



Belvoirdale Primary School

Pupil Attendance Policy

May 2023

Agreed by Governors:

Signed:

Dated:

To be reviewed:

Pupil Attendance Policy

Good attendance is key to ensuring children make good progress. This policy outlines the context for promoting and encouraging good attendance.

Children are expected to attend school every day unless there is a good reason not to.

School Times:

- 8.40am-School gates open and children wait in the playground.
- 8.45am- Bell is rung, children line up and register opens.
- 8.50am to 9.00am- All children should be in school and ready for learning.
- 8.50am –Gates close
- 8.50am - Children arriving after this time should register at the school office.
- 9.00am- Registers close. **REGISTERS SHOULD BE SAVED by 9am.**
- 9.00am to 9.05- Children arriving between these times will be marked as Late (L)
- 9.05am- Children arriving after this time will be marked as an unauthorised late (U)

Roles and Responsibilities

Children – are responsible for ensuring they are organised and ready for school, being aware of the significance of being absent and ensuring they work hard to try and catch up on missed learning if they are ill. Children learn the responsibility of getting a good night's sleep and good time keeping.

Parents - are responsible for their children arriving to and being collected from school, punctually. Parents are responsible for their child's good attendance avoiding where possible absence through minor ailments and planning holidays outside of term time.

Authorised Absences

If you know that your child is going to be absent from school e.g dental, hospital or clinic appointments, you should inform the school office in advance. For an unforeseen absence, please inform the school office by 9am and provide evidence in the form of appointment cards and letters of correspondence.

Absence due to minor illness

The school will follow NHS and DFE guidance on absences for minor illness. Where absence persists due to routine coughs and colds etc. advice will be offered and discussions held with parents. In some instances where this persists it may be useful for parents to meet with the school nurse to discuss this and seek advice

Where parents refuse to engage in a constructive dialogue and/or refuse to seek further help from agencies such as family steps the school nurse or similar, then they will continue to be given the warning letters detailed above and informed that they are not working within the home/school agreement.

No children need to be absent from school because of head lice. If a child is sent home because of head lice, they must be treated and returned to school immediately. For other minor ailments and illnesses there is a copy of these and incubation periods in the school office medical folder.

Appointments for dentist /doctor

Wherever possible parents are requested not to take children out of school for medical/dental appointments. Such appointments should be made after school. Where this is not at all possible, parents are asked to try and arrange these in the afternoon (as opposed to the morning) or as close to the end of day as possible. If appointments must be taken in the day then copies of the appointment card /letter must be passed to the office to file.

Exceptions

Where a child has had a known illness such as regular attendance at hospital or similar, there will not be the need for the sequence of letters for monitoring as detailed above. However, parents will still be informed about how the picture of attendance is changing with more frequent reports so they can monitor this. Parents need to give the school copies of any appointments made for their records. A letter indicating this will be sent to explain.

Unauthorised Absences

These are absences for which we do not receive a written explanation, or days for which there is not an adequate reason. Unacceptable reasons include: going to buy shoes or clothing, getting up late, a day off for the child's birthday, going to see relatives.

Parents must telephone the office on the first morning of absence or illness by 9am. When no call has been received, the school will attempt to make contact with the parent. If no contact or no appropriate reason is given, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Governors – are responsible for reviewing and monitoring actions defined in this policy and the impact of this on whole school attendance and learning. The Governors are responsible for holding the Headteacher to account in ensuring this policy is followed and listening to appeals if they occur.

The Headteacher – on behalf of the Governors, is responsible for ensuring all stakeholders play their role to maintain good levels of attendance for all pupils by following and executing the remit of this policy. The Headteacher is accountable to the Governors that this policy is adhered to by all parties and will compile reports for attendance to keep Governors up to date.

All staff – are responsible for raising concerns about attendance or punctuality and the impact this has on classroom life. They record in books or on plans when pupils have been absent from lessons and make parents aware what work has been missed and any concerns arising. They are responsible for talking to children and parents about their absences when this becomes a cause for concern and

keeping relevant notes. Staff must seek additional reports for attendance if they notice patterns emerging.

