



# **Biddick Primary School**

## **Attendance Policy**

**Signed: Wendy Fowler**

**Viv Low**

**Headteacher**

**Chair of Governors**

### **Statement of Intent**

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

At Biddick Primary School, we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping students achieve the best that they can be; being in school on time every day gives your child the best possible chance of learning and making progress. Pupils should be at school on time, dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy and ready to learn every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

### **Statutory Framework**

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act a student is required to attend regularly at school should a student fail to attend regularly legal action may be taken. A \*parent(s)\* may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice or could be fined up to £2,500 face three months in prison and receive a parenting order. An Education Supervision Order could be sought.

- The school is required to complete a register twice during the school day. This is once at the start of the school day - 9 a.m. and again for the afternoon session at 12.45 p.m.(KS1) and 1.15 p.m. (KS2)
- The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not itself authorise an absence. It is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

Education Law defines a \*parent\* as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child on a daily basis.

It is important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including students, parents, governors and staff.

### **School will:**

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence in order to act early to address patterns of absence.
- keep parents fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record and follow up unexplained absences by text phone calls and letters as necessary
- contact parents on the first day when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason
- take timely action on any problem notified to us and involve appropriate outside agencies in order to support students and their families. This may include a 'home visit' or a request to the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.

### **Pupils will:**

- aim to achieve 100% attendance each academic year
- attend school daily.
- arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.
- go to registration and lessons on time.
- register at the school office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

### **Parents will:**

- support the school and their child in aiming for 100% attendance each academic year
- ensure their child attends school daily and on time (i.e. by 9 a.m each morning)
- ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, fully equipped, with a positive attitude to learn
- notify the school before 9.30 a.m. of any absence.
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

- ensure the school has updated contact numbers.
- actively work with the school staff and relevant multi-agency staff, to solve any attendance issues as and when they occur.

## **REGULAR, EFFICIENT AND ACCURATE RECORDING OF ATTENDANCE**

1. Reasons for the absence given by the parent are recorded on the register using the appropriate codes.

### **Unauthorised absence**

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

### **Authorised absence**

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

### **Approved Educational Activity**

**Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.**

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

2. First response to no reason for absence, office staff will make a phone call to determine a reason for the absence. If there is no response, further phone calls will be made during the course of the school day.
3. If there is no notification by the parent, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

## **LATE ATTENDANCE**

### **Registers are closed at 9.10 a.m.**

Pupils arriving at school after main doors have closed, enter through the main entrance and parents must record the time name and reason for lateness. An L code is used in the register to denote a pupil late after registers close at 9.10 a.m.

The school will monitor late arrivals. The attendance team will also support follow up meetings with parents as required. SLT will occasionally carry out late gates to reinforce messages about the impact of pupils missing the beginning of school.

If a child is late but registers have not closed their details are recorded but they will not get a late mark. School still monitors lateness before registers close to look for patterns of lateness that might be a concern.

## **MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE.**

### **Targets**

At Least 97% attendance is the target set by the Department for Education, to encourage all children to reach their full potential. Biddick Primary School uses 'attendance zones' to offer support, at an early stage, to those experiencing difficulties.

**Red** - below 91%   **Amber** - 92% - 96%   **Green** 97% - 100%

Attendance is tracked on a weekly basis to monitor children within the above zones.

## **Rewards**

Attendance monitoring information is used to recognise and celebrate children who have 97-100% attendance. Results of good attendance for a child will be shared with parents via posters, newsletters and on the school website. Certificates may be used to celebrate particularly good or improved attendance.

There is a class H.E.R.O Award, which is celebrated in assembly. This is given out over the course of the year for a variety of reasons related to Punctuality or Attendance e.g. most improved class attendance, best attendance, best punctuality, greatest number of green attendances.

There is a termly raffle with prizes. Children who achieve a week's 100% attendance are entered into a prize draw. This allows all children to participate in the raffle. Winners are drawn from each class at the end of each term.

Communication with an individual or groups of pupils about attendance will only ever be positive and encouraging messages. No pupil will be held accountable for their own non-attendance as it is a parental issue.

## **Medical**

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance and submit a copy of the appointment card. The absence will be marked unauthorised if the parent fails to submit the appointment card.

The school will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. If a parent rings the school to confirm the pupil is unwell, the school may request supporting evidence: medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence.

The school may choose not to authorise absence without this supporting evidence as it is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised.

If your child is experiencing difficulties you should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving the difficulties. This is nearly always successful. If the difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service, who will assess the case to determine the appropriateness of use of statutory enforcement procedures i.e. Fixed Penalty Notices, Magistrates Court or seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment a parenting order can also be imposed.

## **FORMAL PROCEDURES**

Ref: City of Sunderland – 'Procedures for Non-Attendance at School'

Formal proceedings are for children who are of statutory school age.

