



# Abbey Meads Community Primary School

## Attendance Policy

### INTRODUCTION

Regular attendance at school is essential for the effective education of all pupils; there is a clear link between good attendance and good progress. Historically, our attendance rates have been very good, remaining at over 96%. It is important that a high level of attendance is maintained.

### AIMS

- ✓ To maximise the attendance of all children thus supporting high levels of attainment and achievement.
- ✓ To provide an environment which encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those at the school.
- ✓ To monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty.
- ✓ To analyse attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice.
- ✓ To work closely with, and make full use of the support from the wider community, including the Education Welfare Service, school nurse, Parent Support Advisor and multi-agency teams.

### COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Our Attendance Policy is available on the school website. Reminders about holidays in term time, absence due to illness and term dates are published regularly in newsletters. Those causing concern are communicated with more regularly, outlining our concerns, developing plans for improvement and making clear legal expectations on parents and possible consequences for failing to comply.

### REGULATIONS

Parents / carers of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act (1996) to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full time basis; children reach statutory school age the term after their fifth birthday. Children are required to attend school for 190/365 days per year. (In very exceptional circumstances, a temporary, time specific part-time timetable can be agreed to meet a pupil's individual needs.)

Term dates are published on the school website every year. The school selects an additional 5 days for training, called Teacher Development Days and one or two additional Trust Days – specifically called by The Blue Kite Academy Trust - (in most cases this is 6 school closures a year). The school notifies families of term dates and the training days during the preceding academic year. Regular reminders of term dates, TD days and the importance of regular attendance are given via regular school newsletters.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The following people have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

### ***Governors***

- To set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy.

### ***Head Teacher (or Deputy Head Teacher were delegated)***

- To monitor individual pupil, group and whole school attendance and punctuality.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of policy and practice.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to agree annual attendance targets.
- To communicate with parents/carers regarding significant concerns about their child's attendance.
- To arrange meetings with parents/carers whose children have poor attendance to discuss support and set attendance targets.
- To work in partnership with outside agencies, as appropriate, when attendance and/or punctuality is an issue.

### ***Class Teacher***

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class.
- To record the reasons for absence given to them appropriately.
- To communicate with parents regarding their child's absences.
- To raise any concerns about a child's absence with admin staff and/or Senior Leaders.
- To respond promptly to any query raised following analysis of registers by admin staff.
- To organise work to be sent home for children in their class who are expected to be absent for an extended period through sickness or enforced absence due to wider circumstances (EG pandemic)

### ***Admin staff***

- To input attendance data using the Attendance Manager System.
- To monitor and track attendance patterns for all children and prepare relevant attendance reports for the head teacher and Education Welfare Officer as appropriate.
- To contact any parent who has not informed the school as to why their child is absent on the first day of absence.
- To ensure that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child at the end of each week.
- To make a judgement, **in conjunction with the head teacher**, whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

### ***Parent Support Advisor***

- Following a referral from the school, to work with families to improve pupils' attendance rates.

### ***Education Welfare Officer / Legal Lead for Attendance***

- Following a referral from the school, to work with families to improve pupils' attendance rates.
- To support the school in securing good attendance through regular contact and monitoring individual children's attendance.
- To enforce the law regarding school attendance.

The Legal Lead for Attendance in Swindon is Michaela Cunningham.

The Designated Educational Welfare support comes from Swindon Borough Council.

### ***Medical personnel***

- Specialist staff and the school nurse may be involved in ensuring the best possible attendance by a child with a severe medical condition. A 'Care Plan' is likely to be needed and on-going communication between the family, school and appropriate medical personnel is essential.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

The school uses the ICT based Attendance system to store and monitor data in relationship to attendance.

Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Registers are completed electronically and monitored by the Admin Team. Children who arrive at school after registration has closed are recorded as 'U' and this is classified as an unauthorized absence.

Children who arrive late before registration closes are recorded as 'L'. This is not classed as an absence.

Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Failure to complete a register accurately leaves the school vulnerable to complaint from parents or carers and creates a risk if an emergency evacuation has to take place. Marking a child absent when they are present causes undue anxiety for parents when they are contacted, as part of first day absence response. Quite rightly, they would expect us to know their child is safe in school!

### **ABSENCE**

#### ***Lateness***

- Pupils should arrive at school between 8.20am when the gates open and 8.40am, when the school day begins and the register is taken. The gates are locked at 8.45am
- Pupils arriving after the register has been closed at 8.50am will be considered as late. 'L' will be recorded.
- Pupils arriving after late must report to the School Office so that their attendance can be recorded as late, 'L'.
- Pupils arriving after 9am will be officially absent for the morning session. This will be considered an unauthorised absence (U) unless a satisfactory reason is given, for example a pre- notified or emergency doctor's appointment.

