

## Attendance Policy

### West Blatchington Primary & Nursery School



Date: September 2018

Review Date: September 2019

Date approved by Full Governing Body: 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018

#### Key contacts

	Name	Contact details
Lead Member of staff	Natalie Bellis/Rachel Tuck	01273 770777 ext: 103/307
Head Teacher	Rachel Simmonds	01273 770777
Lead Governor	Curriculum Standards and Diversity Committee	01273 770777

## Rationale

At West Blatchington Primary & Nursery School, we recognise our school's diverse and unique make up in the city of Brighton and Hove. We want to ensure all our children attend school regularly in order to make the most of the learning opportunities they experience. We believe that regular attendance ensures that children can reach their full potential. Poor attendance has shown to be a factor in poor attainment and we want all our children to have the best possible opportunity in their education to acquire the skills and knowledge for the future.

## Our aims for the policy are

- To improve the overall percentage of pupils' regular school attendance.
- To make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school, including children, families, staff and governors.
- To develop a clear framework to define agreed roles and responsibilities.
- To implement a system of rewards and sanctions.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and children.
- To respect and appreciate that variation in lifestyle and religious background may place different demands upon children and their families.
- To provide a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.

## Registration and lateness

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that registers are kept up to date and filled in accurately. Class teachers are responsible for their class registers and this is checked by the administration staff.

- Registers are taken on SIMS and a paper copy is also required
- **School day starts at 08:50 on the infant site**, any child arriving after 08:55 will be marked as late (L) and their parents will need to sign the late book and provide a reason.
- **School day starts at 08:45 on the junior site**, any child arriving after 08:50 will be marked as late (L) and they will need to sign the late book.
- The register closes at 09:00 and paper registers taken to the office. If a child is later than 09:15 after the register has closed then a U code will be entered.
- Lates are monitored monthly and if lateness persists a letter will be written to the parents, if this continues they will receive a second warning letter and will be invited to a meeting with the Family Liaison Worker, Natalie Bellis and the Independent School Attendance Advise, Maggie Baker. If improvement is still not seen then a meeting with the head teacher may be arranged.
- If a child has been late to school (after close of registration at 09:30) on 10 or more separate occasions in a 10 week period then they will be issued with an official warning letter. If there is not acceptable improvement then the school can refer to the Local Authority who will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Parents are encouraged to come and speak to school about any issues that they may have regarding lateness

### **The role of the child/parent**

- To come to school each day unless ill or in exceptional circumstances
- To set up good habits as early as possible
- To understand the links between poor attendance and underachievement
- To contact the school by 09:00 if there is to be any absence – with details of why
- To bring children to school after or around any medical appointments
- To try and make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible
- To talk to the school if there are any problems or issues with their child attending school
- It remains the legal responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure a child's regular attendance

### **The role of the class teacher**

- To develop relationships with the parents
- To monitor the reasons for absence by talking to the child and/or parent
- To notice any patterns in non-attendance and to enquire and inform relevant staff through CPOMS
- To keep Inclusion coordinator up to date with any information through CPOMS
- To raise attendance issues with parents at parents evening
- To inform parents and the Family Liaison Worker/Inclusion Co-ordinator if a child is missing interventions by non-attendance or lateness, this can be done through class teacher or adult who is leading the intervention
- To talk to the class about attendance to raise it's profile
- To reward good attendance through whole school and individual activities
- To report on attendance in the annual report to parents

### **The role of the Family Liaison Worker**

- To fortnightly track attendance and follow the guidance provided by the Local Authority Code of Conduct
- To keep class teachers and SLT informed of relevant screening results and to provide context around any absences
- To meet and liaise with parents where attendance and/or lateness is a concern
- To arrange and attend Attendance Support Meetings in consultation with the Independent School Attendance Adviser
- To liaise with the Inclusion team to ensure all staff working with the children and their families are aware of any concerns to ensure that decisions can be made with individual family circumstances in mind
- To analyse the attendance data and keep up to date with any trends
- To be aware of how poor attendance is effecting academic achievement for individual children
- To inform the local authority if a child on a child protection plan is absent from school
- To support with rewarding consistently high attendance