### **Stage 1**

An attendance target of 97% for all pupils has been set by the Department for Education and Sunderland LA. Each week the SBM, alongside our Parent Support Advisor, reviews all pupils who have achieved less than this set target. Our Parent Support Advisor monitors amber and red attendances.

The Traffic Light System will be followed using a letter to alert parents if their child is moving into the Amber zone.

If absence continues to be less than the set target, a four week monitoring period will be identified with parents, during this time it is expected that attendance will improve.

If attendance continues to be a concern then the next stage will be:

**Stage 2:** a meeting held with parents to set up an attendance contract.

Or Stage 3 procedures will be initiated working closely with the LA Attendance Team

**Stage 3:** Procedures are continued by LA Attendance Team. This will apply to any parent whose child has failed a monitoring period or who has 10 days absence within a 6 week period.

**Stage 4:** Formal appearance before LA School Attendance Panel. A formal parenting order or attendance order will be made at this stage by the Local Authority and if no improvement after this movement to Stage 5.

**Stage 5:** Legal proceedings are prepared.

## **Nursery Children**

Nursery children are not statutory school age therefore non-attendance cannot be prosecuted by law. However, to ensure that all children who attend Biddick Primary School understand and develop good habits of attendance, the procedures outlined above will apply to all Nursery pupils. Although formal procedures do not apply to Nursery children, if a child's attendance falls below 60% their school place may be offered to another child on the waiting list. This decision requires the involvement and consent of the Governing Body and there is a right of appeal.

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE.**

By law, parents and carers of children registered at school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Children should attend school every day so that they make the most of the education available to them. We understand that there may be occasions when a child is unwell and is not able to come in to school, but this should be kept to a minimum.

Parents and carers must avoid taking their children out of school during term time.

## **The Law**

From September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 amendments to the 2006 Education Act make clear that **Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** The DfE has removed references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold to 10 school days. There is no entitlement for parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

## **How to apply for special leave during term time**

Please ask one of the office staff for a **Special Leave Form**. The form should be completed at least 2 weeks in advance of the date of the proposed leave, giving details of the circumstances of the leave request. You should expect to hear from us within 5 working days. Term time holidays will NOT BE AUTHORISED unless there are

exceptional circumstances which might justify it. Each case will be considered on its individual merits and it is likely that you will be asked to attend a meeting in school.

### **What are exceptional circumstances?**

It is the decision of the Head teacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term time leave will be considered on an individual basis.

Exceptional circumstances are **NOT**:

- Availability of cheap flights and/or holidays
- Arrangements made by a family member or friends

### **What if we decide to go anyway?**

If the Head teacher has not authorised special leave, and your child is out of school for between half a day and 10 days then this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. The Local Authority will monitor all school absences during term time.

If absence from school makes your child's attendance drop below 97% this will trigger an amber concern letter, below 91% a red concern letter and a formal monitoring period will begin.

If attendance remains low or falls below 90% which is called persistent absence then you are at risk of facing possible prosecution and fines.

**It is always best to be honest and apply for any planned absence from school, whether Special Leave is granted or not. The chances of possible prosecution increase if it is found that the parent/carer has not been truthful about their child's reason for absence.**

### **If we authorise your special leave:**

If we do authorise a special leave of absence under exceptional circumstances, you must understand the educational impact upon your child. We will also explain what work your child will miss at school, and agree with you how this may be addressed, either during the holiday or upon your return.

If we do authorise your leave you will receive a signed Special Leave Form which confirms the dates when your child will be absent and the agreed date for return. It can only be signed by the Head teacher or Deputy Head teacher. A copy will be kept on record.

### **REPORTING.**

The Head teacher will report on attendance/ absence termly in the Head teacher's Report to the Governing Body.

Parents will receive regular updates on their child's attendance throughout the year.

### **CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION**

The school's responsibilities to prevent pupils becoming 'lost' in the education system are taken very seriously. Prevention is the school's first priority. To this end we have adopted the best practice recommended by the Local Authority Education Team and informed by Ofsted's publication (Aug 2010).

The school have adopted and use the systems and practice recommended in the document 'Guidance to identifying children missing from education' Sunderland City Council 2011. School operates a rigorous system of transfer arrangements prior to a child moving school with particular care when pupils move between Local Authorities to ensure seamless transition and the handing on of school records; school to school.

Our Parent Support Advisor, Jill Robson, has links with multi-agency teams across LAs to ensure children are tracked and verified as being in education when they move from our school. File transfer protocols are used to ensure all sensitive documentation is transferred and recorded. The current Officer in charge of CME is Sandra Thompson 0191 5615615 [cme@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:cme@sunderland.gov.uk) if a referral needs to be made.

When children apply and are accepted into school, exhaustive attempts are made to contact the child's previous school to ensure proper transition.

Children, in particularly vulnerable groups such as CLA, pupils with CAF and TAF referrals, some Ethnic minority and Families in Need are given special attention due to the increased potential for those families to move rapidly between schools and LAs.