



Attendance and Punctuality Policy.

Introduction.

At Busill Jones Primary School, good attendance and punctuality is a high priority. We want motivated enthusiastic learners who arrive at school on time, ready to learn establishing good habits for lifelong learning. Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to make sure that children come to school regularly and on time. The school has a legal duty to mark the register and record the attendance of every child on its roll and to specifically code which children are absent or late and why. There is now a statutory requirement that schools publish statistics about their attendance rates. We fully support all initiatives from our Local Authority and comply with all of Walsall Children's Services guidance and expectations. We have challenging targets set each year against both local and national averages. Absences fall into two groups, authorised and unauthorised.

What are authorised absences?

Authorised absences involve children having time out of school for approved reasons, for example: illness, urgent medical appointments, attendance at funerals, religious observance or visits to new schools.

The school will need an explanation from parents or guardians (a note, telephone call, message in person or GP appointment card/hospital letter) if they are to authorise the child's absence. This is then coded in the register. Every effort should be made to arrange routine dentists and GP appointments outside school hours. However, it is understood that specialist hospital or clinic appointments may have to be made during school hours.

It is essential that the school office is informed before a parent collects a child in order for relevant preparations to be made and to keep disruption to classroom practice to a minimum.

What are unauthorised absences?

Unauthorised absences involve children having time out of school without any

Explanation offered, or where the reason for absence is one that the school cannot authorise, for example: holidays, shopping, birthdays, baby-sitting for younger children, too tired, late night due to birthday, not realising term had started or because other members of the family are ill.

If the Head Teacher does not authorise 'exceptional leave' in term time, and leave of absence is still taken, this will always be classified as unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence may lead to penalty notice being served.

Penalty notices are fines of £60 imposed on each parent per child. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

They can only be issued by a Head Teacher or someone authorised by the Head Teacher, i.e. Deputy or Assistant Head, Local Authority Officer or the Police. All schools and the police must send copies of penalties issued to the local authority. Penalties can only be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school.

Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

Penalty notices may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion.

The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

Routines for managing and improving attendance:

- The bell is rung promptly at 8.45am (juniors) and 8.50am (infants).
- At every Friday assembly 'The Attendance Cup' is awarded to the class with best attendance as measured as a percentage of the week. This has proved highly motivating to children. Also we celebrate and reward ALL children if as a school we achieve our weekly target of 96%.
- Termly 100% attendance certificates .
- Children who achieve 100% attendance over the academic year are rewarded with a certificate and small prize.
- Termly 95%+ raffle takes place for 3 prizes.
- An individual letter from the Headteacher is sent every term to the parent/carer informing them of their child's current attendance.
- A clear and consistent message is given at all times by all members of staff.
- Every morning at 9.30am checks on all class registers are made and parents are contacted if absences remain unexplained. Our approach is to be direct, relatively informal with a 'follow up' as soon as possible.

Holidays taken during Term Time.

There is no entitlement to holiday in term-time, and holidays in term time will not be authorised by the school. Unauthorised absence may lead to a penalty notice being served.

We strongly discourage children missing school. They miss out on crucial work and friendships. They may also lose their sense of engagement and involvement with school life.

Government now place a great deal of emphasis on maintaining high levels of attendance in UK schools and unlike previous guidelines, the policy is extremely robust yet providing clear transparency.

The main points of this policy are highlighted below:-

- The 2006 Pupil Registration Regulations remove any reference to 'family holidays and 'extended leave'.
- Where previous guidance has referred to Head Teachers discretion to authorise up to 10 school days leave, the new amendments make it clear that Head Teachers should not grant any leave of absence during term time for any purpose unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. (In such circumstances it will be for The Head Teacher to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school). n.b. there is no definition of 'exceptional circumstances'.
- Should parent(s)/carers choose to remove their children from school for a period of unauthorised Leave of Absence (incl. term time holidays) it may result in a referral to Walsall Council Education Welfare Service.
- Fixed Penalty Payment thresholds have also changed. Payment of £60.00 per parent, per child **MUST** be paid within 21 days (changed from 28 days) with the charge rising to £120.00 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days (changed from 42 days) to avoid prosecution. For example, should the parents of two children attending the school take a vacation during Term Time then the Fixed Penalty payment would be £60.00 x 4, i.e. £240.00 payable within 21 days.
- The criteria for issuing penalty notices remain unaffected. Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices are interventions available to promote better school attendance and behaviour.

The Government have clearly introduced some significant changes to attendance regulations for pupils at school from September 2013.

