

Bewcastle Primary School

Attendance policy (draft)

Summer Term 2014 – pupils committee

Signed: _____

Date:

Review Date:

Introduction

At Bewcastle school, we regard regular attendance as very important for every child's education. Encouraging good attendance is a priority for staff, parents and governors and we are committed to improving attendance at our school. Our attendance is broadly average, however, as we have a very small cohort of children, one child's poor attendance can have a significant impact on the overall percentage. We actively promote good attendance and are looking at ways to improve it even further.

Legal responsibilities

Identify specific new guidelines and legal requirements of governing bodies issued over the past couple of years

Our daily procedure

- Children arrive at school from 8.40am;
- The register is taken daily at 9.00 in each class;
- Our admin assistant checks attendance and any staff in school take messages regarding absence and logs them in the attendance log inside the register;
- Messages can be a phone call, verbal or in writing;
- Parents are requested to call as early as possible.
- If a call has not been received by 9.15am, either the admin assistant (Andrea) or the Head teacher (Ms Harland) will call to find out the reason for absence.
- All staff (including supply staff) are made aware of the absence codes that are to be used.

Register

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately, neatly and marked in ink. The correct attendance codes must be used.

The data from the printed registers is transferred into SIMS and used for statistical analysis and census returns.

A whole school approach to attendance, from children, parents, staff and governors, will ensure that attendance is high. The head teacher will regularly monitor attendance, which must be above 95%. Where it falls below this figure, close monitoring will begin.

Communicating the importance of good attendance

The governors and the head teacher will regularly communicate the importance of good attendance to children and parents by:

- Sending out correspondence from the government and the local authority;
- Rewarding good attendance by giving children certificates of 100% attendance for each half term, which are displayed in the hall and then sent home;
- Talking to children and parents informally when appropriate;
- Taking formal steps to address poor attendance if required;
- Reporting on attendance in the end of year reports

Types of absence

Authorised absence

Only a school can authorise an absence. Parents and the LA do not have the power to authorise absences.

- It is a legal requirement that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually;
- We are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence where there is doubt as to the validity of that explanation;
- Schools are no longer able to authorise holidays in term time – however, due to the exceptional nature of our school, the head teacher may authorise extended under exceptional circumstances, in consultation with governors ;
- At Bewcastle, if a parent calls and informs the school of a single day's absence for farming reasons, authorisation will be given – we wish to encourage honesty at all times;
- We should always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the school is aware of family difficulties;

- Minding the house, looking after siblings, shopping or going on a trip will not normally be acceptable reasons for absence;
- An explanation of every absence is required; if one is not forthcoming the absence should be treated as unauthorised;
- Where absence is authorised, our school will remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance;
- Lateness will be actively discouraged and persistent lateness treated in the same way as irregular attendance.

Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is absence without approval from an authorised representative of the school and includes all unexplained absences.

If a child is absent with the approval of the school, for whatever reasons, no offence is deemed to have been committed. Thus, the decision taken by the school to give or withhold authorisation for an absence is a critical factor in determining the LA's decision to prosecute parents.

We need to exercise caution in the authorisation of absence. If we are suspicious of the explanation given by parents, the absence should be further investigated and left unauthorised until the matter has been clarified to the satisfaction of the school. The decision taken by the school to authorise absence or not is of critical importance in determining the level of involvement of the LA. If the school has authorised a pupil's absence, they have, in effect, given leave – therefore there is no case in law for the parents to answer.

Parentally condoned absence

Parentally condoned absence is, in many ways, more difficult to identify than any other form of absence. This form of absence is equally damaging to the pupil's educational experience. Parents may perceive that they are keeping their child away from school for legitimate reasons; they may feel that they are protecting them. It is essential that, when school staff feel a worrying pattern of non-attendance is emerging, they work together with the educational, social and health support services to ensure the most appropriate and effective intervention is available to pupils and parents.

Holidays during term time – further guidance

Absences cannot be granted apart from 'exceptional' circumstances and family holidays are not classed thus. However, some discretion will be applied at Bewcastle school. Any parent wishing to take a child out of school for a holiday during term time must submit a request in writing to the head teacher. The letter must state the purpose, length of time, destination etc. The head teacher will then consider granting permission, in consultation with the governing body. This decision will be based upon a child's age, the time of year (eg impact on Sats) and the child's pattern of absence and family circumstances. An official letter will then be given to the parents, signed by the head teacher.