Admin staff – are responsible for maintaining accurate records of attendance and compiling frequent reports and administration for attendance. In some instances this may include printing weekly reports or alerting the Headteacher if issues with attendance and punctuality are noted. All new pupils arriving must have a copy of the home/school agreement on arrival. Admin staff are the first response if pupils do not attend school in ensuring a reason has been given and chasing families if no reason is forthcoming. If the school is concerned about an unexplained absence they may also report this to social care in case of safeguarding issues.

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)- is employed by the school to monitor attendance. Termly meetings are held to discuss the current issues.

Attendance below 95% is monitored.

Parents are invited to attend meetings with the EWO so that support can be provided.

Where attendance is significantly below 95% and does not improve after monitoring, meetings and support, the EWO will advise the school on the appropriate next steps; this can involve legal proceedings and penalty notices being issued by the local authority (not by the school).

Local Authority – LAs have responsibility under sections 444, 444 1 and 444 1A of the Education Act 1996 for legal action to enforce attendance at school. This duty is exercised through the school's own Education Welfare Service and its Education Welfare Officers (EWOs). They also have the following legal powers to enforce attendance:

- School attendance orders
- Prosecution for irregular attendance
- Penalty notices for irregular attendance
- Education supervision orders.

Absence requests

In all instances, requests for leave must be submitted in writing using the Request for Absence form available from the school office (see appendix 1).

The Governors of Belvoirdale Primary School have agreed that no absences for holiday requests, day visits or similar will be authorised. This also reflects the DFE guidance and ensures that there are not mixed messages with parents (who may query why some absences have been authorised and others not). This means any time taken out of school will be marked as unauthorised.

Only in very extreme circumstances may the Headteacher on behalf of Governors and at their discretion, allow an authorised absence and this will be the exception and not the norm. Examples of this could be:

a sudden and unexpected bereavement in the family; a serious illness of immediate family; other significantly traumatic family event such as an incident or period of domestic violence; incident or period of mental illness in the family; very traumatic parent separation; a National event of great importance where absence has been agreed by the school.

This is not an exhaustive list but an example of possibilities. In these instances absence permission will only be granted on one occasion and only if children have demonstrated: at least good previous attendance (i.e. 96% or higher); good punctuality; no immediate concerns for their progress; no other concerns with school life for example needing a measured programme for behaviour or being part of a nurture group.

When making such decisions the Headteacher will consider on balance if the absence requested will be a helpful solution to a difficult situation or circumstance i.e. a preferred option than being in school at that time. A response will be made in writing within 7 days. Governors will periodically review absence requests.

Should an absence be declined and subsequently a claim for illness made on the same day the absence will be recorded as unauthorised as a matter of course. If an absence, claimed as illness, is later suspected of not being so or indeed not needing excessive time away from school, the Headteacher is requested by Governors to record it as unauthorised.

Fines

The Government has introduced a fining system where schools may now, in some instances, issue fines to parents for poor attendance through penalty notices. Belvoirdale will explore all possibilities of avoiding penalty notices wherever possible with the support of the EWO. However, it may be necessary to issue fines where there are consistent problems with attendance. Belvoirdale will follow the Leicestershire LA Policy when issuing penalty notices.

Appeals

If a parent disagrees with the refusal for an absence to be authorised or the way an absence has been logged, they have the right to appeal in writing to Governors. They must do this within 7 days of receiving notification or the Headteacher letter stating the reasons for the absence needing to be taken in term-time and why they are appealing against the decision (or indeed why they are appealing against any unauthorised absence). In turn, a response will be provided in writing from Governors after investigating the case. A response will happen no longer than 30 working days after the appeal letter has been received. In some instances this may mean decisions are overturned retrospectively and until that time the absence will remain as unauthorised.

Reporting to Governors

Termly attendance reports will be shared with Governors so they can keep abreast of fluctuations in whole school attendance figures. Attendance data will form part of the Headteacher's report to full Governors. On-going monitoring and actions of EWO involvement will be reported on.