The most important of these (as highlighted above) relate to term-time leave of absence.

Amendments have been made to 2006 regulations in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1st September 2013.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, allowed Head Teachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday during term-time in "special circumstances" of up to 10 (ten) school days leave per year. Head Teachers could also grant extended leave for more than 10 (ten) school days in "exceptional circumstances". Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to "holiday" and "extended leave" as well as the statutory threshold of 10 (ten) school days.

The amendments make clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Head Teachers should determine the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

The Government has not defined 'exceptional circumstances' referred to in the 2013 regulations and it is for the Head Teacher and governing body to decide what constitutes an 'exceptional circumstance'. However, bereavement, serious illness of a close family member, weddings within the immediate family, e.g. parents or siblings of the child, plus service personnel returning from tours of duty, are commonly regarded as being exceptional.

Any requests that do not easily fit into these areas will be referred to the governing body.

Parents are therefore asked to respect these new regulations under which we must now work, and that if there is a need to take a child out of school during term time, it must be made very clear in the request how the circumstances are exceptional.

Each application for leave of absence will be considered on its own merits.

As from September 2014, applications for 'Leave of Absence' (including Holidays during Term Time) made in advance and refused by the Head Teacher, will result in the planned absence being unauthorised. Should the child be absent from school during that period the consequence will be a formal referral to Walsall Council Education Welfare Service resulting in legal action being taken against the parent/carer by way of 'The Fixed Penalty Procedure'.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframes set out in that notice, the matter will be referred to Walsall Council Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

It must be pointed out that referrals will also include circumstances where it is found that parents/carers have removed their child/children from school on the pretext of illness, yet when in reality they have taken on vacation.

Requests to the Head Teacher need to be made before any planned absence is taken. (forms are available at school reception).

Exceptional Authorised leave.

Parents who wish to take their children out of school for any other reason during school time are asked to make this request to the Head Teacher, in writing or in person. It is important to make the request in good time before the period of requested leave; it is not acceptable to tell the school afterwards. The school will respond quickly either by phone, letter, E-mail or in person.

Each request for 'exceptional' leave will be considered on its own individual merit and the Head Teacher's decision will take into account the following, as contained in the DFE Circular:

- The reason for the leave and why it could not be taken in school holidays;
- The number of days requested;

Punctuality

Punctuality is very important and sets important lifelong habits. At Busill Jones Primary, all children should be in school by 8.45am/8.50am, shortly after the main gates are locked. After this time all pupils who arrive at school are recorded as late. Late arrivals will be marked as such by the School Office.

Children arriving after 9.30, i.e. 30 minutes after registration closes, and who do not have a good reason for doing so are marked as an 'unauthorised absence'.

On entering the school via the office, infant children will be taken to the class by a member of staff and not the parent. Staff in the office area will ensure all other children safely enter the school via the internal electronic door.

Routines for monitoring and improving Punctuality:

- Our SLT are present on the playgrounds every morning.
- The bell will ring promptly at 8.45am/8.50am.
- Late marks are issued after 9.00am. There is a great emphasis on consistency between classes.
- A late book is kept in the school office keeping a record of those who arrive late.
- Persistent lateness will result in letters being forwarded to parents.

We are committed to reducing the number of persistent absences in school. It is important for us to identify such patterns, offering support, to both pupils and families; thereby ensuring attendance is above 90%.

For registration purposes, children will be expected to be in school by 9.00 am.

Attendance Issues and Procedures:

Stage One:

Contact will be made with parents/carers when a problem is first identified in order to deal swiftly with any issues arising. If our Parent Support Advisor has been unable to contact a parent either by telephone or a Home Visit, a note will be left at the home address requiring explanation for the child's absence. A reminder will also be given to the parent regarding future absences.

Stage Two:

If there is no improvement following the initial contact and no satisfactory explanation for absences, a letter should be forwarded to the parents/carers, indicating that future absences may not be authorised with the potential that the matter may ultimately be referred to the EWS.

Stage Three:

With no improvement after stages 1 and 2, then the parents should be invited to attend a formal meeting at school where attendance and punctuality targets may be set. (The Education Welfare Officer will also be invited to attend).

The Education Welfare Officer will make contact with the parents, fully exploring the reasons for non-attendance, with a view to removing any obstacles. Ultimately, if there is a lack of co-operation by the parents and the individual child fails to maintain regular attendance at school, the Education Welfare Service may take legal action.

Date Implemented: October 2016

Date for review: October 2017.