

## **ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY**

### **WHY WE HAVE AN ATTENDANCE POLICY**

We want to ensure that all pupils receive a full-time education to maximise opportunities for everybody to realise their potential. Experience and research both locally and nationally demonstrates a clear link between good attainment and good attendance. The school believes that setting a clear policy for attendance and punctuality is an excellent preparation for later school years and future employment.

The school strives to be welcoming and caring, so that everybody in the school community feels wanted and secure.

All school staff work with pupils and their families to ensure everybody attends school punctually on every day of each term.

The school intends to build on a system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who do not.

To meet these objectives Brookfield School will continue to foster good communication with pupils, parents, carers and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

### **THE TARGET**

Brookfield Primary school intends to maintain its high levels of attendance each year. Our current target for Autumn is 96%.

### **OUR STATUTORY DUTIES**

This policy is written in relation to the following acts of Parliament and guidance relating to attendance:

- Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- We will also take account of all new legislation and initiatives.

### **THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Leave should not be taken during term time except in exceptional circumstances, and only then when authority is requested from the Headteacher. There is no automatic right to a request being agreed.

Where unauthorised absence is taken the school may take what they consider to be the appropriate action and this may result in a referral to the Education Welfare Service. This could result in a Penalty Notice/s being issued to parents if a child is taken out of school during term time without written permission from the Headteacher. It is the parent's responsibility to secure this permission.

The tariffs for the Notices are £60, to be paid within 21 days. If it is not paid within 21 days, the payment increases to £120 for a further 7 days. If still not paid at this time the matter may then be sent for prosecution, not for an unpaid fine but for the original offence. **All Notices are issued per parent per child as of Local Authority guidelines.** We will adopt a focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

1. Parents and carers are asked to sign up to this policy in the signing of the home school agreement. This makes clear to them that unauthorised absences do not only damage their own child's education, but also others. This is because teachers need to help those children who have been absent catch up with work they have missed, which reduces the time available to give to the remaining children in the class. In addition the change in dynamic of a classroom when students are not in school can also have a profound effect on some children, particularly younger pupils. This is one of the crucial reasons for a firm attendance policy, because when parents withdraw their children from school, it is not only their children who are affected.
2. This policy also seeks to encourage punctuality. Children can arrive at school from 8.50am and should be ready to assemble by 8.55am. Children arriving after 8.55 am are recorded as being late, and where children repeatedly arrive late the school may take a variety of actions to rectify this. If a pupil arrives at school after the close of registers post 9.05 am they will be recorded as having an unauthorised late. As of DfE guidelines this is marked in the register as the student being absent for that particular session.
3. The school day ends at 3.30 pm (unless arrangements have been made for extended services). Where parents continually fail to make arrangements to pick up their children at the end of the school day the school may have to consider referring the matter to Social Services and/or Camden's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). It is a parents responsibility to ensure that s/he collect their children from school on time every day.

### **Communicating with parents and carers**

1. The school gives high priority to advising all parents, carers and pupils of the importance of regular and punctual school attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems, not least because these are extremely important when there is a problem about attendance.

Measures we take include:

- Holding induction sessions for all new parents and pupils
- Including attendance and punctuality performance in the weekly school newsletter, as well as any new school policies or government legislation.
- Producing statistics of whole school attendance performance to be displayed in the weekly newsletter and the annual school profile. Termly attendance performance reports are also sent to all parents and governors
- All staff are made aware of the values and standards expected for school attendance and taught how to encourage school attendance

- A reward system for pupils is in place to reinforce good attendance and make those who are punctual proud of their punctuality
- Term dates are published in advance and are communicated in the weekly newsletter and in a separate letter to every parent. Any changes in the term date schedule are communicated more than one month in advance and communicated in a letter to the parent of every child.

### **Telling the children about the importance of attendance and punctuality**

Children receive guidance from teachers on an individual, class and school level about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. If a child has concerns about their attendance or punctuality they are encouraged to speak to their class teacher.

Children are encouraged to walk and cycle to school and to get to school on time before the bell goes.

Children are encouraged to go to bed at an appropriate time so that they are not tired the next day. They are encouraged to prepare for the school day on the night before as much as possible so they are not rushed in the mornings.

There are incentive schemes in place to promote good attendance and punctuality amongst the children.

The school council is consulted with on an ongoing basis to help promote and develop initiatives to improve school attendance and punctuality.

Children who are regularly collected late at the end of the school day may be referred to the school education welfare officer and in some instances social services.

### **What parents can do to help**

The school works with parents and carers to ensure excellent attendance and punctuality and recognises that parents have a crucial role. If a pupil does miss school, parents/carers should inform the school of their child's absence immediately and provide an explanation as soon as possible. The nature of the explanation determines whether the school will authorise the absence or not.