### ***Illness and unexpected absence***

- Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide the reason for the absence and to give an update on each subsequent day of absence. Parents/carers should provide a written explanation on their child's return to school.
- In the case of gastric illnesses, parents are asked to keep their child away from school until they have been **clear of sickness/ diarrhoea** for a full 24 hours
- Office staff will contact parents on the first day of absence if a reason for absence has not been given.
- If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, the head teacher will be informed.

### ***Medical (including dental) appointments***

- Whenever possible, parents/carers are encouraged to make medical appointments out of school hours.
- An absence request form must be completed for a child to attend a medical appointment. Such requests will be authorised. Parents/carers may be requested to provide written confirmation of these appointments.
- When appointments must be in term time, parents are encouraged to ensure their child attends school for as much of the day as possible e.g. returning to school after the appointment. There is a file in the office which is used to sign children in and out.

### ***Holidays during term time***

- Holidays should be taken during the school holiday periods.
- Schools must comply with DfE requirements and may authorise term time holidays only if there are exceptional circumstances which indicate that it is appropriate to do so. It is for the Head Teacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. **Exceptional circumstances are VERY RARE and holidays should not be taken in school time!**
- Applications for absence during term time will be considered on an individual basis and should be applied for using the request for absence form obtained from the school office.

### ***Child Performers***

Parents of a child performer may seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. A Local Authority licence must be obtained. Head Teachers should be sympathetic to requests that are supported by a licence as long as the school is satisfied that this will not have a negative impact on a child's education.

### ***Other absences***

Other requests for absence from school will be considered on an individual basis and a decision will be made as to whether the absence can be authorised and which absence code is appropriate. A request for absence form should be completed as explained above. Other absences which may be authorised, in cases where the school is notified in advance by the parent/ carer, include:

- Days for religious observance
- External examinations e.g. dancing
- Educational events e.g. swimming in a gala
- Visiting a new school
- Significant family events such as funeral of close family member.

**It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that leave has been granted before taking a child out of school for a holiday or other absence. This is especially important where a request is made late, giving the school insufficient time to consider the request and respond in writing.**

**Failure to comply with this could lead to prosecution for unauthorised absence in school time.**

### **Persistent absenteeism**

Attendance rates are continuously monitored and analysis takes place each term. The head teacher and EWO discuss outcomes at regular intervals. Attendance between 90 and 95% is considered to be irregular attendance. We recognise that a child is classed as being a persistent absentee when their attendance falls below 90%. Where there are concerns that a child is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee we will arrange for a joint problem solving meeting to be held with the head teacher, EWO and parents/carers.

### **Children missing education**

We fulfil our duty to inform the Local Authority of any pupil who has been admitted to another school and is going to be deleted from our admission register, who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent for a period of 10 school days or more. If a Looked After Child or a child subject to a Child Protection plan goes missing, we will refer them to social services within 48 hours. We also inform the LA of any children being withdrawn from school with the intent to be electively home educated, so that the child is known to the Local Authority. We recognise that 'Child missing from education' and 'Child missing from home or care' have been added to the list of specific safeguarding issues about which schools must be vigilant. No children are deleted from our register until we have confirmation of their next location.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES**

If an absence is not authorised and the child does not attend school, the parent has committed a criminal offence. The school may instruct the Local Authority to prosecute a parent for the offence. A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority. This entails a fine of £60 per parent per child where the child resides with both parents, payable within 21 days. Failure to pay this in time will result in the fine rising to £120 per parent per child. A penalty notice is issued in circumstances where it is appropriate to prosecute but the parents are given the opportunity to pay a penalty so as to avoid prosecution and having a criminal conviction registered against them. If there are factors that mean it is not appropriate to issue a penalty notice, for examples, when previous Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued, the Local Authority can prosecute for the offence. The Local Authority has in previous years moved straight to prosecution when it considers the fine an inappropriate deterrent.

## **REPORTING TO PARENTS AND CARERS**

- All absences, both authorised and unauthorised, and lateness, will be reported to the parent/carer towards the end of the academic year with their child's report. During the year, parents may request information about their child's attendance; they will receive a printout of their child's attendance and may check that the information provided is accurate.
- In order to give parents/carers information about the impact of absence from school upon their education, attendance posters/ information provided by Swindon Borough Council will be used alongside this policy.

