

Staff: February 2020  
Governors: February 2020

## Brookland Infant and Nursery and Junior Schools Attendance Policy

### Rationale:

We believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. Good habits of attendance and punctuality should be established early. It is of vital importance that children and their parents and carers know that the school values and expects good attendance and timekeeping. Brookland Schools strongly discourage absence from school unless absolutely essential, in keeping with the Local Authority's aim to maximise the potential of all pupils.

Encouraging good attendance is the shared responsibility of the parent/carer, the school, the pupil and also partners in the Local Authority, the police and Children's Social care. Parents have a responsibility to see that their child receives appropriate education and it is the responsibility of the Local Authority through its Educational Welfare Service, to ensure that this happens. Government expectations are that pupil school attendance should be a minimum of 96% - this applies to all children of statutory school age.

### Legal Framework:

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents/carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive sufficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents/carers secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require all schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 allowed headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year.

Headteachers could also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

**Amendments to these 2006 regulations, which came into force on 1 September 2013**, removed references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that - Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances

#### Equal opportunities and inclusion:

Parents and carers play a crucial role in developing good habits of attendance and punctuality in their children and therefore we will work with all members of our community to achieve this.

#### Aims:

- To meet statutory requirements
- To improve attendance and punctuality of all children from Nursery to Y6, to achieve at least 96% attendance
- To reduce the number of children who are named as persistent absentees (with less than 90% attendance)
- To prevent disruption to the learning environment caused by lateness and absence
- To ensure parents and carers are aware of their legal obligations and requirements
- To help children develop good habits of attendance and punctuality
- To ensure that children do not regularly miss essential learning

#### Objectives:

- To ensure the Pupil's Registration Regulations 1956 Act is fully implemented by marking an attendance register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session
- To ensure the distinction of authorised and unauthorised absences in registers as described in The Education Regulation 1991(pupil attendance records)
- To endeavour to follow up unexplained absences on the first day of absence and follow up any outstanding unexplained absences within three days
- To offer preventative, early advice to parents and carers whose children are beginning to establish patterns of absence or lateness (less than 93%)

### Responsibilities:

#### **The governing body**

- To develop the policy and ensure the policy is maintained and reviewed. This is delegated to the safeguarding committee
- To delegate the day-to-day management of this policy to the headteacher

#### **The headteacher**

- To have an overview of the attendance and punctuality policy and ensure the policy is followed at all times
- To follow up patterns of absence and lateness
- To consider requests for leave of absence, taking into account the family's circumstances and balance these with his or her duties toward the effective management of the school and welfare of the child
- To liaise with the educational welfare team
- To communicate the policy to parents and carers, through the governing body, the school website, school brochure and meetings with parents

#### **The class teacher**

- To mark the online attendance register promptly and record reasons for absence where known

#### **The welfare/administration staff**

- To inform class teachers of reasons for absence as noted from the answer machine or messages taken and enter reasons for absence onto the online register, with both a brief explanation and code
- To attempt first day telephone or text contact to follow up unexplained absence
- To inform the headteacher should patterns of absence be identified
- To issue parents and carers with letters regarding attendance and punctuality
- To liaise with the education welfare officer
- To maintain electronic records of attendance
- To complete the termly absence return to the DfE

#### **Education Welfare Officer**

- To assist the school in identifying poor patterns of attendance and punctuality.
- To challenge families where poor attendance is occurring and work with the head teacher to address concerns.
- To assist those families who are experiencing difficulties with school attendance.
- To support staff in the development of whole school approaches to maintain and develop excellent attendance and punctuality

#### **Parents and carers**

- To bring their child to school every day and on time
- To telephone to inform the school of the reason for absence on or before the first day of absence
- To avoid making medical or dental appointments for their child during school hours.
- To only take family holidays during school holidays

- To apply to the headteacher at least 3 weeks in advance for permission to take their child away from school for the purposes of a Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances only
- To ensure that their child is signed in at the office if they arrive late for school or have returned from an appointment.
- To provide medical evidence should their child be regularly or persistently absent through illness

### **Pupils**

- To understand the importance of regular attendance and punctuality at school
- To talk to a member of staff if there is anything which makes them feel unhappy at school and could reduce their willingness to attend

### Categorising absence:

#### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **Authorised or Unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

#### **Authorised Absences**

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for the following reasons:

##### **Illness**

In most cases a telephone call from the parent informing the school that their child is ill is acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences or longer periods of absence due to illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc but could be in the form of a doctor's note.

##### **Medical/Dental Appointments**

Parents are advised where possible to make routine medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school. Brookland Schools recognise that there will be occasions when children need to attend clinical sessions on a regular basis, for example for counselling.

