

# **The Bellbird Primary School**



## **Attendance Policy**

**November, 2018**

**(To be reviewed Summer 2020)**

## **Introduction**

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995* the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate the reason for an absence and whether it was authorised or unauthorised.

We recognise that early intervention work is essential in order to maintain satisfactory attendance levels. Attendance and attainment are linked. The Bellbird is committed to ensuring that there are strategic approaches to best manage overall attendance and achieve the government persistent absence target of 10% (Sept 2015).

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

The 'three-letter system' is intended to enable schools to continuously and consistently monitor and address poor school attendance system. It gives the opportunity to target non-attendance methodically and progressively up to and including the point at which a referral to an Education Welfare Officer and/or the Legal Panel may be necessary.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian, for example if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. This includes children who arrive after 9.30 am. These absences will affect the child's overall attendance record which is monitored by the Education Welfare Service and remains on their school file.

## **School day and Lateness**

School starts at 8.55am. This is the time your child must be in the classroom, so you need to ensure your child is coming through the gate by 8.45am.

It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to give out instructions or organise school work for the rest of the day. If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child. We take the view there are no late children, only late parents.

Parents who arrive at school after the gates are closed must bring their child in through the office entrance. The child will be marked as 'L' (late) in the register; children who arrive after 9.15 am will be marked as 'U' (unauthorised absence).

## **What happens when a child is absent?**

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, using the appropriate code, or, if the reason has not yet been established, recording 'N'. At 9.30am each morning, office staff will check the class registers and begin contacting parents/carers of any child who is absent but whose absence has not been reported by a parent/carer. Calls to parents/carers will be made by 11am.

On the first day of a child's absence, parents are asked to contact the office to give the reason for the absence and to contact the office as early as possible on each subsequent day of absence.

The office keeps a book to record all absences and when a child is out for a medical appointment.

If a child has a medical or other necessary appointment, parents should contact the office prior to the day of absence. Children must be signed out when collected for such appointment. If a child is absent due to illness for longer than 3 school days medical evidence may be requested.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The office staff will then be in contact as soon as possible with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child. If no contact is made with the parent/carer and there are concerns about the child's well-being, a home visit may be made or contact made with outside agencies.

## **Requests for exceptional leave of absence**

From September 2013 the Department for Education amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the amendments removed references to family holidays as well as statutory threshold of ten days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may NOT grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances, in which case the Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. The definition of exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis.

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, there may be circumstances where a parent may request leave of absence for a special reason. The exceptional leave request form is available on the website or from the school office. The exceptional leave request form should be completed by the parent and returned to the school office at least **one week** before the first day of requested absence. Even with the exceptional circumstances we will still consider the following before permission can be granted:

- Current level of school attendance including punctuality
- The current progress being made towards academic targets
- The time and length of the requested exceptional absence
- The amount of exceptional absence that has been authorised previously

If the school does not agree to the exceptional leave request and you still take your child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. This absence will then be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and it may result in a Penalty Notice being issued.

*Please remember that the more time your child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A **good** understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom.*

### **Repeated unauthorised absences**

The school has adopted a three letter system.

**There is a regular item on the staff meeting and SLT agenda - Attendance and Welfare. This is an opportunity for staff to identify and register concerns about individual children and their attendance.**

If a child has a significant number of absences, the parent(s) or carer will be sent a **Letter 1**, accompanied by the Education Welfare 'School Attendance' Leaflet and a copy of the child's attendance record. The letter reminds parents/carers about the importance of regular school attendance. The letter also points out that regular attendance is a legal requirement. This is recorded on the **record of letters sent** report. Should the pupil's attendance improve but the improvement fail to be sustained, a further copy of the letter may be sent at a later date.

If attendance does not improve a **Letter 2** is sent to the parents/carers asking them to meet with the Head teacher/deputy Headteacher and discuss the absence. Enclosed with this letter is the Education Welfare 'School Attendance' Leaflet and a copy of the child's attendance record. This letter is copied to the Education Welfare Officer and is recorded on the **record of letters sent** report.

If there is no significant improvement in attendance and no satisfactory explanation for the absences, parents/carers are informed by a **Letter 3** that their child is now at risk at becoming a persistent absentee pupil. This means attendance is now at **90%** or below. As such, a referral to an Education Welfare Officer will be considered and a Penalty Notice or legal proceedings may be incurred by parents or/and carers.

### **Rewards for good attendance**

A weekly attendance certificate is given to the class with the best attendance.

## Attendance monitoring

The Bellbird Primary monitors attendance carefully and considers the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting their own priorities for the coming year.

Through newsletters and by personal contact, parents are reminded about their responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly.

The EWO monitors attendance regularly and meetings are arranged/letters sent home as appropriate to encourage good attendance and remind parents/carers of the effects of low attendance.

Parents will be encouraged to understand the full implications for both their children's academic progress and their social groupings when they miss school.

## Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be. The responsibility to authorise or requests for absence has been delegated to the Headteacher. Letters are sent to all parents who request absence and the seriousness of unauthorised absence is clearly explained. The school will keep accurate attendance records.

The rates of attendance will be included in the report to governors by the Headteacher.

Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for bringing it to the attention of the Headteacher/deputy. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher, who will contact the parents or carer.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
C	Other authorised circumstances	O	Unauthorised absence
E	Excluded	P	Approved sporting activity
I	Illness	R	Religious observance
L	Late (before registers closed)	V	Educational visit or trip
M	Medical/dental appointment	X	Non compulsory school age absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence		

Date: 17 September 2018