Holidays during term-time and long weekends are not acceptable reasons for absence. A particular problem for Brookfield Primary School is extended holidays and families taking additional days around the time of school holidays. We know that this can present difficulties with more expensive air fares– but in choosing to send a child to Brookfield Primary School parents must accept the school's policy in relation to attendance during term time. As mentioned above, one of the key reasons for this is not just the education of the child taking the holiday, but the effect the absence has on other children in the class. This can often be compounded by parents taking children on holiday in term time who then ask the teacher for extra homework, taking up more of their time and therefore cutting the time available for the rest of the class. This is not an acceptable request and we believe that children need to be in school every day during term time.

There are only a few reasons for which authorisation for absence may be granted. The death or funeral of a close relative is one. In these circumstances, we may ask

for proof of the bereavement and/or evidence as to when any travel documents were purchased.

Emergency medical and dental appointments can be a reason, although all routine check-ups should be scheduled outside of school hours.

Other exceptional circumstances may be authorised at the Head teacher's discretion.

We will also consider whether the leave is important for the well-being and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness or other traumatic events. Leave is **not** authorised because of availability of flights, accommodation or a family member's other work commitments.

We may also consider leave on ethnic or religious requirements, for example, (usually) one day's leave for Religious Observance may be granted for all multi faith religions.

If leave has been granted and a child returns back late then we will expect to see written proof of the date they had originally planned to return to the UK before the start of school and the revised date. This would also apply if a child is delayed whilst abroad and there is a claim that the delay was unavoidable. If this evidence cannot be supplied then a penalty notice may be issued. The onus is then on the parent to prove otherwise.

Parents are expected to adhere to the procedure for authorised school leave. All requests for school leave should be made in writing to the Headteacher and prior to the leave being arranged, or any travel plans made. An exceptional leave request form is available to request leave and can be obtained from the school office. The completed form should be addressed to the Head.

If the school is not notified of any absence then the school will initiate contact with the parent on first day of absence. The school will make contact by written correspondence if phone or text contact is not possible.

If parents have any comments, concerns or complaints regarding the school attendance policy these can be addressed in writing to the Headteacher or an appointment can be arranged for discussion with the Headteacher. If any parents wish to work with the school in partnership to promote and implement good school attendance practice this is encouraged and applauded. If a parent believes the school can support or assist them in their child's school attendance we would be happy to accommodate this.

### **The Headteacher's Role**

The Headteacher will consider every request for leave on its individual merits. The parents will need to give the proposed dates of absence and return, as well as cogent reasons for the absence. If leave is granted and the child fails to return on the agreed dates it is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If an extended absence is taken without authorisation, or parents are not contactable by the school, then a child may then lose their place on the school roll. They may then have to apply to Camden Admission's Service for a new school place. Due to school waiting lists this **may not be at the current school.**

The school attendance lead responds to teachers' referrals and concerns and checks the registers for problems with attendance, taking appropriate action when necessary. This information is shared consistently with the head and class teachers so that strategies can be employed to improve attendance within each class year.

The Headteacher oversees the collection and reporting of attendance data and the publication of statistics and reports on attendance to parents, pupils, governors and the Children, Schools and Families Directorate (CCSF)

### **The role of teachers**

All class teachers have a responsibility in keeping an attendance register. This is a legal document and must be completed accurately. It is a legal requirement that the attendance register must be marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Absences are coded according to the information received from the parent of the child.

The class teacher monitors the register daily and is encouraged to be attentive and discerning to any emerging patterns of absence and lateness or any alarming changes in this area.

Class teachers encourage patterns of punctuality and good attendance by praising those children who came to school each day and arrive on time.

The class teacher reports any concerns about a child's attendance or punctuality to the School Attendance lead and the Headteacher.

### **The role of the administrative staff**

The administrative staff record late arrivals each day and take telephone calls from parents or carers concerning pupil absence.

Each week the senior administrative officer will print weekly registers for each class and enter the attendance data on the database.

Individual pupil attendance reports are compiled on the request of the Headteacher or the education welfare officer (EWO). The administrative staff will also prepare termly and annual returns to the local authority.

### **The role of the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)**

The EWO is responsible for monitoring, supporting and assisting good attendance in all Camden schools. The EWO monitors school attendance registers and holds consultation meetings with the Headteacher and takes referrals from the school.

The EWO may meet a parent/carer and child in school, write to parents/carers, arrange a home visit and refer to other professional agencies. The results of these interventions are reported to the school, and in many cases the interventions are carried out alongside school staff.

