfare Officer may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order.

## **Registers**

Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 (s434) and the Student Registration Regulations 1995, the school must keep an attendance register.

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for this absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

## **Pupils Leaving During the School Day**

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time and all children must be collected during the school day.
- Pupils must report to the school office when leaving/returning from the school, where their absence is recorded

## **Categorisation of Absence**

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

### **1. Unauthorised absence**

This is for those children who are absent and where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have not been fully explained
- Shopping,
- Looking after other children
- Birthdays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

### **2. Authorised absence**

This is for children who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

### **3. Approved Educational Activity**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

**Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance return purposes.**

This would include:

- Educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Approved education off site
- Induction visits( e.g. to Junior School)

### **Registration and Lateness**

The school day begins at 08:45 am. Morning registration will take place at 08:55. The registers will remain open until 09:15. **Any child** who arrives within this period will be marked present. **However if the register has been completed, the child will be marked as present, but late.** Any parent/carer **arriving after 09:15 should accompany their child to school office** and offer an explanation regarding the child's lateness. The child will be marked as having an **unauthorised absence** unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early **medical appointment**, the appropriate authorized absence code will be entered.

### **Escalation Process**

If a child is absent for any reason, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school. However, if the child is absent and no reason has been provided the following procedures will apply:

#### **First Day of Absence**

The school will telephone / text the parent to request an explanation for the absence. The school will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. A message will be left where no contact can be made.

#### **Second Day Absence**

The school will telephone / text the parent to request an explanation the for absence. The school will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. A message will be left where no contact can be made.

#### **Third Day Absence**

The school will telephone / text the parent to request an explanation for absence. The school will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. If no response is received the school will send a letter and the Headteacher will be informed.

#### **Ten Days Absence**

Where any pupil is absent without an explanation, for 10 consecutive days the Local Authority will be notified, by a referral, to the Education Welfare Service. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the actions that have been taken.

### **Welcoming Back**

Where a child is absent from school the following procedure will be followed for welcoming them back:

- If they have been off for one day, the class teacher welcomes them back and checks that they are OK.
- If they are off for a few days, further communication from the class teacher will be made for the pupil to catch up with work if necessary.
- For longer term absences a reintegration will take place, in liaison with parents.

### **Absence**

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful 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 makes things worse.

The LA Education Welfare Officer meets with school staff on a regular basis to discuss attendance concerns.

In cases where a child begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent by:

1. Phone call to parent by Head to discuss concerns
2. This will be followed up with a confirmation letter.

If this is unsuccessful the school may refer to the LA Education Welfare Officer.

### **Persistent Absence ("PA")**

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' ("PA") when they miss **10%** or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor absences 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.

PA children are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Parents will be notified by letter regarding the level of their child's absence if their child becomes a persistent absentee and will be invited to a meeting where an action plan will be drawn up to address the issues identified.

The school will telephone / text the parent to request an explanation for the absence. The school will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised.

### **Failure to ensure regular attendance**

The LA Education Welfare Officer may also issue a Penalty Notice to parent/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular attendance and are not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Education Welfare Officers. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

### **Holidays /Leave of Absence**

**The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.**

*Exceptional needs of military families relating to deployment would generally be deemed exceptional.*

There is **NO** automatic entitlement, in law, to time off from school to go on holiday.

Any savings that parents think they may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to their child's education and future life chances.

The school will only authorise leave of absence in term time in **exceptional** circumstances, and will only authorise a maximum of 10 days in any one educational year.

Where a parent wishes to request a leave of absence, a formal request must be made, in writing, to the Head Teacher who will consider the application on behalf of the governing body. Consideration will then be given as to whether or not the circumstances are truly exceptional, to the child's previous school attendance and that the time requested does not exceed 10 school days in any educational year.

If a holiday is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and LA Education Welfare Officer will be notified. **Family holidays are not deemed exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised.**

### **Penalty Notices for leave of absence**

- In line with the guidance from Department for Education (DfE) holidays during SATs and other external exam periods will **NOT** be authorised by the school and a Penalty Notice may be issued.
- – The Head Teacher can request that the Local Authority consider issuing a Penalty Notice to parents when children are taken out of school for 5 or more day's holiday or leave of absence without school authorisation.

## Penalty Notices

### **County policy in respect of penalty notices will be followed:**

A Penalty Notice may be issued as an alternative to prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and will be used by Surrey County Council in the following circumstances:

1. Unauthorised holidays in term time. In such cases the Head Teacher/Governing Body will request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice. Warnings will not be given where it can be shown that parents have been notified that such absences will not be authorised. Each parent is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child.
2. In addition to Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised holidays. Penalty Notices may also be issued at the discretion of the Education Welfare Manager if a parent / carer fails to ensure regular school attendance, and are failing to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the School or Education Welfare Officer. This will be considered if attendance is below 85% and there are 10 or more unauthorised sessions (equivalent to 5 days) in the previous half term, which may include a pupil arriving late after the close of registration.

The Penalty Notice fines are as follows:

- **£60 per parent, per child, IF paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.**
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the Local Authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

### The Education Welfare Officer

LA Education Welfare officers monitor the attendance of all children on a regular basis. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will work with school staff and parents to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence.

If attendance problems cannot be resolved by school then the school will make a referral to the LA Education Welfare Officer. The EWO will try to resolve concerns but if attempts to improve attendance have failed, and unauthorised absence persists, the EWO can use sanctions such as parenting contracts, Penalty Notices and prosecution.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance, under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, to a fine not exceeding £2500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months, or both.

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### **All staff are expected to:**

- Encourage good attendance and punctuality.

#### **Class teachers are responsible for:**

- Providing pastoral support to address attendance issues.

#### **Deputy Headteacher / Bursar**

- Will ensure morning and afternoon registers are taken and are up to date at 08:55 and 13:00
- Monitors and reviews the attendance procedures and works with Education Welfare to ensure reasons for absence are identified and interventions are put in place.
- Regularly meet with the Education Welfare Officer to identify and action any attendance concerns.
- Work with families to resolve attendance issues.

- Identifies and monitors attendance of PA pupils.

**Senior Admin Assistant and Bursar**

- Contact parents and request reasons for absence.
- Collate daily attendance records and, together with the Headteacher, put in place agreed procedures to monitor and respond to poor attendance and punctuality.

**Headteacher**

- Promotes the attendance policy within the school and ensures that it is implemented effectively.

**The Governing Body**

- Monitors and reviews the attendance policy on a regular basis
- Agrees attendance targets on an annual basis. Plays an active role in ensuring targets are achieved

**Current Target**

2014/2015      Target set = 96%

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Signed by:

Chair of Governors:

Date:

Headteacher:

Date:

Agreed at the Governing Body Meeting on

Review due

