

Whole School Attendance Policy

Good attendance means that children usually make good, consistent progress in their school work. We are proud of our children's achievements and feel this is an indication that our pupils enjoy being in school.

Broadwindsor Primary School expects good attendance from its pupils, in order for them to make the most of the opportunities that the school has to offer. We rely on our partnership with parents to ensure that this is achieved.

This policy clearly outlines the expectations and responsibilities of the school, parents/carers and the pupil. The school follows the policy and guidance provided by Dorset Council of which the latest was issued September 2019.

Information for Parents/Carers

- Parents have a legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attend every day (100% of sessions attended), punctually, properly equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents must notify the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- A pupil's absence from school will be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received.
- Parents will be promptly informed over concerns about attendance and given the opportunity to discuss this with a member of staff. This will be either through a letter or face to face meeting.
- Attendance will be discussed with individual pupils and parents where there is a level of concern or pattern of absence.
- Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from class teacher, and should the need arise, from a senior member of staff.
- Attendance information will be raised with parents through Parents' Evenings, Governor communication, school prospectus, newsletter, and/or letter prior to commencing school.
- All families will inevitably go through periods when life can be very challenging. This could be to do with a family bereavement, redundancy and debt, children's challenging behaviour etc. In these circumstances it is important that you talk to staff in confidence as to how this might be affecting your child's ability to focus at school, their behaviour and attendance. It may also be that a Common Assessment might be a supportive way forward. A Common Assessment is a way of gathering information and appropriate agencies together to see what kind of support is needed. This is something that happens with you and can only be done with your consent. Further information on the CAF process and related leaflets are available on www.dorsetforyou.com/caf
- Children and young people who are unable to attend school because of medical needs have access to as much education as their medical condition allows so that they are able to maintain the momentum of their education and to keep up with their studies. Below is a link to further guidance:

Access to Education for Children and Young People with Medical Needs

- Dorset Council has statutory powers to bring legal action against parents/carers who:
 - Fail to ensure regular attendance at school of a registered pupil
 - Fail to ensure their child is receiving a suitable education -either by regular attendance at school or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them.
 - The local authority has a duty under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996 to serve a notice or a school attendance order to the parent/carer.

Pupils

- Pupils will be made aware of the importance of maintaining their attendance at the highest possible level. This will be encouraged through positive strategies and rewards. Certificates celebrating good levels of attendance are presented at the end of each year. Pupils are praised when punctuality has been improved.
- It is made clear to all pupils that they are expected to attend school regularly (100% attendance being their aim) and punctuality and the reasons why this is important.
- Attendance will be monitored using individual attendance records.
- Pupils should be aware that bullying will not be tolerated but also if they find they are being bullied or worried about anything at school they know how to get support.

Governors

- Attendance will be an agenda item at the first Governors' meeting of each term.
- The governing body will ratify the school's policy.
- A group of governors consider 'exceptional circumstances' requests by parents and will be responsible for following up issues raised with Headteacher on attendance matters

Recording attendance

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Only the school can authorise a pupil's absence. An absence must not automatically be recorded as authorised simply because it is covered by a note from the pupil's parent/carer.

If a pupil is absent, the absence must only be recorded as authorised if:

- the pupil has been granted leave of absence, i.e. the absence has been approved beforehand by the school, or
- the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or some other unavoidable cause, or on a day that the pupil's parents/carers' religion sets aside for religious activities.
 - When appropriate, an absence initially recorded as authorised may subsequently be amended to unauthorised. In such circumstances all relevant details relating to the amendment must be recorded.

If the reason for a pupil's absence has not been established at the time the register is taken, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised. Any subsequent correction to a register recording an absence as authorised must be made as soon as is practicable after the reason for the absence has been established.

Authorised absence where exceptional circumstances may apply:

Sickness

Medical or dental appointments which, cannot be arranged outside school hours

Immediate family exceptional event.

Days of religious observance

Unauthorised absence is:

Holidays within term times.

Truancy

Staying at home to look after younger children or sick relatives

Going shopping or having hair cut

Any absence which the school has not been informed about in advance, either by letter or telephone

The school will be legally obliged to record these absences as “unauthorised”.

Requests for term-time leave

Children and young people should attend school 190 days (380 sessions) a year and could miss a substantial part of their education if they do not. Under current regulations, schools do not have discretion to grant leave of absence for family holidays during term time.

It is recognised that there are occasions when child/ren are withdrawn from school for exceptional circumstances. The nature of the words ‘exceptional circumstances’ are such that they indicate unusual events or an abnormal occurrence. It is therefore not possible to define in advance when a request will or will not be exceptional.

The Governing Body assesses requests for leave of absence. Requests for term-time leave need to be made through a form to the Governing body which can be sought through the school office. Each request for absence will be considered individually. It is the responsibility of the governors to decide whether or not to grant the leave of absence.

Where a parent takes a child on holiday during term time without the school authorising the absence, with a **minimum of 10 half day sessions missed**, a penalty notice is likely to be issued by the Local Authority.