Refusal to engage with these interventions by the education welfare officer and/or no subsequent improvement in attendance and punctuality, could lead to the issuance of a Penalty Notice/s or magistrate court proceedings.

This policy brings your attention to the right of the school to refer a child to the Education Welfare Service for persistent unauthorised leave; The EWS can issue a Penalty Notice (s) which is charged at £60, if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid within 28 days. If payment is not paid within 28 days the Education Welfare Service may seek proceedings against the parent in the Magistrates Court. If taken to court and convicted this can attract a fine of up to £2500 and /or up to three months in prison or a criminal record.

### **In what circumstances would the school bring in the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)?**

Before contacting the EWO the school will make every attempt to make contact with the parent or carer by telephone and in writing. In the first instance we would invite them to discuss the problem. If this is unsuccessful the school gives warning of referral to a EWO. A referral may be made to the EWO under the following circumstances:

- 10 days of continuous unauthorised absence
- More than 10 days of authorised leave
- A term time holiday taken without permission
- A pupil who has been more than 15 minutes late (after the close of registers) on multiple occasions
- 90% or less attendance

A Penalty Notice is issued per parent per child and sent as of the school contact details. If a parent or family moves out of the address that the school holds they will need to produce proof of their new address dated within the last 12 months or they may receive a Penalty Notice. Evidence that the authority accepts of a new address is a Council Tax bill, Tenancy agreement or a Housing Benefit form.

Remember it is essential, and the responsibility of the parent/s, to inform the school of any new contact details or change of address.

### **What happens after a long absence?**

The school is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of pupils returning after significant periods of absence and will support the smooth reintegration of pupils both academically and socially. In such circumstances the school works with parents, carers and pupil towards an agreed reintegration plan which may include opportunities for counselling and feedback, peer support and mentoring, along with an agreed review period.

### **Our School Starting Timetable**

School starts at 8.55 am. Children can arrive at school from 8.50 am and are expected to go straight to their classrooms.

Children who arrive after (start time) are marked late in the register. After the close of register at 9.05 children will be marked with a U code. This is the equivalent of being marked as absent. If a pupil accumulates a large number of U codes a parent/s can receive a Penalty Notice.

School ends at 3.30 pm. Parent and carers should meet children at 3.30 pm unless extended hours arrangements are in place.

Each parent/ carer must complete a form with contact telephone number details and address of anybody who is designated to pick up your child from school. Should parents wish to change this list of names the school will need written consent from the parent in advance.

Children in Year 5 and 6 are permitted to arrive and leave school unsupervised on the condition that the school has a permission letter from the parent.

A child cannot be picked up or brought to school by anyone under the age of 14. Children over the age of 14 who are themselves attending school which finishes at 3.30pm should not be in charge of picking up children from Brookfield Primary School. If this happens we will write to the parent/s ,inform the Education Welfare Service and may refer the matter to Social Services.

### **Term dates**

School term dates are published in advance and can be found on the school website.

They are also available from the school office and will be regularly highlighted in the school newsletter.

Staff training days (inset days) are included in the term dates schedule. Parents or carers will receive written notice of any changes in term dates. Those changes would also be published in the calendar on the weekly school newsletter.

**Date:** May 2020

**Agreed by Governing body:** May 2020

**To be reviewed:** May 2021

## **ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY SUMMARY FOR PARENTS**

### **1. Punctuality:**

Children need to be ready to assemble at 8.55 am and must be collected at 3.30pm. If those collecting children are not the primary parents or carers the school must be informed in writing. A pupil cannot be dropped or collected by anyone under the age of 14. The registers close at 9.05 am and any absence after this time is treated as unauthorised late as U code .

### **2. Attendance:**

Full attendance is expected during term time, except in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances do not include holidays, long weekends, leaving for holidays one day before the end of term or visits to family or friends. Parents must understand this when they place their child in the school.

Exceptional leave absences should be requested in writing in advance from the Headteacher. Acceptable reasons generally include close family bereavements and funerals and emergency medical and dental appointments (although routine check ups should be scheduled outside school hours). The Headteacher may also consider ethnic or religious requirements in certain circumstances.

### **3. Unauthorised absences:**

Unauthorised absences are treated seriously by the school and the local authority. Initially we try to resolve any such absences by contacting parents directly, but if there are persistent problems of either punctuality or attendance the local authority is informed. Although it is very much a last resort, ultimately, Penalty Notices may be issued to parents.

When a child's level of unauthorised absence reaches (90%) evidence of any further absence may be requested by the school.

Pupils can also lose their place at the school if extended leave is taken without permission.

Each pupil's punctuality and attendance record will also be passed on to any school they propose to attend after they leave Brookfield Primary School.