



Attendance Policy (Belmore)

Updated April 2017

1. The Importance of Good Attendance

At Belmore Primary Academy we believe that good attendance is central to children achieving, making good progress and forming good relationships.

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. 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 children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

2. Policy Aim

The aim of The Belmore Primary Academy attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to as much as is possible.

Belmore Primary Academy takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support.

3. Legal Framework

Statutory guidance on parental responsibility measures:

- The Education Act 1996
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education Act 2005
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education/Student Registration (England) Regulations 2000 & amendments
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and amendments □ The Education and Skills Act 2008

This policy has been amended to comply with the Department for Education Advice (DfE) on School Attendance (August 2013)

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- work in partnership with the school
- ensure the regular attendance of their children
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school and include an expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as making medical and dental appointments outside school hours
- respond to text messages requesting reason for absence
- complete slips with reasons for absence if received
- ensure children arrive at school on time
- ensure a good attitude to learning
- meet the social and emotional needs of the children
- ensure their contact details are up to date
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance
- report any academic or social concerns promptly
- retain open and honest communication with the school
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time

Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- listen to parents and the school
- communicate with parents and the school about any worries or anxieties
- go to bed at an appropriate time and come to school on time and ready to learn

The School

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- provide a welcome and safe environment
- communicate with parents and carers
- text or call parents for reasons of absence if they have not been reported
- send home slips requesting reasons for absence if no reason reported
- provide education appropriate to the child
- promote and celebrate good attendance for all
- keep accurate and up to date records on children's punctuality and attendance and liaise with the Local Authority (LA) regarding concerns over children's attendance
- complete a monthly return to the Local Authority highlighting any persistent absentee (PA) children
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance

The Governors

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure there is clear policy and guidance applied fairly by the Head Teacher
- take time at governors' meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen
- appoint a governor with responsibility for behaviour and attendance

School Leadership Team

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings

5. Promoting Regular Attendance

Creating 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 details on attendance in our regular newsletters and on the school website
- report to parents at least termly with their child's attendance and punctuality rate
- report to parents how their child is performing in school and how their attendance relates to their attainments at every Parents' Evening and written school reports
- celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements on a school attendance board
- reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events
- run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together towards raising attendance levels across the school
- celebrate attendance with children in whole school assemblies every week for KS1 & KS2 with rewards for the winning classes rewarded with a non-school uniform day
- hold attendance clinics in school with the Participation Officer from the Local Authority
- hold internal attendance meetings with the parents of children who are at risk of becoming Persistent Absentees

6. Support

Belmore Primary Academy offers a variety of different support to students and their families to positively reinforce good attendance and punctuality. This may include support from the Attendance

Officer, the Pastoral Manager and Inclusion Team, the Class Teacher, the Learning Mentor, the Year Group Leader, and Senior Leadership Team.

In some circumstances the Local Authority Participation Officer will be attached to the case to work with the family and the school to improve attendance. The school Attendance Officer and Pastoral Manager will hold meetings in school with parents wherever possible before referring the case to the Local Authority. The school also works with a variety of external agencies to support students who are absent from school and their families.

The school provides Learning Mentor support for those children who experience difficulties at school and pastoral and behaviour support plans for those pupils at risk of exclusion. Support and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are offered to those children who have additional educational or medical needs.

The breakfast club at Belmore Primary Academy is open to all children and is offered to all families where attendance and punctuality is an issue to encourage the children to arrive early, start the day in a calm fashion and offer a healthy breakfast. The school also provides a 'soft start' in the mornings where children are supervised in their classrooms from 8.35am.

In exceptional circumstances the school will endeavour to assist with collecting children from home and bringing them in to school. Attendance is monitored closely and school staff will visit the home where it is felt to be appropriate if a child is absent without a valid reason.

7. Categories of Absence

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences.

Staff should make it clear on the school register when taking attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised. If staff have concerns regarding absences they should follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return. For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a written note from the parent/carer of the child.

Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents are expected to make a phone call to alert the school on each day of absence. When the child returns to school they should bring a note from their parent explaining the absence – this is for the school records.

For prolonged absence due to illness, parents may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

Medical or dental appointments

Parents are expected to make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children are expected to attend school for as much of that day as possible.

Authorised absences

There may be some exceptional circumstances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement or similar.

Exclusion

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence.

Family holidays and extended leave

The school believes that taking holidays in term time affects children's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

The school **cannot** authorise any holidays during term time and this applies to all year groups, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, a parent/carer choosing to take their child on holiday in term time without authorisation will be identified in the Local Authority checking of pupil absence and will risk a penalty notice of £60 per parent per child on return from holiday. If unauthorised leave is repeated it can result in a Court Summons being issued to each parent. Holiday/flight details may be requested for all unauthorised holidays.

Religious observance

Belmore Primary Academy recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times. Children are not expected to miss more than 3 days in any school year for religious observance

Parents will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

8. 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, preferably in writing.

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

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 Local 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 too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- excessive illness without medical evidence

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.

9. Punctuality/Late Arrival

Registration starts at 8.50am for all children in Years 1 – 6 and at 9.00am for Reception children.

Any child arriving after these times must report to the Welfare Officer on duty and they will be marked as late in the register.

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 getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

Persistent lateness can result in disciplinary action where it is felt that the child holds some responsibility for this.

10. Absence Procedures

If a child is absent parents/carers must:

- contact the Attendance Officer by telephone on the absence line to update every day of absence (01895 463364) or call into school and report the absence to reception to leave a message for the Attendance Officer
- if the absence is due to illness and is longer than two days, they may be asked to provide medical evidence (eg. note from medical practitioner or photocopy of prescription)
- respond to text messages from the school if they are unable to call

If a child is absent the school may:

- telephone or text parents on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them
- invite parents to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Manager
- refer the matter to the Local Authority Participation Officer if the absence lasts for more than 10 days without authorisation

11. Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

- A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more 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 parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.
- We monitor all absences thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.
- PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic monitoring where absence affects attainment.
- All PA cases are automatically made known to the Local Authority Participation Officer.

<p style="text-align: center;">Parents are responsible for making sure their child attends school to meet the Government target of 95%</p>

12. School Action: following up absences

Class registers are checked by the school Attendance Officer at the end of the registration period. Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the school Attendance Officer will contact the parent or carer to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

If the attendance rate fails to improve the school will notify the Local Authority Participation Team for further action.

Where a child has been absent from school for a period of more than 20 school days, and where the absence was unauthorised and both the school and LA have been unable to contact the parents, the school may remove the child from the school roll.

The Local Authority Participation 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 Local authority Participation Officer.

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 persists, these Officers can use sanctions such as **Penalty Notices (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid within 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice)** or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 441(1) and 444(1A).

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered student at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence".

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Participation Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858 or participationteam@hillingdon.gov.uk

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its attendance figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be made available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and students as the best way to ensure as high level of attendance as possible.