### **The role of the Headteacher**

- .To be aware of children's/families poor attendance through liaison with the Family Liaison Worker
- Authorising of any absence is at the Head's discretion and will only be given in exceptional circumstances
- To respond to all letters requesting absence
- To unauthorise all holidays, unless exceptional circumstances, and refer to the Local Authority for a penalty notice if the holiday is unauthorised
- To ensure all literature provided to parents such as prospectus, attendance policy, home school agreements, newsletters and website information include the warning that parents may be issued with a penalty notice if a holiday is taken without permission
- To promote good attendance at meetings with parents where appropriate e.g. new Reception parents initial meeting, parents evening

### **The role of the Governing Body**

- Ensure that the school has a whole school attendance policy in place
- Receive timely attendance reports via the lead governor for attendance and the Family Liaison Worker
- Monitor the effectiveness of the whole school policy
- to have regular meetings between the Family Liaison Worker and lead governor for attendance, to ensure context is understood around those pupils with persistent absence

### **The role of the Local Authority**

- support and challenge schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
- upon the request of the school, the Local Authority has the power to issue parents or carers with a fine for unauthorised absence under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Local Authority also has the power to prosecute parents or carers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if the fine is not paid

### **Monitoring absence**

The school is committed to following clear and consistent internal escalation processes for all levels of attendance and we work closely with the Behaviour and Attendance Team to ensure this happens. We follow rigorous consistent processes as outlined below to ensure that our children and families are well supported.

If a child is not able to attend school, the parents/carers should ring school on the **first day of absence**. If we have not received a phone call about an absence by 09:00, the school will send a text to ensure the parents contact the school to let the school know the reason for the child's absence. If we have still not heard from the parents/carers a letter will be sent home and if no further reason given or the explanation is not acceptable as a legitimate reason for authorisation the absence will be unauthorized.

Sickness/diarrhoea:

If a child is vomiting or experiencing diarrhoea, they need to be completely free of physical symptoms for a period of 24 hours before returning to school. If a child comes back to school earlier than this required time, the parent/carer will be advised to collect their child from school.

For children that are on a CPP (child protection plan) and those identified as CiN (Children in Need) absence from school can be a cause for concern.

- These children are prioritised when undertaking first day contact with parents
- The tracking and systems will start when the child falls below 95% in any half term period and the social worker will be informed
- If the child is absent and no contact is received from the parent as to the reasons why or the school are concerned about the reasons given, the school will inform the social worker

### **Categorising absence**

Absences follow the agreed codes that are put into the register. Persistent absence is classed as an attendance of **90% or below**.

### **Authorised absence may be given in the following circumstances:**

- Exclusion
- Days of religious observance
- Medical/dental appointments (if they cannot be arranged out of school time)
- Illness of the child (if attendance is not a cause for concern)
- Flexibility around any custody agreements
- Exceptional occasions such as
  - bereavement
  - serious illness of a close family member
  - wedding within the immediate family
  - service personnel returning from a long tour of duty

### **Request for absence during term time**

If a parent is requesting time off for exceptional circumstances then a letter needs to be written to the Head teacher. Each case will be looked at on an individual level. The school will need to take into account the amount of time asked for; current attendance levels of the child; previous requests received; welfare of the pupil. All requests will be responded to on an individual basis as a written response. If exceptional circumstances are granted, the Head teacher will determine the number of sessions the child can be away from school. This absence must not exceed an agreed period of absence otherwise a fixed penalty notice may be issued.

