

BRIGSHAW MAT ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

Our Cluster Attendance Policy is based upon a number of principles:

- Good attendance is intrinsic to pupil achievement
- We believe that pupils will fulfil their potential if they attend school regularly and punctually
- Good attendance contributes to pupils feeling included in their school community

This policy contributes to towards the aim to meet the outcomes of the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan, where children and young people:

- Are safe from harm
- Do well in learning and have skills for life
- Choose healthy lifestyles
- Have fun growing up
- Are active citizens who feel they have a voice and influence

1) Expectations

In order for the Cluster's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times.

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school every day;
- attend school punctually;
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day;
- discuss promptly with their class teacher or another adult in school, any problems that deter them from attending school eg bullying

Parents/carers have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. Parents should also make sure that the children arrive on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a fit state to benefit from the education offered to them. Parents may be prosecuted if a child or young person does not attend school regularly and punctually.

If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance at school is concerned.

We expect that all parents/carers/persons with day to day responsibility for the children and young people will:

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that the child or young person in their care arrive at school punctually, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn;
- contact the school on the first day of the child or young person's absence prior to registration;
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child or young person away from school.;
- ensure holidays are not booked in term time. We will not grant permission for holidays in term time.

We expect our schools will:

- ensure that attendance is a high priority within the school community; eg Cluster letter to parents sent annually. Appendix One
- ensure that the registration procedures are carried out accurately;
- ensure attendance and absences (authorised and unauthorised) are monitored;
- use a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism;

- investigate any problems that may lead to non-attendance;
- keep parents informed of attendance issues;
- report each child/young person's attendance with the annual report;

We expect the Cluster will:

- update this policy
- provide an attendance improvement officer[AIO] for support and advice
- provide a school attendance panel
- provide training for staff with responsibility for attendance eg briefings

We expect the Local Authority will:

- support the Cluster with legal advice and guidance;
- Leeds City Council is responsible for issuing penalty notices on behalf of schools in the city.

2.) Attendance is defined as: participation in the programme of educational activities arranged by the school. In addition to actual attendance within the school premises it covers;

- ❖ Work experience
- ❖ Educational visits
- ❖ Day and residential visits to outdoor centres
- ❖ Sports, musical or theatrical productions
- ❖ Activities in conjunction with psychological services
- ❖ Hospital tuition
- ❖ Alternative curriculum programmes

Authorised absence is defined as:

- ❖ Sickness
- ❖ Medical and dental treatment. These are to be arranged out of school hours wherever possible. Proof of appointment will be needed.
- ❖ Bereavement
- ❖ Domestic circumstances relating to exceptional hardship at home
- ❖ Religious observance
- ❖ Meetings prior to and in court
- ❖ Attendance at or in connection with meetings by Children's Social Work Service

3. Promoting Good Attendance

The Brigshaw Cluster encourages regular attendance in the following ways;

- by providing inclusive and welcoming learning environments;
- by responding promptly to a child/ young person's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils;
- by celebrating good and improved attendance.

4. Unauthorised absences in term time

Unauthorised absence is defined as:

- ❖ Family holidays taken in term time
- ❖ Leave for sickness which cannot be evidenced
- ❖ Truancy defined as unauthorised absence from school for any period as a result of premeditated or spontaneous action on the part of the pupil parent or both
- ❖ Unexplained absence

From September 2017 we will adopt the Fast Track Process for fining non-attendance as set out by The Authority.

- ❖ Schools will identify pupils who have 10 absences [5 days] within a 12 week period.
- ❖ Schools will send Fast Track Letter 1 to parents.
- ❖ Schools will monitor for 20 days.

- ❖ If no improvement schools will invite parents to a meeting [SAP] using Letter 2.
- ❖ At the meeting [SAP] schools will issue a penalty notice warning letter, Letter 3.
- ❖ After the meeting schools will monitor for a further 20 days.
- ❖ If no improvement shown schools can refer to the authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Holidays in school term time

The government made a change in legislation from 1 September 2013, which affects all schools in the country not just in Leeds. The changes mean that schools are no longer allowed to authorise any requests for children to be taken out of school for a holiday during term time. Nationally, five million school days were missed in the academic year 2011/ 2012 because of family holidays in term time, which is 10.1 per cent of overall absence in schools. This high level of absence led the government to make this important change to legislation.

- **no requests for holidays can be authorised during term time** unless there are exceptional circumstances

The 'exceptional circumstances' mentioned by the Department for Education are very limited. It is therefore anticipated that there will be very few requests for leave of absence in term time that will be exceptional and so most requests will have to be declined and marked as unauthorised. The new legislation is designed to support increased attendance and to improve standards in our schools.

The law does not now give any automatic parental right to take a child on holiday during term-time. Parents/carers can be fined for taking a child on holiday during term-time without consent from the school and as already mentioned consent will probably be declined. If parents/carers take their child on holiday during term time for 5 or more days they may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice and the timescale for paying a penalty notice has been reduced. A fixed penalty notice can require a parent/carer to pay a sum of either £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. Each parent/carer can be issued with a notice for each child so two parents/carers with two children can potentially be issued with four notices.

If you are issued with a fine, details of how to pay will be included on the letter that you will receive with it. It is important to note that the fine has to be paid in full – instalments cannot be accepted. Remember that if a fine is not paid, then you could be summoned to the magistrate's court, which has more serious consequences. If a parent is found guilty in court they can be fined up to £1000 and will have a criminal record, which can affect employment. If a person strongly disagrees with receiving a fine, they can contact the council directly with any information that they feel should be taken into consideration about whether the fine is valid or not. Council services will take reasonable steps to ensure that a fine is only issued in the right circumstances and will only withdraw the fine if there is sound evidence that it should not have been issued in the first place.

The Cluster has established an Attendance Panel to hear applications for leave during term time to decide whether they meet the criteria for 'exceptional circumstances' to be authorised. The panel consists of the Cluster Attendance Improvement Officer, the Cluster and Targeted Services Leader and representatives from different schools to ensure an unbiased hearing.

5. Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 9 a.m. the school will endeavour to contact them that day including calling all contact numbers and next of kin.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try and contact the parent/carer. The school named staff for attendance may also perform a home visit.
- If it is difficult to make contact with families or attendance becomes an issue the AIO will become involved and work with families to improve attendance and set future expectations.
- Failure to comply with the future expectations set out, may result in further action; a fixed penalty notice, an application for an Education Supervision Order, a court prosecution or a Parenting Order.

6. Management of attendance

Attendance at all schools in The Cluster will be constantly monitored by each school in conjunction with the AIO who will also liaise with Leeds City Council as necessary. An attendance blitz for each school can take place on request.

Persistent Absentees:

A child / young person with attendance of less than 90% is deemed to be persistently absent. Absence of this level is doing considerable damage to any child/ young person's education. Parents/carers are liable to a fine of up to £2500 or imprisonment for failing to ensure regular attendance without good reason. In most circumstances attendance will be unauthorised if it falls below 90%.

Policy written by Cluster Attendance Improvement officer and Cluster Leader. Updated annually.

Policy adopted by:

Kippax Greenfield Primary School
Kippax Ash Tree Primary School
Kippax North Nursery, Infant and Junior School
Swillington Primary School
Allerton Bywater Primary Schhol
Methley Primary School
Great Preston CofE Primary School
Lady Elizabeth Hastings CofE Primary School
Brigshaw High School

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