

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the School Absence Enforcement Policy written by Cumbria County Council and revised in February 2016

Blackford C of E Primary School is committed to the principles stated in our document. We strongly believe that all pupils benefit from the education we provide and therefore from regular school attendance. In order to achieve this, we will take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted on as quickly as possible. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

Aims

School aims to ensure that:

- All pupils have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the National Curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- No pupils will be deprived of their education opportunities by either their own absence or lateness or that of other pupils.

It is recognised that:

- The majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peers, and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society.
- Many pupils and their parents may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their children's attendance at school as required by law (ref Section 7, 1996 Education Act).

Expectations

School expects that all our **pupils** will:

- attend school regularly;
- arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day with all equipment needed;
- carry out any work provided by the school during an authorised leave period.

School expects that **parents** will:

- contact school, as soon as is practical, whenever their child is unable to attend school;
- only keep children at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If a child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache, stomach-ache etc. parents should inform the school and bring them in. If they don't get any better, school will contact parents straight away, to collect them.
- endeavour to keep health appointments out of school hours when possible and, if unavoidable, pupils should be brought back to school afterwards;
- inform a member of staff of any reason or problem that may hinder their child from attending school;
- fulfil their legal responsibilities and ensure their child attends school;
- seek permission from the school for any leave of absence. The Headteacher has the right to refuse authorised absence in accordance with LA guidelines (see below for further details).

Parents and children can expect the following from the **school**:

- regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance in line with national guidelines;
- early contact when a pupil is absent without explanation;
- action on any attendance problem notified to the school;
- referral of specific attendance issues to supporting agencies where appropriate;
- encouragement of, and rewards for, good attendance.

We encourage and reward good attendance by:

- consistent, clear communication with parents and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt, attendance;
- setting targets for improved attendance and sharing these with Governors, parents and pupils;
- the accurate completion of registers at the start of each session, and within 15 minutes of the start of each session;
- attendance reports each half term (weekly for those with <95% attendance) and an annual report at the end of the school year;
- weekly award of a 'trophy' to the year group with the best attendance;
- monthly award of a non-uniform day to the year group with the best attendance
- termly and yearly 100% attendance rewards.

Follow-up action in cases of non-attendance

- School will contact parents on the first day of an absence by 9.30am if no reason has been received (contact will be by telephone);
- If there is no response to the first contact, a letter will be sent to enquire about the unexplained absence;
- If attendance drops below the school target of **96%** (starting from Autumn 2) parents will receive a letter indicating that this is the case and that attendance needs to improve (see appendix A).
- If attendance drops below 92%, parents will be sent a further letter (see Appendix B) and will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the reason for this and any necessary action will be agreed.
- Attendance will then be monitored closely over a 12 week period.
- Where no improvement in attendance occurs, parents will be requested to attend an Attendance Panel (see Appendix C) which will comprise the Headteacher and at least one Governor where clear objectives will be set and support offered. Parents will be made clear about the implications of ongoing poor attendance. The LA Access and Inclusion officer may also attend where possible.
- Where there is no response to school intervention, and where the absence or pattern of absence has persisted and attendance drops below 90% without explanation, the school can refer to the Access and Inclusion team at the LA, once the pattern of absence meets the service referral criteria.
- *Please see the Attendance Flow Chart in the County Council Enforcement Policy for a full overview of how the school will manage poor attendance.*

Holiday Absence

Recent changes to legislation have removed the discretionary 10 day period of absence which covered family holidays. Schools are now required to refuse requests for holiday absence in term time.

Headteachers may, however, grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If parents believe that their circumstances are exceptional, they should make request a leave of absence form from the school office and return it to the Headteacher detailing the reasons behind the request.

The headteacher will not authorise absence unless they believe the circumstances are exceptional. Case law identifies that any holiday or event which can be arranged during school holiday periods should not be authorised during the school term.

In considering a request, the school will also take into account the child's age, the time of year of the absence, and the reason for the visit. The headteacher will also consider the child's stage of education and progress and the child's overall attendance record.

Parents are therefore strongly encouraged to avoid booking family holidays during term time.

The Headteacher will consider each request on a case by case basis and will respond promptly.

If exceptional circumstances do exist and leave is granted, parents must ensure their child catches up with any missed work on their return.

Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holiday in Term Time

*"Penalty Notices will not be used as an **automatic** sanction against parents who take unauthorised holidays in term time, but may be issued in certain circumstances. Each situation should be considered individually."*

Taken from the County Council Enforcement Policy 2016.

Author/Owner	Date Written/updated	Approved by Governors	Comments
Mrs L Smith	Sept 2010		
	5 th March 2013		Updated by curriculum committee
	Jan 2014		In light of new legislation re holidays
	July 2016	Sept 2016	Regular review

To be reviewed by governors in line with the policy review timetable

Appendix A

Date

Dear

Re: D.O.B

Address

Following routine monitoring of all students attendance at school, it has been identified that your child's attendance is below 96%. This is below our school target and below national average attendance.

We accept that there may well be obvious reasons for absence, such as illness but we have a duty to inform you that your child's attendance is now below average.

We hope that by bringing this to your attention you can support your child and the school to ensure your child gains the greatest benefit that they can from their education, by regular school attendance. However, if needed, please feel free to contact school on (01228) 674614 to arrange a time so that you can discuss any issues or concerns you feel may be impacting on your child's ability to establish and maintain a regular attendance pattern.

Yours sincerely

Linda W Smith

Headteacher

Appendix B

Date

Dear

Re: D.O.B

Address

Your child's attendance is now below 92%.

This is well below school's average attendance and is detrimental to your child's academic and social achievements.

Should your child have further absences, they should be accompanied by medical evidence to ensure authorisation. This can include a practitioner note, appointment card and/or labelled medication. This will remain in place until your child's attendance reaches 95% this academic year.

If attendance fails to improve, you will be invited to discuss the matter at an attendance panel made up of myself and at least one governor and possibly an LA Access and Inclusion officer.

Should you require any further information or wish to discuss attendance issues, please do not hesitate to come in and see us or to contact the school on (01228) 674614.

Yours sincerely

Linda W Smith

Headteacher

Appendix C

Date

Dear

Re: D.O.B

Address

You will be aware that we have contacted you previously to inform you of school's concerns in respect of your child's absence from school.

Your child's attendance at school has deteriorated further and they are currently only achieving -----% attendance. As a result of this, your child has now moved into the persistent absentee (PA) bracket (90% and below).

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to your child's education and will seriously affect their learning. Blackford CE Primary School is committed to ensuring your child achieves their full potential and recognises that this can only be accomplished with your assistance and your child's full attendance at school.

Whilst any child may be absent from school due to illness, we recognise that sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school for a variety of reasons. We wish to support you and assist your child in establishing a regular attendance pattern at school and would ask that you contact me to arrange a mutually convenient meeting to discuss any barriers to your child's school attendance.

Please be aware that should you fail to contact me and your child's attendance deteriorate further, we will pass the case to the LA Access and Inclusion officer who may make consideration of enforcement proceedings.

Yours sincerely

Linda W Smith

Headteacher