



## **Beresford Memorial CE (VA) First School** **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Pupils need to attend school regularly to fulfil their potential and to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The Government expects schools and authorities to

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled; and act early to address patterns of absence
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

### **Principles**

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

The school will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance and behaviour by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a 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 may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

The attendance policy must include procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

**Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.**

**Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:**

- **Parents 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**

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying

### **Late Attendance**

Students arriving after 9.00am should report to the Attendance office. Pupils arriving after 9.30am will receive a U code which counts against their attendance figure.

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.

## **Procedures**

**The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are: Caroline Quinn and Louise Smith.**

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

The school takes an attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion we record whether every pupil is

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school follows up any unexplained absences on the first day of absence 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 schools management information system (which is used to download data to the School census). The absence and attendance codes are national codes enabling the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulations.

Registration closes at 9.30 am. In the case of absent children, the school texts parents, if there is no response this is followed up with a telephone call.

If a child is absent through sickness or any unavoidable cause, we encourage parents to inform the school by telephone in the first instance. This absence may constitute an authorised absence. This decision is made by the school.

## Leave of Absence during Term Time

As of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 there has been a change in The Education Regulations 2006 (Pupil Registration England). Where there used to be the option for Head teachers to grant leave of absence during the term time in 'special circumstances' of up to ten days in a year, this has been removed.

Leave of absence in term time is discouraged. Parents are not automatically allowed to take their child out of school on holiday. Principals are now only allowed to authorize any leave of absence when an application has been made in advance and it is felt to be for an exceptional circumstance; the annual family holiday would not be deemed an exceptional circumstance.

### **What should parents do if they wish to request a leave of absence?**

Parents should contact the school to find out how to make a request for permission. We would strongly recommend that this is done before planning any leave of absence.

### **What happens if a child goes on holiday in term time or takes leave of absence for other reasons without permission from the school?**

The absences will be marked in the school register as unauthorized absences and this may result in a Penalty Notice of £60 (rising to £120) per parent per child being issued by the Local Authority. In some cases, parents may be prosecuted for the offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorized absence.
- There will be no limit on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorized leave of absence can be used in an academic year.
- In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorized absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in the first five days of exclusion.

Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

- Previously our approach was to only issue a Penalty Notice if the pupil's overall attendance was below 87%. This threshold has now been removed.
- Previously only one Penalty Notice per pupil was issued within an

academic year. This limit has been removed so more than one Penalty Notice could be issued for repeated absence without permission during term time.

- Previously pupils missing 10 sessions or five days taken together risked a Penalty Notice. Now a combined total of ten sessions (not necessarily grouped as 5 consecutive days) could trigger a Penalty Notice.
- Instead of monitoring and totalling holiday absences taken across each academic year, they will now be monitored across the previous three terms, regardless of academic year
- Penalty Notice for persistent absence
- Parents whose child is repeatedly absent will now only receive one warning notice period to bring about improvement in attendance in a single academic year. If attendance deteriorates again then no further formal warning notice will be issued and the Local Authority can automatically consider other statutory actions if unauthorized absences re-occur.

#### **Returning to school after illness**

Children returning to school after illness should clearly be fit to do so and free from infection. Children should be fit to participate in all school activities including outdoor games and play time. Injury, asthma, respiratory complaints or circulation difficulties are of course exceptions. If in doubt the school is happy to advise.

#### **Medicines**

If a child needs prescribed medication during the day eg antibiotics, the school requires written authority and parents need to call into the school office to complete the necessary medical forms.

The school has agreed with Staffordshire County Council to inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for up to ten days.

All schools have legal powers to use parenting contacts, parenting orders and penalty notices to address poor attendance and behaviour in school. Parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices are interventions available to promote better school attendance and behaviour.

When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 85% in any term without good reason, a referral to the EWS will be made by the school. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

**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.

**Policy Adopted: January 2016**

**Date for review: January 2018**