

# **Bakewell Methodist Junior School**

## **Attendance Policy**



### **1. Introduction and background**

Bakewell Methodist Junior School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school in preparation for Junior Education

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **2. 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 all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters and Governor newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on how their child's attendance by means of the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance (96%)
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates when appropriate. These are given out as part of a whole school assembly to promote children's understanding of the importance of good attendance.
- Include information about attendance in our school brochure

### **3. Understanding types of absence:**

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.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason. Good reasons are defined as:

- where the child is too ill to attend school\*
- where medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (parents should make every effort to make appointments out of school time)
- when the absence occurs on a day set aside for religious observance to which the parents/carers belong
- when there are extreme weather conditions and it is not safe or possible to travel to school
- when there has been a family bereavement (but this should be for a very limited period of time eg 1 or 2 days)
- where the pupil lives more than 3 miles from school with no suitable transport, up to a maximum of five days with the authorisation of the Headteacher.
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\*Children who have a high level of illness throughout the year, and fall below the 96% attendance target may be referred to the school doctor or nurse in order to help with any health needs or issues that prevent the child from attending school.

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 the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained
- shopping
- looking after other children
- birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time.

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 a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem.

#### 4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss up to 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. You will be informed if your child's absence is nearing 85% you will be informed and invited in to school to discuss the matter. If the figure goes below 85% the matter can be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. This information may also be used when pupils' progress is tracked as absence affects attainment.

#### 5. Absence Procedures:

- Class teachers record attendance on weekly registration sheet at the beginning of each session am and pm.
- Pupils arriving between 9.00am and 9.30am will be recorded as arriving late. If arriving after 9.30am parents will either need to record the reason for the late arrival in the school log book situated in entrance lobby or provide a letter detailing the reason.
- Parents must contact the school office on the first morning of any absence. We will contact you as soon as possible if we haven't heard from you.
- Written communication of the reason for child's absence will be required on the child's return to school.
- School will monitor attendance and punctuality. If attendance falls below 96% (school target) or if a child is repeatedly late a letter may be sent by the Head Teacher.
- If poor attendance continues, or measures have not been taken to improve the situation, parents may be asked to attend an attendance panel held in school.

## 6. The Education Welfare Officer

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 Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO 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 the Local Education Authority.

## 7. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher preparing for the day. Late arriving pupils 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 school day starts at 8.50am when the whistle is blown.
- Registers are marked by 9.00am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.
- At 9.10am 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.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

8. Leave of Absence in Term Time:

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. The DfE have stated in their regulations of September 2013 that no approval should be given for holiday in term time. Leave of absence may be granted in exceptional circumstances. Availability of cheap holidays and adding days off to the beginning and end of holidays will no longer be allowed. If parents think the request for leave of absence constitutes exceptional circumstances, they may submit a leave of absence form to the school at least two weeks in advance of the planed leave. Absences cannot be approved retrospectively.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. The minimum level of attendance for any child at is 95% attendance. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

This policy should be reviewed every three years.

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Signed.....