Further guidance on Penalty Notices is given in the Dorset Council Attendance Policy and Guidance which is adopted by the school and is on the school website.

The School Day and Lateness

Registration

Our school day starts at 8.45am.

Pupils who are not present for registration but arrive before 9.15 am will be marked as present but late.

Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

If your child has a medical appointment which will force them to be late please ensure you inform the school in good time. Our afternoon session begins at 1pm.

Broadwindsor School also takes lateness very seriously. Persistent lateness can become a problem, as vital information with regards to school work is usually given out at the beginning of lessons. Students arriving late can miss this which may have a negative effect on attainment. We do have a legal obligation to close the register after the first 30 minutes of morning and afternoon sessions. If your child is late by less than 30minutes they will be given a late mark. If lateness becomes an issue, further action will be taken.

If a child is more than 30 minutes late for morning or afternoon sessions he/she will legally be considered as absent for part of that morning or afternoon session. Regular lateness of more than 30 minutes may therefore also result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued by the Authority and/or further legal action. A penalty notice could be issued if this equates to 10 sessions within a 12 week period.

PRO-ACTIVE INTERVENTIONS

First Day Response

Parents/carers are expected to call school on the first day of absence to advise that their child will not be in school and to give the reason why. If they do not call then they can expect a phone call from the school at an appropriate time so that we can determine that the child is safe and this is key part of our safeguarding duties. Parents/carers are also expected to give updates on absence that continues beyond one day.

Gate Duty

School gate duty can be a useful way of targeting punctuality issues in conjunction with other methods to support and improve whole school attendance and punctuality.

Certificates/Incentives

- Certificates and incentives will be given to pupils with excellent and/or improved attendance or punctuality.
- Staff will be aware and sensitive to the fact that some pupil's attendance and punctuality may be affected by their disability or their medical needs

DATA ANALYSIS

Attendance will be centrally monitored for all pupils using class registers and computer software.

Potential attendance patterns will be regularly analysed to explore reasons and required actions.

Sibling attendance at other schools will be taken into consideration when dealing with attendance issues and liaising with families.

The school is aware that consultation with families around ethnicity, religion or beliefs may be required to ascertain the effects on school attendance on certain days and festivities.

Letters to parents

Termly attendance data will be analysed and letters will be sent home when attendance falls below a figure agreed by West Dorset Schools Collaboration. The following trigger points have been agreed by the Collaboration and operate at Broadwindsor Primary School - 95%, 90%, 85%, 80% or below. We also recognise when attendance improves above the trigger point of 95%.

At each point of contact discussions will take place with parents to ascertain whether help is needed and if so an action plan put in to place.

Meeting with Parents/Carers and Pupils.

If felt necessary, it may be appropriate to invite the parents/carers and pupils to a meeting with a member of staff to discuss reasons for poor attendance, strategies to address it, targets to achieve and the date for review. This is an ideal opportunity to ascertain any underlying issues and where appropriate consideration should be given to the CAF.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Children Missing Education (CME) refers to all children of compulsory school age who are neither on a school roll nor being educated other than at school or who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School and college staff should follow the school's or college's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

The government has placed a duty on local authorities (Education and Inspections Act 2006) to make arrangements to establish (as far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving a suitable education.

Broadwindsor Primary School has put in place appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions.

All staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

The law requires all schools to have an admission register and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, an attendance register. All pupils must be placed on both registers.

We inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education;
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or, have been permanently excluded.

As stated previously the local authority must be notified when a school is to delete a pupil from its register under the above circumstances. This should be done as soon as the grounds for deletion are met, and before deleting the pupil's name from the register. It is essential that schools comply with this duty, so that local authorities can, as part of their duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education, follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.

School staff will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority (or in default of such agreement, at intervals determined by the Secretary of State).

Penalty Notices and Prosecution

Penalty notices can only be issued in cases where a pupil of compulsory school age has been absent and the absence has not been authorised by the school or where the pupil has persistently arrived late after the register has closed.

The level of absence that is necessary before a penalty notice can be issued is 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence.

The key consideration in deciding whether to issue a penalty notice will be whether it can be effective in helping to get the pupil who is missing education back into school.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is considered capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so.

To ensure consistent and fair delivery of penalty notices, the following criteria for their use shall apply:

- No one parent will receive more than three separate penalty notices resulting from the unauthorised absence of an individual child in any twelve-month period.
- However, where families contain more than one poorly attending pupil, multiple issues may occur.

Penalty Notices and Unauthorised Leave in Term Time

In accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, a penalty notice can be issued in exceptional circumstances, for example, where a parent takes a child on holiday during term time without the school authorising the absence. In such circumstances, although a minimum of 10 half day sessions of unauthorised absence will still apply before a penalty notice may be issued, the authorised person may issue a penalty notice without first issuing a formal warning to the parent as would otherwise be required. This policy and information given to parents when applying for term-time leave is notice of the fact that a penalty notice may be issued if a child is absent for 10 half-days of unauthorised sessions.