### **Unauthorised absence includes:**

- Holidays during term time
- Sickness of parent/carer who cannot get their child to school
- Medical appointments for other family members
- Days out
- Child's illness, with no medical evidence, after the parent has been notified that attendance is a continued cause for concern

Rationale for the administering of Penalty notices (as taken from the Code of Conduct)

- It is a legal requirement under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 that parents of children of compulsory school age ensure that their children receive full-time education that is suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that they may have. A child reaches compulsory school age at the start of the term on or after their fifth birthday, and continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach 16.
- It is essential for pupils to attend school regularly in order to maximise the opportunities available to them. The Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team investigate cases of irregular attendance and instigate statutory intervention where appropriate.
- Under the provisions of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, in certain cases of unauthorised absence a penalty notice may be issued to the parent(s)/carer(s) responsible. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice once issued by the local authority.

Brighton & Hove City Council ('the Local Authority') considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where **unauthorised** absence occurs (taken from the Code of Conduct). Parents will receive a warning letter from the school prior to the issue of a penalty notice.

Circumstances when penalty notices might be issued:

- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed).
- Pupils whose attendance has not reached a satisfactory (90% attendance)) level during a six week period following intensive support.
- Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification in a fixed term or permanent exclusion.
- Penalty notices **will** be issued following assessment of **poor attendance** which the LA considers to be 4 sessions or more within a term. This does **not** relate to unauthorised holidays but any other unauthorised absence.
- Penalty notices **will** be issued for all unauthorised **holidays taken during term time**.

The Authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather help parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any legal enforcement. However attendance is of such importance to all of us that the Authority **will** use these powers if this is the only way to secure a child's schooling. If parents fail to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice they may be prosecuted for the original attendance offence,

### Rewards for good attendance

At West Blatchington we will reward excellent attendance (95% or above) through a variety of strategies. These include:

- The class who has the best weekly attendance will be shared in assembly and written up on the team points display
- Reward for the most improved attendance at the end of each term
- 100% attendance certificates and badges given out each term

- Attendance percentages shown in the fortnightly newsletters to parents
- Individualised incentives and rewards for specific vulnerable pupils
- End of term attendance reward session for pupils who have consistently high attendance
- Reward sessions for the class with the highest attendance for each half term.
- Recognition of those achieving 100% attendance in the newsletter

### **Sanctions for attendance of 95% or below**

Every two weeks an attendance report is run showing individual children's attendance of 95% or below. When a child's attendance drops below 95% at any point, the reasons given for the absences will be checked. Where there is a cause for concern (e.g. where a pattern of short, regular absences occurs) the following procedures will be followed and we will try hard as a school to support the child/family;

- An initial letter is sent home to all parents whose child's attendance is 95% or below and showing initial concerns
- If no further improvement is seen, and the child's attendance is below 90% in a six week period, another letter is sent to the parents and the Family Liaison Worker/Inclusion Co-ordinator may contact the parents to see how they can work together with the school to improve the child's attendance. From this parents are advised that medical evidence now needs to be seen for any further absence related to a child's illness.
- If there is still no further improvement parents will be invited to an Attendance Support Meeting with the Family Liaison Worker and Independent School Attendance Adviser. During the meeting the parents/carer may be asked to sign a parenting contract and clear targets will be set. The parenting contract contains reasons for poor attendance, an action plan and highlights the possibility of legal action being taken/fixed penalty notice being issued.
- The Family Liaison Worker will then track the child's attendance and set fortnightly targets. If there is no/little improvement the school will refer to the Authority to request a fixed penalty notice. If there is still no improvement the school will liaise further with the Independent School Attendance Adviser and consideration will be made as to whether to refer to the authority for consideration for prosecution. The school has a legal responsibility to provide any supporting evidence required by court.

If attendance has improved at any of the stages above there may not be any further action taken but the child's attendance will continue to be monitored by the class teacher, Family Liaison Worker and where appropriate the authority.

### **Complaints**

At West Blatchington Primary & Nursery School, we work very hard to ensure that we fulfill our legal requirements with regard to attendance. However, should you feel that you have been unfairly treated, in the first instance arrange a meeting with the Head teacher. Once the case has been taken to Court, restrictions may apply on the action that we are able to take.

