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**Blackheath Primary School**

**Attendance Policy**

**Date of issue: October 2020**

**Review date: October 2021**

***Introduction:***

This is a successful school and your child/children play their part in making it so. 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 essential, and a legal requirement, that they attend school regularly. Your child should be at school on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important that you make sure that your child attends school regularly. This policy sets out how together we will achieve this from the 25th September 2017 where the Governing body formally adopted the new Sandwell LA guidance and notified parents of this via letter.

In light of the recent Covid 19 pandemic, the school is fully aware of the need to further support families with attendance issues and will communicate its expectations and support measures e.g. risk assessment moreover support families appropriately within their power, throughout any changes around opening from September 2020 onwards to maximise attendance.

***Why regular attendance is so important:***

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absences 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.

***Promoting regular attendance:***

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

**To help us focus on this we will:**

* Monitor attendance on a weekly basis, communicate and share with parents and staff any concerns/achievements (half termly reports)
* Give parents/carers details on attendance in our regular newsletters
* Inform parents/carers at least termly about your child’s attendance percentage, where it is a concern
* Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements weekly
* Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and events
* Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school e.g. Parents Evening, Breakfast clubs

***Understanding types of absence:***

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 any absence is always required.

Following the September guidance for registration the school has adopted the attendance codes appropriate to covid related issues.

Where children or parents are anxious and choose not to send their children in (not related to self isolation , official shielding or a positive case) the school will support and reassure parents. The Risk assessment is always current and available from the school website and school office upon request. Where a child has SEN needs around their health with a healthcare plan e.g. weak immune system, individual cases will be supported as appropriate e.g. amendments to health care plans or risk assessments.

**Authorised Absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. The Headteacher authorises the absence.

**Unauthorised Absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no ‘authorisation’ has been given. This also applies to illnesses where the school does not feel satisfied with the medical evidence provided. Where a child is ill, the school encourages parents to contact the school to look at what medical evidence would be appropriate and parents have been made aware of this requirement. (See appendix 1). An unauthorised absence is also used for children who are late to school after registers close.

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| Authorised absences  (This list is not exhaustive) | Unauthorised absences  (This list is not exhaustive) |
| * Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling * Sudden loss of housing * Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA (Evidence required) * Weddings of parents and siblings (1 day) * Religious observance - this would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions (1 day only) – The education Act 1996 s444(3) © states “On any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs” * genuine illness of the pupil; * hospital/dental/doctors appointment for the pupil (Evidence required) * visits to prospective new schools; * external exams or educational assessments. * If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad (Will not be in receipt of leave in near future school holidays. If not, one period will be granted per year) * Where a has been requested to self isolate due to Covid 19 or is awaiting test results. (Evidence may be requested) | * Holidays abroad during term time (including overlapping with the beginning or the end of term. ) * Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative or family event. Where an application is made, evidence may be needed * Pilgrimages by parents (eg. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). * Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work or personal commitments. * A Birthday * Appointments for other family members * Oversleeping of children or family members * Looking after other children/family members   members;   * Where a parent chooses to keep a child off because of Covid related issues, without direction or agreement from the school e.g. specific health reasons supported by medical practitioners |

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ (PA) when their attendance falls below 90% or more across the school year. We monitor all absences 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 you will be informed of this immediately.

Our pupil progress monitoring identifies low attendance. As a result interventions are put in place to improve attendance. Parents may be requested to sign an Attendance Agreement and in some cases an Action Plan may be implemented to include activities around raising attendance. In line with legislation we may refer unauthorised leave of absence to the Attendance & Prosecution Service. Such a referral could lead to legal action and a penalty fine.

We will write to families who cause us concern informing them that due to the amount of days missed due to sickness, we will require medical evidence for all future illness.

Where there are concerns around Covid-19 e.g. anxiety, the school will reassure parents and support them appropriately within the guidance and schools powers.

***Attendance & Prosecution Team***

The school works closely with the Sandwell Attendance & Prosecution team and they support us in our monitoring systems. Parents may wish to contact the Attendance & Prosecution team 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 the Sandwell Local Authority.

***Absence procedures:***

If your child is absent you must contact us before registration either by telephone or in person on the first day of absence; (0121 559 1033, Option 2)

***Lateness:***

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child is late they miss the introduction to the lesson this can be detrimental to their learning. When children arrive late it disrupts the class and their learning.

