

# BOURNE COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

## PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 At Bourne School, we aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.
- 1.2 It is very important therefore that parents make sure that their child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how this will be achieved.

### 2 Principles

- 2.1 **Learning:** Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.
- 2.2 **Safeguarding:** Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-
  - Attendance
  - Behaviour Management
  - Health and Safety
  - Access to the Curriculum
  - Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

### 3 Promoting Regular Attendance

- 3.1 Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.
- 3.2 To help us all to focus on this we will:
  - Give you details on attendance in our regular Home – School Bulletin;
  - Report to you at least half-termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
  - Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
  - Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
  - Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

### 4 Legal Responsibilities

- 4.1 The Law relating to attendance:  
Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-
  - (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
  - (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise’

- 4.2 The Law relating to safeguarding:  
Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

## **5 Types of Absence**

- 5.1 Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.
- 5.2 Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.
- 5.3 Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This type of absence can lead to sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:
- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
  - truancy before or during the school day
  - absences which have never been properly explained
  - children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
  - shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
  - day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
  - Parents’ own illness or appointments
- 5.4 Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

## **6 Persistent Absenteeism**

- 6.1 A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and parents’ support and co-operation is required to tackle this.
- 6.2 The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.
- 6.3 PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by our Pupil Support Officer and we also combine this with academic support where absence affects attainment.
- 6.4 All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support, individual incentive programmes, outside agencies. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service.

## **7 Absence Procedures**

- 7.1 If your child is absent you must:
- Contact the school office absence line before 9:30am on the first day of absence and

follow up calls made to keep the school informed if the absence is longer than one day;

- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.
- GP and dental appointments should be made out of school hours unless it is an emergency in which case the child may well not attend school that day for that reason.
- Hospital appointments which are arranged should be arranged for out of school hours or for the afternoons where possible.
- Hospital appointments which are given (eg for certain clinics which only run at given times) parents should request an appointment that will enable their child to be in school for the first part of the morning wherever possible.
- Private or alternative health care appointments will not be allowed (authorised) in school hours unless supported by a GP letter and evidence that the practitioner only provides services in school hours.

#### 7.2 If your child is absent we will:

- Send a school text message and telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Pupil Support Officer and/or Assistant Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to Education, Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service if attendance moves below 90%.
- In exceptional circumstances, ESBAS will work with children whose attendance is below 95% following a school referral.

## **8 Contact Numbers**

- 8.1 There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

## **9 Education Welfare Support**

- 9.1 Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education, Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service from East Sussex County Council. The practitioner will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, these Practitioners can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.
- 9.2 Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact ESBAS themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting East Sussex County Council

## **10 Lateness**

- 10.1 Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for

the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

- 10.2 The school day starts at **8.45am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.
- 10.3 Children arriving after this will receive a late mark, up until 9.15am.
- 10.4 At **9.15am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.
- 10.5 If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Headteacher and/or Pupil Support Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.
- 10.6 The ESBAS team do frequent unannounced 'late swoops' at the school gates, and the children who are identified by these will be noted on their official files, and letters or other further action may follow.

## **11 Holidays in Term Time**

- 11.1 The school has a separate Leave of Absence (Withdrawal from Learning) Policy
- 11.2 Requests for withdrawals from learning are only authorised in exceptional circumstances, and the process for deciding this is detailed in the Leave of Absence (Withdrawal from Learning) Policy

## **12 School Targets**

- 12.1 Parents are made aware at prospective parents' events, open days and home visits that the school take attendance seriously and about our expectations.
- 12.2 Parents will also be made aware that by sending their child to school before they are 5, they are obliged to follow the policies of the school which includes not taking children on holiday during term time.
- 12.3 The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.
- 12.4 The school has adopted an acceptable rate of attendance as 95% with a target of 96% and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares through the Bourne Bulletin each term.
- 12.5 Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.
- 12.6 Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.
- 12.7 Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our weekly bulletin and we ask for parents' full support.

## **13 Attendance Policy Review**

- 20.1 The school will constantly monitor and update the Policy as appropriate and will undertake a formal review on a bi-annual basis seeking endorsement from the Governing Body.

20.2 The governor with responsibility for attendance will monitor attendance three times a year

20.3 Termly attendance data is reported to governors through the headteacher's reports.

Appendix 1: Holiday Request Flow Chart

Appendix 2: Request for Withdrawal from Learning Form