

Birches Primary School



Pupil Attendance Policy

Date ratified by Board of Governors: Term 1 2017

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Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Birches Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school, on time, and remaining for the prescribed time therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Regulations and Guidance from the Education Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal, Teachers and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Promote high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Maintain attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues at or above 95%.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness or leaving before the end of the school day.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer.

For example:

- if a child has been unwell and the parent informs the school to explain the absence.
- a bereavement
- a medical or dental appointment

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority.

Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. For example:

- a family holiday
- no reason provided for absence
- late after registration has closed

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence, lateness or leaving before the end of the school day.
- To follow up absences if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the Education Authority when requested.

All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Principal.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Principal where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up actions to attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at parent/teacher meetings where necessary

Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the EWO service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Ensuring that parents/carers are informed of School Closures in a timely manner.

Administration staff

The school secretary is responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the principal

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time.
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Completing the 'Leaving Early' book kept in the entrance hall when taking their child out of school.
- Ensuring that family holidays are not arranged during term time.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

The school doors open at 8.30am and close at 8.50am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. These registers are returned to the school office weekly.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Education Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept in accordance with the Disposal of Record Schedule.

Lateness

Any pupil who comes into school after 8.50am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil. Any child who arrives for school later than 9.00am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later will have the absence recorded as a medical absence.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will be contacted advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school when their child is absent. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Principal has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we will send a form requesting these details be completed by parents/carers. If this form is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the principal and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

The Education Welfare Officer visits regularly to check and monitor attendance. He/she carries out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 85%). He/she works with the school and parents/carers to improve attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

The school secretary has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the principal to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.