***How we manage lateness****:*

Doors normally open at 8:45am and the school day starts at **8.50am**. We expect your child to be in class at that time. During Covid 19 however, the school have enforced a staggered start and end time to the day, to help reduce potential contact and numbers on site.

**Dropping off (All doors entry points remain the same)**

* Times:
  + Nursery a.m/p.m – No change
  + Reception: 8:30-8:40
  + Year 1: 8:55-9:05
  + Year 2: 8:45-8:55
  + Year 3: 8:30 – 8:40
  + Year 4: 8:45 - 8:55
  + Year 5: 8:45 – 8:55
  + Year 6: 8:30 – 8:40

**Collection**

* Times:
  + Nursery a.m/p.m No change
  + Reception: 3:05
  + Year 1: 3:30
  + Year 2: 3:20
  + Year 3: 3:05 (From the Lounge)
  + Year 4: 3:20
  + Year 5: 3:20
  + Year 6: 3:05

(8.30am for the morning nursery session and 12.30pm for the afternoon nursery session).

Children who arrive after doors close at are to be signed in by their parent, where a reason for lateness must be completed. This process helps ensure safeguarding is in place and that a child is fully accounted for as on site. Lateness is monitored weekly, if your child has persistent lateness, we will contact you to resolve the problem. You can approach us at any time if you are having issues getting your child to school on time.

***School procedures for absent pupils:***

1. After the close of registration pupils that arrive late (after doors have closed) should enter school through the school office so they can be signed in and a reason for lateness can be recorded
2. Check all registers between 9am - 10am
3. Send a text to parents to ask them to contact school for reason of pupil absence
4. If parents have not contacted school by 11.30am, call parents to request reason for absence
5. Attendance Officer will do a home visit and post a letter through the parents/carers door if there has been no contact
6. If child is absent on day 2, we will contact you again by letter, home visit or telephone to discuss your child’s absence
7. If absence persists, invite you into school to sign our home/school Attendance agreement
8. Make a referral to the Attendance & Prosecution team, where applicable

***Children not collected after school hours:***

There are rare occasions when perhaps due to an emergency, parents are not able to collect their children promptly from school, or make arrangements for their collection at the end of the school day. Our school day ends at 3.20pm, Nursery sessions are 8.30 to 11.30am and 12.30 to 3.30pm.

In accordance with Sandwell Local Authority Policy, if a child is not collected, the school will make enquiries to find the parents using the emergency contact numbers provided by the parents. If after one hour it has not been possible to contact parents/carers then the local Police may be informed of the situation. The Head Teacher will certainly contact the Referral Team at Social Services to inform them of a possible problem.

***Inclement weather:***

The school follows the Sandwell Safeguarding Policy on Emergency Closures with regard to absences due to inclement weather. In summary, if the school closes completely, all pupils will be marked as Y “forced or partial closure”.

***School targets:***

Our school target is 97% and we strive to achieve this and higher. Each week we monitor attendance and punctuality and identify 2 areas of concern: attendance below 90% and below 93%/attendance.

As a result of the weekly monitoring system, we make home visits, telephone home, send letters home, call parents in for a meeting and ask parents to sign a school attendance agreement.

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**Application for Leave of Absence during term time for parents**

Blackheath Primary School, the Local Authority and Government believe that absence during term time should be avoided as it can have a damaging effect on pupils’ education and overall achievement.

**With effect from 1st September 2013 we do NOT authorise ANY request for holiday in term time.**

**The Head Teacher may authorise requests for leave in exceptional circumstances.**

**The school will authorise only one day for each Religious Observance.**

The Education Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

*Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application*

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| **Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time –**  **evidence may be requested**  **(AUTHORISED)** | **Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional**  **(NOT AUTHORISED)** |
| * Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling * Sudden loss of housing * Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA * Weddings of parents and siblings (1 day) * Religious observance - this would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions (1 day only) | * Holidays abroad during term time * Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative or family event. Where an application is made, evidence may be needed * Pilgrimages by parents (eg. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). * Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work or personal commitments. |

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to Sandwell Education & Prosecution Services This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM**

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM AND READ INFORMATION OVERLEAF:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013: Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the schools considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.



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