## **REWARDS**

- Good attendance is expected and encouraged. We award Good Attendance Awards each summer. We have changed this from 100% Attendance Awards, at the request of the children, due to the potential negative impact it has on those who miss this mark as a result of minor absence through genuine sickness.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Attendance data will be analysed termly (six times a year) to identify patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with: unusual patterns of absence; Monday and/or Friday absences; lateness; periods of extended absence; unauthorised absences. The attendance of Pupil Premium children will be compared with that of all pupils. The circumstances of all children with attendance below 90% will be considered. This data will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer as part of our on-going partnership working. If concerns are raised by analysis of attendance information, parent discussions will occur, either through telephone calls to the parents/carers by the Senior Leadership of the school and/or formal letters stating the attendance of the child and that there is an issue.

The head teacher and Education Welfare Officer will discuss the impact of the school's Attendance Policy and the strategies used to promote good attendance annually.

The Governors will set an annual attendance target and review this annually.

Children who have persistent absence from school, suffer, not only from the days that they are away, but also struggle when they return:

- 'Chunks' of teaching and learning has been missed, meaning the child is constantly trying to play 'catch up' with their peers which can have an effect on their self-esteem and their personal desire to be at school.
- Friendship groups can be more difficult to sustain as children will ultimately form stronger bonds with those they see on a regular basis and there is the danger that children with persistent absence end up on the periphery of social groups, again reducing their desire to come to school.

As a school and for the benefit of the child we will always be:

- Extremely positive and 'up beat' about a child's return.

- Seek ways to support the child in catching up with work or include appropriate interventions to enable each child to catch up.
- Use positive role models in the class and group the children accordingly so that friendships can be fostered.
- Seek out responsible jobs that the child with persistent absence might be able to do. Giving ownership and a personal role within the school can lead to greater self-esteem and a willingness to be in, carrying out their specific job and being rewarded for doing so.

- The Head teacher and EWO will discuss the impact of the School's Attendance Policy and the strategies used to promote good attendance annually and the Head teacher will recommend an attendance target to the Governors.
- Attendance figures will be reported to Governors 6 times a year at their termly meetings. The Governors will review attendance annually at their first meeting of the academic year.

**Policy updated: February 2022**

## **Appendix 1**

Parents and carers are reminded that an 'Absence Request Form' should be completed for a planned absence and submitted to the school office for the Head teacher's attention in advance.

Unauthorised absences may be referred to the Local authority and Penalty Notices issued, followed by prosecution should the fine be unpaid. As a matter of course, recurring absences are required to be referred.

The procedure is the same for authorised absences, for medical or extra-curricular activities, such as music exams or auditions. These should be supported by copies of appointment letters or medical notes so that the absence can be authorised.

Frequently asked questions...

### **• So is 90% attendance good?**

Any less than 95% and your child cannot do their best.

### **• So what is poor attendance?**

Education Welfare Officers (EWO) work closely with school attendance and become very concerned at 85% and below, legal action may be taken in some cases.

### **• What do these figures mean?**

95% attendance at the end of a school year means your child has been absent on 10 days. 90% attendance at the end of a school year means your child has been absent on 19 days. 85% attendance at the end of a school year means your child has been absent on 29 days.

### **• What does 'persistent absence' mean?**

In simple terms any child that continues to have low attendance through the year will have persistent absence. The figure for persistent absence is less than 85% attendance.

### **• What does 'genuine illness' mean?**

High temperatures, diarrhoea and sickness, childhood ailments e.g. measles, tonsillitis are genuine illness. A child should not be kept home with minor coughs, tummy aches and headaches etc.

• **Can I take long weekends and odd days as holidays?**

No. Too many Mondays and Fridays missed would not be good for achievement. You cannot request a holiday for a day out e.g. birthday treat.

• **What is an exceptional circumstance?**

‘Exceptional’ circumstances are much more likely to be unique and/or one-off situations e.g. where there has been a trauma or bereavement in the family. It is for the Head teacher to decide if the circumstance is ‘exceptional’.

• **What does a ‘penalty notice’ mean?**

The Local Authority will fine each parent £60 for each child. This means a family with two parents and two children could face a fine of £240 for unauthorised absence.

• **Can a fine be paid in instalments?**

No – a fine must be paid in full or it will double. Failure to pay at all will lead to prosecution.

*Remember:* If you want your child to do his/her best they must be in school at least 95% of the time. (That means no more than 10 days absence in a school year).

**Just a little bit late doesn’t seem that much, but ...**

He/She is only missing just...	That equals...	Which is...	and over 13 years of schooling that’s...
10 minutes per day	50 minutes per week	Nearly 1½ weeks per year	Nearly half a year
20 minutes per day	1 Hour 40 minutes per week	Only 2½ weeks per year	Nearly 1 year
Half an hour per day	Half a day per week	4 weeks per year	Nearly 1.5 years
1 hour per day	1 day per week	8 weeks per year	Over 2.5 years