

Attendance Policy (updated 01/05/09)

Rationale and aims

The aim of this policy is to promote the highest possible standards of attendance at Bishop Barrington. It is based on the following key rationale:

- All young people have a right to an education
- Good attendance is fundamental to supporting learning and raising achievement
- The policy is based on the principles outlined in relevant government and local authority legislation and guidance.

Principles

Good attendance will be promoted by:

- A welcoming and caring ethos, characterised by positive relationships and mutual respect
- Inspiring and motivating teaching
- An appropriate and relevant curriculum which includes all pupils
- An understanding of legal requirements, school expectations and roles and responsibilities
- An emphasis on working in partnership with pupils, their families, the Education Welfare Service and other support agencies
- An acceptance by all members of the school community that there is a shared responsibility for promoting good attendance
- Frequent positive reinforcement of the importance of good attendance
- Effective registration and response to absence procedures
- Effective procedures for the early identification, communication and action on attendance problems

Legal Requirements

- The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their children receive a suitable full time education. Parents/carers found guilty of school attendance offences could be subject to a fixed penalty fine or court action
- Schools are responsible for maintaining two registers: an admission register and an attendance register
- Schools are required to ensure an accurate attendance register is taken twice a day; once at the beginning of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.
- For each pupil, the register must be marked either present, absent or with the agreed code for medical, holidays, educated off site etc.
- If a pupil is absent, the register must indicate whether or not this absence has been authorised by the school
- Attendance registers are legal documents and must be kept for three years following the last entry
- Schools are required to inform the LEA if a pupil fails to attend regularly or has been absent for a continuous period of 10 days and the absence is unauthorised
- The LEA is responsible for ensuring parents meet their responsibilities for school attendance. In County Durham this is delegated to the Education Welfare Service (EWS)
- Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the police have the power to remove truants found in public places and return them to school
- Schools are required to submit attendance figures to the DfES on a termly basis. This includes authorised and unauthorised figures

- Schools may also be required to provide details of individual pupil's attendance as evidence in court cases and social services reports.

Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities

- Pupils are expected to attend school every day, unless absence is unavoidable. This is usually due to illness or an extreme domestic emergency
- Absences can only be authorised by a teacher or authorised representative of the school. A satisfactory explanation from the parent/carer will **always** be required
- Absences without permission from school are unauthorised. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences
- Any attendance below 92% is regarded as unsatisfactory. Attendance below 80% is regarded as a serious cause for concern and will result in letter/follow up by the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
- Where absence is known in advance, parents are asked to advise us by telephone or in writing. For all other absences, parents/carers are asked to contact the school by telephone, before 9am, on the first day of absence. If this has not been possible, parents/carers are asked to provide pupils with a letter or a note in their planner on the first day they return to school after their absence
- Families can request the school to authorise absences for holiday leave for up to 10 days in any academic year. The decision remains with the school. Families are therefore advised to contact the school **before making any bookings**. Decisions are made on an individual basis and take into account the impact on the child's education and the overall attendance pattern of the pupil. Holidays which will involve pupils missing public examinations will **not** be authorised. The school actively discourages holidays being taken in term time. Letters are sent to parents at the beginning of term explaining the importance of attendance and the consequences to their child's education of missed days.
- Details of the school's expectations concerning attendance are included in pupils' planners and the school prospectus. Expectations and procedures are also explained at parents' consultation evenings both before and after pupils start at the school.
- Pupils are reminded of expectations and their **own** responsibility for their attendance at regular intervals by form tutors, and senior members of staff in weekly assemblies
- The role of the EWO is given a high profile within the school through assemblies, participation in meetings and a daily presence in school
- Within school, responsibility for promoting good attendance is shared by all staff. Form Tutors and the Assistant Headteacher Pupil Engagement have specific Responsibilities

Registration and Response to absence Procedures

- Registers are taken every lesson. Form period from 8.45am to 9am and lesson 4 are the official registers for the day. Training on 'E' Registration and detailed guidelines on procedure is given to all staff. It is expected that registration is an orderly procedure where pupils sit quietly to avoid mistakes being made while the register is being taken.
- The school attempts to contact by Truancy call or telephone call the family of any pupil for whom no explanation of absence has been received on the first day. If this is not possible a letter is sent by first class post, asking parents to contact school and explain the absence. If there is no reply a reminder letter will be sent if there is still no satisfactory response the case is referred to the EWO

- Absences are reviewed regularly by form tutors, the Attendance Officer, the EWO and the Assistant Headteacher Pupil Engagement.
- Weekly meetings between the Assistant Headteacher Pupil Engagement, EWO and the Attendance Officer.
focus on unexplained absences and attendance below 90%. Follow up action may include: a letter of concern; a visit by the EWO; a meeting at school or referral to other agencies
- The Assistant Headteacher Pupil Engagement collects and analyses data. This is shared with the EWO and form tutors
- A register is taken every lesson by subject teachers to deter internal truancy. This is also done electronically to aid the speedy identification of truants. Internal truancy is monitored by report card and parents are informed. Persistent offenders are referred to the EWO

Positive reinforcement and Consequences

The importance of good attendance and punctuality is emphasised in a number of ways:

- The school's reward system includes termly prize draws and certificates for those with 100% attendance.
- Good attendance 92% or above is required for participation in termly reward trips
- Attendance by form group is displayed on the attendance display board
- Form tutors have a weekly print out of their form's attendance to discuss with students
- All form rooms have a display of the effects of poor attendance on their learning
- The importance of good attendance is explicitly addressed in PSHEE lessons
- Details of attendance and punctuality are included in reports to parents/carers
- Detentions are held for pupils who are regularly late to am or pm registration without a reasonable explanation. Persistent lateness leads to parental contact and EWO involvement, where appropriate.

Support

- The school recognizes that some families and pupils find regular attendance at school difficult. Parents/carers are encouraged to contact the school as soon as possible if they have concerns about their child's welfare. Within school, a range of support strategies are utilised to remove barriers and improve attendance in individual cases. These include: individual timetables; in-school support from staff; the school counselor; the EWO; the anti-bullying service (including peer mentors) and the connexions adviser. The Learning Support Unit (Achievement Centre) further enhances the school's capacity to offer individual and group programmes to pupils with attendance problems. Learning Mentors work closely with poor attenders on various issues e.g. programmes to promote self-esteem, thereby enabling them to feel more confident about tackling problems and attending school more regularly.
- The school places great emphasis on its welcoming ethos and on the importance of pupils feeling safe and secure.
- The school liaises with a wide range of external agencies to provide "joined up" support for pupils. This is considered to be of particular importance as attendance problems are often indicators of personal or domestic problems
- We recognise that pupils are more likely to attend school if they find the curriculum accessible and relevant. The climate team works closely with the Head

of Curriculum and Heads of Department to ensure any problems are dealt with quickly and efficiently. Staff are trained to differentiate lessons so that they are accessible to all. The school also has links with the local college and a variety of Vocational courses are available for pupils in KS4.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The school is committed to regular and systematic monitoring and review of its attendance policy
- The collection and analysis of attendance data is seen as a key part in this. Regular review of procedures and feed back from form tutors is an essential part of this process
- The school participates in the LEA's KS3 Behaviour and attendance strategy, using time with the LEA representatives to ensure the link between attendance and achievement is made explicit to both staff and pupils. Findings from the strategy have been used to help raise awareness and improve practice
- The use of ICT to enhance attendance, particularly 'E' Registration and Truancy Call, is an effective means of gathering information about patterns of attendance for monitoring purposes.

Policy approved by Governors on 21st June 2010 (SRC Committee)

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