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Attendance Policy



BALLADEN CPS

LINDEN LEA, RAWTENSTALL, ROSSENDALE, LANCASHIRE, BB4 6DX

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BALLADEN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

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 vital that they attend regularly and 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 therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence/ lateness 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.

Expectations regarding regular attendance

As a school, we aim to have all of our pupils in school every day. Whilst we recognise that pupils may have unavoidable absences at times we aim to reduce unauthorised absence and to work with parents and pupils to minimise absence where possible

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **96%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletters and we ask for your full support.

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:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- Always have Attendance and Punctuality as a target on our School Development Plan;
- Give you details on attendance through the year; eg School Reports/Website.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high school;
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school;
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors;
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

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.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, **emergency** medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time and other emergencies/unavoidable causes.

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
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed (after 9.30am)
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed/authorised
- days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. School will request evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised.

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 your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism:

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the Persistent Absenteeism threshold will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed of this immediately.

Persistent Absenteeism pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

All our Persistent Absenteeism pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: use of individual incentive programmes and home school agreements. Due to the serious nature Persistent Absenteeism school will always consider requesting support from the Local Authority Team in order to address the matter. School will also consider requesting that the Local Authority issue penalty notices, or use other sanctions, as a mean of approving attendance.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible, preferably before 9.00 am and no later than 9.20am, on the first day of absence, either by leaving a message on the answerphone, ringing directly, or you can call into school and report to reception. Messages cannot be taken from siblings/friends etc.
- Contact school every day your child will be absent, preferably before 9.00 am and no later than 9.20am. In certain circumstances, school will advise parents/carers that it is not necessary to call every day.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone parents/carers/other contacts on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you, this will continue on subsequent days until we know the reason for absence.

- If absence persists a letter will be sent to parents/carers highlighting attendance issues enabling support and strategies to be put in place. Strategies may include the use of the breakfast club, reward schemes for children etc.
- Send a letter inviting parents/carers in to school to discuss the situation with our in-school Attendance Lead and/or Headteacher.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team if attendance does not improve satisfactorily.
- Consider requesting that the Local Authority issue penalty notices in accordance with Lancashire County Councils code of conduct, or use other legal sanctions in order to improve attendance.

Telephone Numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number - if we don't then something important may be missed.

Parents are responsible for keeping the school advised of changes to telephone/contact details. Data sheets will be sent home annually in the Autumn Term for any amendments.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality:

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. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the Headteacher;
- 100% attendance certificates are rewarded at the end of each academic year.
- 100% class attendance cake awarded at the end of each term.
- Use of penalty notices.

The Local Authority School Attendance Team:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). They will 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 the case may be referred to the Court Officers, who can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons/children, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8:55am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **9.00am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in school by 9.00 am.

At **9.30am** 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 Headteacher and/or a member of the pastoral support team (Attendance Officer) to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave in Term Time:

Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.

All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office. Requests will only be authorised if the circumstances surrounding the request are considered to be exceptional.

Our policy and procedures are available on our website, but it is important that you understand that leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

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.

In certain circumstances, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date. Re-admission cannot be guaranteed.

The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010 and 2013)

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

Alternative provision and use of directions:

There are a range of reasons why pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are listed below:

- Pupils who have been excluded, either for a fixed period of more than 5 days or permanently,
- When a pupil is unable to access provision at their main school for medical/Social reasons
- When a pupil is required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour; either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (managed move)

When a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for the purposes of improving behaviour, the governors of the main school must issue a written 'direction' informing all parents of the alternative provision which their child is required to attend. Where a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for all other reasons, the issuing of a written direction is considered best practice.

Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons:

The introduction of new statutory guidance on 1st September 2014 places much more emphasis on the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils; whether their condition is short or long term. The school will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be as a result of specific practices or resources used within school or by sourcing more appropriate provision at another establishment. When education is to be provided at an alternative location, this should always be done via the use of a direction (please see the relevant section of this policy).

Role and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st and every day of absence (before 9:00am where possible)
- Avoid any leave in term time and apply in advance using form
- Participate in attendance at meetings in school
- Participation and co-operation in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies
- Advise school of any change to contact/ telephone details through the year.

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher / (School Attendance Lead):

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school.
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters.
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance.
- Consider each request for leave, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision.
- Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process.
- To monitor attendance.

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Attendance Officer/School Business Support to contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided.
- Attendance Officer/ School Business Support to input and update the attendance registers.
- Attendance Officer/ School Business Support /Headteacher regularly identify

and monitor pupils, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups.

- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents if absence falls on or below 96%.
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance.
- SENCO to monitor attendance of children on SEN register.

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Governors

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Support the Headteacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Chair of Governors to work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

Penalty Notices

School will issue a Penalty notice for:

- Truancy (unauthorised absence)
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Holidays in Term time
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register closes)

This means that Parents/Carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly, and those absences are classed as unauthorised.

The threshold for initiating penalty notice procedures is 5 school days unauthorised absence in a term, or 7 school days unauthorised absence over 2 consecutive terms.

Penalty notices are an alternative to prosecution, and the fine is £120 **per parent, per child**. However an early payment discount applies if the fine is paid within 21 days of being issued, with the cost is reduced to £60 per parent, per child.

Failure to pay the fine within 28 days could result in prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, with a court appearance and a maximum fine of £1000, as well as a criminal conviction.

If the school is contacted by parents/carers to inform us that a child is unwell during a period when an application for a holiday in term time was applied for and declined, or the child is absent during the said period, we will seek to ascertain whether the family is indeed on holiday.

Children Missing in Education:

When a pupil leaves Balladen Primary to move to another school, the pupil is not taken off roll until confirmation has been received from the accepting school that the pupil has arrived. Admissions are then informed of the change of school and the pupil is taken off roll at Balladen. If the child has not arrived at their new school then the Attendance Team/Admissions Team are informed immediately.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. These will be published on our school website every term and on a yearly basis. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Date of Policy: July 2017

Date Review Due: July 2018