#### **Other Authorised Circumstances**

##### **Background**

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the notional threshold of ten school days. The amendments made clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. The regulations also state that headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted for 'exceptional circumstances'.

The DfE advice on school attendance (November 2013) should also be considered and read in conjunction with the 2013 regulations.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. We will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy is that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

- If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence
- Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance
- Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave
- Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and very limited time will be allowed for travel to such events, usually one or two days before and after the date of the event, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events
- The needs of the families of service personnel are taken into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time
- We make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities
- Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis

When making decisions we will take the following into consideration:

- Whether the leave of absence is at an inappropriate time in the child's academic development
- Whether the event can take place during school holidays
- The timing of the request - leave will not usually be granted at the beginning of the school year or attached to the start or end of a school holiday
- Whether there have been repeated requests for absence
- Whether overall attendance is good

By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Parents/carers are asked to complete the *Absence request form* on such occasions. Evidence is essential to support the application. It is the headteacher's discretion to authorise such requests and in some cases a discussion will take place between the Headteacher and EWO. Where leave is granted, the leave will be coded according to the reasons given for the absence. The headteacher may refuse the whole period requested by a pupil's parents or carers, or may grant part of the requested period, or may grant the whole of the requested period.

- On the bottom of the absence request form it will explain the reasons for the refusal and what action will be taken if the parents/carers ignore the refusal and keep their child away from school.

### **Religious Observance**

Brookland Schools acknowledge the multi-faith nature of British society and recognise that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. It is reasonable for a parent/carer to allow their children not to attend school on a day of religious observance if the day is recognised by the Local Authority.

### **Medical and Related Conditions**

At Brookland Schools we automatically treat illness as authorised absence and with the local authorities' help, support pupils' education throughout their illnesses. We also have an understanding and sensitive approach to children who may have periods of absence due to disability or long-term ill health. Please contact the Head, Deputy or Inclusion Leader/SENCO if you wish to discuss your child's attendance and punctuality in this context.

### **Interviews with prospective new school and school examinations**

Absence for pupils to attend interviews or exams at prospective secondary schools will be granted within reason. Other examples of authorised absence may include participation in national sporting or musical events or children who are taking part in filming or theatre performances and have applied to the LA for license to be absent for this purpose.

### **Excluded (No alternative provision made)**

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absences are those where the parents/carers have been unable to provide a satisfactory explanation to the school or where no permission has been granted by the school. These include the following:

### **Family Holidays and Extended Leave**

In line with the amendments to the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006** which came into force on 1 September 2013, all requests for holiday during school time will be refused. Parents and carers taking their children out of school for the purpose of a holiday need to be aware that they may be liable for sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice, a fine or a court summons issued by the Local Authority. (see appendix A).

### **Time out of school to attend privately funded tutoring/teaching/sports/music sessions and other activities**

Permission will not be given to parents/carers wishing to take their children, during school time, to attend such sessions.

### **SATs Week**

No absence will be authorised for year 6 during SATs week, unless it is day of religious observance and the day is recognised by the Local Authority.

### **Absences which have not been properly explained**

All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the child's absence has been received.

Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark on the register

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late.

Other examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Illness of parent/carer who takes child to school

NB It is the school NOT parents/carers who decide whether an absence may be authorised; giving a reason is not sufficient in itself.

### Possible consequences of taking pupils out of school without authorisation:

- Parents or carers who take their children out of school without the school's consent, or fails to return on the agreed date after an authorised absence, will be issued with a fixed penalty notice via the education welfare team, the penalty is currently £60 per parent/carer for each child, rising to £120 per parent/carer for each child. Parents/carers who fail to pay will be subject to criminal prosecution on the issue of poor attendance (see appendix A)
- Where a pupil fails to return to school on the expected date the headteacher may take steps to remove the pupil from the school roll:
  - The headteacher will ensure that there was no good reason for the pupil's absence, such as disrupted travel arrangements or illness, before removing the pupil from the school roll
  - The headteacher will give notice in writing stating the intention to remove the pupil from the school roll
  - The headteacher and the education welfare team will make reasonable enquiry to locate the pupil before the removal is made
  - The school will remove the pupil's name from the school registers, inform the local authority and transfer their information to the National Lost Pupils Database
  - If the headteacher considers there is a good reason for the pupil to be absent he/she will be marked 'authorised absence' using the relevant code

- If the pupil is located, the school will take steps to address the reasons for their failure to attend, accessing support from other agencies where appropriate
- Where a pupil does not attend school for four consecutive weeks and cannot be traced despite making every effort to make contact with the family, the pupil will be taken off roll and placed on the Lost Pupil Register with the DfE with advise from the Local Authority.

### **Record-keeping**

The school will keep records of authorisations and refusals on file for future reference in the event of complaint or, indeed, further applications. Reasons for the decision reached will be kept in order to ensure consistency of approach.