Late marks

Being late to school can be extremely unsettling for children particularly when they arrive into class and teaching has already begun. This can completely unsettle their start to the day and have a negative impact on teaching and learning for them and also for other children.

Where persistent late marks keep arising on a weekly basis with no sign of improvement, parents will be invited to discuss this with the EWO.

New parents

Where new children arrive at Belvoirdale as mid-year transfers, attendance data will be passed to the Headteacher. Where this information is cause for concern the Headteacher will arrange an opportunity to discuss this and share the policy with new parents.

How is this policy shared with parents and children?

On first joining the school, parents will be informed of this policy. This policy will also be shared on our school web-site. All parents are expected to sign our home/school agreement when they join us and at the start of each school year teachers will remind children of their responsibility as well as playing their part to minimise time away from school. There will be a section of the prospectus that refers to attendance. If children are absent they will be informed of work they have missed in school and how they might go away and ensure they catch up. As part of our curriculum, we will teach children the importance of punctuality and good attendance and their responsibilities in being ready and alert for learning.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1 Request for leave form

PLEASE NOTE:

As of 1st September 2013, schools are no longer allowed to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. All requests are discussed with our Education Welfare Officer.

As parents you place yourself at risk of the Local Authority issuing you with a Fixed Penalty Notice should you disregard the Headteacher's decision to not approve your request for absence.

Penalty Notices stand at £60, per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being issued, rising to £120 per parent, per child, if paid after 21 days but before the 28th day.

If Penalty Notices are not paid, parents may face legal action through the Magistrates Court which could result in a criminal record and or fine of up to £1000 if found guilty.

Further information can be found in the attendance policy on the school website and also on the back of this form.

PARENTS/CARERS SECTION

PARENTS/CARERS SECTION				
Surname of Child			First Name	
Date of birth		Year	Class	
Full name of Mother				
Full name of Father				
Address of child				
Postcode		Telephone number		
Reason for request				
Departure Date		Return Date		
Would your child miss any national tests or examinations?				Yes / No
Is his/her attendance above 95% over the past 12 months?				Yes / No
Has (s)he had leave during term-time in the last 12 months? (If so, please give dates, reasons, and number of school days leave)				Yes / No
Parent/Carer signature			Date	
Holiday in term time	Approved _____ school days		Not approved _____ School days	
Reasons				
Date parent/carer informed of approval/non-approval				
Headteacher signature			Date	

Taken from the Belvoirdale Attendance Policy

(www.belvoirdale.org)

Absence requests

In order to have complete clarity and equality for all parents, Governors have agreed that no absences for holiday requests, day visits or similar will be authorised. This also reflects latest DFE guidance and ensures that there are not mixed messages with parents (who may query why some absences have been authorised and others not). This means any time taken out of school will be marked as unauthorised.

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APPENDIX 2 Standard attendance letter reply

DATE

Re: Formal Warning in relation to your family holiday request.

Dear Mr/Mrs,

Thank you for your recent request to be permitted to take XXXXX out of school from DATE to DATE in order to

Government guidelines, which came into effect on 1st September 2013, prevent Headteachers from granting any leave of absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. This is also reflected in our attendance policy which is available from the school office or online at www.belvoirdale.org. A family holiday during term-time does not fall under the category of 'exceptional circumstances' and I am therefore unable to grant leave of absence for your family holiday request.

The School and its staff regard the regular attendance of children at school as being vital to each child's education and development. It is for this reason that non attendances (however short or infrequent) are treated seriously. It remains the policy of the school to only sanction non-attendance during term time in exceptional circumstances. All instances of unauthorised leave will be examined by Belvoirdale's attendance officer and action may be taken in the form of:

- The issuing of a *Penalty Notice* of £120 per parent per child (discounted to £60 if paid within 21 days).
- Referral by the Local Authority directly to the Magistrates' Court for the purposes of a criminal prosecution.
- Monitoring of attendance until further notice.

It is hoped that you will take serious consideration of the information outlined above. Your child's absence will be recorded as **Unauthorised**.

Yours sincerely

Richard Dax

Headteacher