

Whole School Attendance Policy

Persons Responsible: Ms Chinnadurai

Policy review date: Summer 2016

1. Aims

Bridge and Patrixbourne Church of England Primary School recognises that positive behavior and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil achievement

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- ❖ promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ❖ ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- ❖ ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- ❖ ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

2. Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- ❖ Give parents/carers details on school opening and closing times and term dates in our newsletters and on our website
- ❖ Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- ❖ Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below 95%
- ❖ Celebrate and reward good attendance by giving class rewards (attendance ted and punctuality pup) as well as 100% attendance certificates.

3. Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- ❖ Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- ❖ truancy before or during the school day
- ❖ absences which have never been properly explained
- ❖ children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- ❖ shopping, looking after other children, sleeping in after a late night or birthdays
- ❖ day trips and holidays in term time which have not been approved

Whilst 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 a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or the Education Welfare Officer.

4. Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when 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 and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

Ourselves and the Education Welfare Officer monitor all absence and the reasons given 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 we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

Parents of children who fall into this category are invited into school to meet with the headteacher and the Education Welfare Officer to discuss ways to improve attendance.

5. Absence Procedures

If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- ❖ Contacting us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.00am. The school has an answer phone to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call.
- ❖ Getting in touch by email on office@bridge.kent.sch.uk
- ❖ Reporting to the school office in person by 9.00am.

If your child is absent we will:

- ❖ Telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- ❖ Invite you in to discuss the situation with our admissions officer and/or headteacher if absences persist;
- ❖ Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

6. The Education Welfare Officer

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff, including the headteacher and the admissions officer in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the Education Welfare Officer will take the lead and require parents to meet with them or the school may choose to refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer.

He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

7. Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, being late can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.50am** and we expect our children to be in the playground before this time ready to line up when the whistle is blown.

Registers are marked at **8.50am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.00 am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and

Punctuality is equally important at the end of the day. Children who persistently remain uncollected at the end of the school day will be referred to the EWO.

8. Absence During Term Time

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. All applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the school. On 1 September, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force, changing the rules about term-time holidays. The amendments remove

references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless they consider there to be "exceptional circumstances" for doing so. If leave is granted, headteachers should determine the number of days a child can be away from school. The government has not defined the 'exceptional circumstances' referred to in the 2013 regulations. It is for the headteacher to decide what they view as exceptional circumstances.

Guidance suggests:

Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advanced notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

The DfEE explains that although headteachers have the discretion to grant leave:

Leave is unlikely to be granted ... for the purposes of a family holiday.

As a Governing Body we define exceptional circumstances as:

... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.

For all absences the previous pattern of absences in term time will be taken into account (this will include sickness). If parents choose to take their child/ren out of school without permission, this will be classed as an unauthorised absence.

We will not agree leave during term time under the following circumstances:

- ❖ At the start of the academic year. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new classroom environment as quickly as possible
- ❖ Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS) for year 6 pupils
- ❖ During May for all year groups as this is our assessment period.
- ❖ When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence
- ❖ Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 90% for any individual or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave
- ❖ Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

9. People responsible for this policy and its implementation

Headteacher, admissions officer and the Governing Body.

10. Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents in the school prospectus and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly and punctually. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.