### Strategies employed to support pupils and parents/carers:

#### **First day response**

Both schools operate a First Day Response scheme, where attendance is monitored on a daily basis. The administration staff will go through registers before 09:30am and note any absences. Parents/carers are encouraged to email or phone school when their child is going to be absent. Where no explanation has been noted in the register the welfare/administration staff will text or call the parent/carer.

A record will be kept of all efforts to contact parents/carers.

#### **Independent Traveller Scheme**

The Junior School operates an Independent Traveller Scheme.

Parents/carers complete a form stating their child will travel regularly to school without an adult and providing emergency contact numbers.

Parents/carers contact the school in advance or on the morning if their child is absent from school. The school will try to contact the parent/carer if the child is absent and no call is received. If the school cannot reach the parent/carer, the police will be called.

#### **Letters home**

Where appropriate the administration assistant will generate letters regarding absences and/or poor punctuality

Pupils with outstanding absence notes and where attendance falls below 90% will automatically receive a letter.

#### **Education Welfare Officer**

If a pattern of concern regarding attendance develops the EWO will write to the parents/carers initially, if there is no improvement, the EWO or Headteacher will invite them into school to discuss the matter. If there is still no improvement the Education Welfare Team may decide to start court proceedings.

Where appropriate the Headteacher will inform the family that future absences on health grounds will no longer be authorised without medical evidence.

Where a family has failed to respond to contact attempts (phone calls / invitations to attend meetings) and attendance and/or punctuality remains a cause of concern the Headteacher will make an urgent referral to the Education Welfare Officer.



## Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality is essential. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss important teaching and vital information concerning the school day. Children arriving late can also disrupt lessons; it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

### **How we manage lateness**

The Infant school has a soft start to the day with the doors opening at 8.45 am and closing at 9.00 am. The Junior school day starts at 8.50 am and we expect our pupils to be in the line by their classroom or on the playground just before this time ready to go in when the class doors are opened.

### **Late Arrival**

Registration in the Infants begins at 9.00 am and in the Juniors begins at 8.50 am; pupils arriving after 8.55am (Juniors)/ 9.00am (Infants) will be marked as present but late. The register will close at 9.20am. Pupils arriving after the close of the register will be recorded as late (unless an acceptable reason has been provided by the parent/carer for the late arrival) and this will count as an unauthorised absence for that particular school session.

If parents/carers know their child is going to be late for **any** reason, they should let the school office know.

On arrival, after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

Punctuality also applies to parents/carers picking up children at the end of the day. The end of the school day is **3.15pm** in the Infants and **3.20pm** in the Juniors, and if a child is not picked up the class teacher will bring the child to sit outside the school office. In the Juniors, children are reminded to come to the office if they are not collected at the end of school as expected.

If a child is collected late from school a record will be kept by the school.

### **Persistent Lateness**

- Parents/carers of children who persistently arrive or are collected late will be sent a letter asking the parent to explain the lateness and requesting that punctuality is maintained
- Be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and/or Social Services where persistent lateness occurs without an acceptable reason.
- FPN may be pursued by the Local Authority for persistent lateness

### Monitoring and evaluation:

Patterns of absence and punctuality will be monitored on a termly and annual basis and the governing body will be informed of levels of attendance each term via the headteacher's report.

In the Infants, children will be awarded with a sticker for 100% attendance each half term. Weekly attendance for each class will be recorded in the weekly newsletter .Congratulation certificates will be presented to children who have achieved perfect attendance for the year.

In the Juniors, individual certificates are awarded for 100% attendance each term and a badge for full attendance over the year. Weekly attendance for each class is recorded on the noticeboard by the hall to encourage good attendance and a trophy is awarded to the class with the best attendance each half term.

## Appendix A

### Fixed-penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence in Term-Time

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term-time are required to apply in advance from the school at which their child is enrolled. Where siblings attending other schools are involved, the Head Teachers should liaise in order to ensure both schools give the same response, unless there are good reasons not to do so.

In considering whether to grant a term-time leave each school should consider the following points:

- the circumstances involved
- the time and length of the proposed leave
- the child's record of attendance
- if there have been any previous requests for leave of absence in respect of the child
- if it is close to exams or tests (SATs in Years 2, 6,).

If permission is not granted and parents take the child out of school, the absences will be marked as unauthorised. In some cases of unauthorised absence the Education Welfare Team will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60 for each child to each parent at the request of the school. This has to be paid within 28 days. The penalty rises to £120 if paid between 29-42 days. If the fine is unpaid on day 43, the Education Welfare Team will begin court proceedings against each parent. The fine could rise up to £1000. The Education Welfare Team will also seek full costs of any prosecutions taken against the parents.

There is no right of appeal against a Fixed-Penalty Notice