**Attendance Policy**

West Blatchington Primary & Nursery School



Date: October 2022

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Key contacts

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|  | Name | Contact details |
| Lead Member of staff | Natalie Bellis in partnership with SLT | 01273 770777 ext: 103 |
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**Rationale**

At West Blatchington Nursery and Primary School we believe that children cannot learn if they are absent from school and that high attainment depends on good attendance. We therefore aim to ensure that all our children take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and to raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of pupils.

We expect all school personnel to support and promote excellent school attendance by acting as role models and to work hard to provide a learning environment in which all pupils are eager to learn, feel valued and enjoy coming to school. School personnel have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

Sometimes a pupil’s absence or lateness may not be their fault and in these circumstances, it is our policy to be supportive of the child. Also, at times we have to give allowances for religious beliefs and individual family circumstances.

We believe it is essential to regularly remind parents of the importance of good attendance and its links to pupil attainment. The Education Act 1996 clearly states that the prime responsibility of parents/carers is to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

Truancy at this school is rare, however, we believe truancy is a matter that we treat very seriously as we feel pupils are not only losing valuable learning time but they are putting themselves at serious risk as the school and their parents are not aware of their whereabouts.

When a parent/carer telephones the school or uses Studybugs to provide information that their child is unable to attend due to illness, or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. The child’s current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.

The school **will not** authorise any holiday to be taken during term time.

Every child has the Right to an Education (Article 28, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). Persistent absence or lateness can impact on children receiving the full education they are entitled to.

In line with Brighton and Hove, **we aim for above 96% attendance for every child**.

In this city, pupils who attend for more than 95% of the year achieve GCSE results that are one grade higher than those with lower attendance. Alongside the academic benefits, attending school is also about being with friends, experiencing new activities and learning new skills. The routine of school can be comforting and familiar for children, providing a consistent support network.

To contextualise this aim:

* **Missing 19 days in a school year means only being in school for 90% of the time**
* **Being late 15 minutes every day would mean missing two weeks of learning in a year**



This policy should be read in conjunction with the Brighton and Hove City Council Code of

Conduct for issuing Fixed Penalties regarding School Attendance. (appendix 2)

This policy should also be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy,(accessed via the school website)

At West Blatchington Nursery and Primary School, we are committed to supporting children with medical conditions so they enjoy a full education

**Our aims for the policy are**

* To improve the overall percentage of pupils’ regular school attendance.
* To make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school, including children, families, staff and governors.
* To develop a clear framework to define agreed roles and responsibilities.
* To implement a system of rewards for consistently high and improved attendance alongside the management of absences
* To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and children.
* To respect and appreciate that variation in lifestyle and religious background may place different demands upon children and their families.
* To provide an inclusive approach to which takes into account the social, emotional and physical issues within families which can impact on attendance
* To provide a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.

**Registration and lateness**

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that registers are kept up to date and filled in accurately. Class teachers are responsible for their class registers and this is checked by the administration staff.

* Registers are taken on SIMS by the class teacher or substitute teacher (with appropriate guidance)
* The School day starts at 8.40am, any child arriving after 8.45am will be marked as late (L) and their parent/carer will need to sign the late book and provide a reason.
* The register closes at 09:00 and paper registers taken to the office. **If a child is later than 09:30** after the register has closed then a U code will be entered.
* Lates are monitored monthly and if lateness persists a letter will be written to the parents, if this continues they will receive a second warning letter and will be invited to a meeting with the Family Liaison Worker, Natalie Bellis. If improvement is still not seen then a further meeting may be arranged.
* If a child has been late to school (after close of registration at 09:30) on 6 or more separate occasions in a 6 week period then they will be issued with an official warning letter. If there is not acceptable improvement then the school can refer to the Local Authority who will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.
* Parents/carers are encouraged to come and speak to school about any issues that they may have regarding lateness

**The role of the child/parent**

* To come on time to school each day unless ill or in exceptional circumstances
* To set up good habits as early as possible
* To understand the links between poor attendance/punctuality and underachievement
* To contact the school by 08:45, using Studybugs as the preferred means of contact, or via Front Office if there is to be any absence – with details of why and to provide any evidence if available
* To bring children to school after or around any medical appointments
* To try and make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible
* To talk to the school if there are any problems or issues with their child attending school
* It remains the legal responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure a child’s regular attendance

**The role of the class teacher**

* To develop relationships with the parents
* To communicate with parents when attendance screening has noted that absence is increasing. To record the communication on CPOMs
* To monitor the reasons for absence by talking to the child and/or parent
* To notice any patterns in non-attendance and to enquire and inform relevant staff through CPOMS
* To keep SLT and attendance lead up to date with any information through CPOMS
* To raise attendance issues with parents at parents evening using individual pupil data provided
* To inform parents and the Family Liaison Worker/Inclusion Coordinator if a child is missing interventions by non-attendance or lateness, this can be done through class teacher or adult who is leading the intervention
* To talk to the class about attendance to raise it’s profile
* To reward good attendance through whole school and individual activities
* To report on attendance in the annual report to parents
* To attend Attendance Support Meetings where possible
* To discuss attendance as part of the parent consultation meetings

**The role of the Family Liaison Worker/Attendance Lead**

Monitoring Concerns

* To fortnightly track attendance and follow the guidance provided by the Local Authority Code of Conduct
* To manage CPOMS in respect of pupils at risk of persistent or chronic absence so that they are closely monitored by key staff
* To keep class teachers and SLT informed of relevant screening results and to provide context around any absences
* To meet and liaise with parents where attendance and/or lateness is a concern and ensure meetings are appropriately documented in line with the LA code of conduct
* To arrange and attend Attendance Support Meetings and ensure relevant information is shared prior to the meeting
* To inform SLT/Class teachers of any meetings taking place to ensure absence continues to be closely monitored
* To liaise with the Inclusion team to ensure all staff working with the children and their families are aware of any concerns to ensure that decisions can be made with individual family circumstances in mind
* To analyse and report to SLT and the governors around key trends/groups where absence is problematic
* To be aware of how poor attendance is effecting academic achievement for individual children.
* To inform the local authority if a child on a child protection plan is absent from school
* To support with rewarding consistently high attendance
* To support with rewarding improved attendance, especially within the vulnerable groups
* To ensure data is provided for all key groups including those in care and those previously in care
* To ensure pupil voice forms part of the development of attendance rewards and raising the agenda of attendance across the whole school.

**The role of the Headteacher**

* To be aware of children’s/families poor attendance through liaison with the Family Liaison Worker
* Authorising of any absence is at the Head’s discretion and will only be given in exceptional circumstances
* To respond to all letters requesting absence
* To unauthorise all holidays, unless exceptional circumstances, and refer to the Local Authority for a penalty notice if the holiday is unauthorised
* To ensure all literature provided to parents such as prospectus, attendance policy, home school agreements, newsletters and website information include the warning that parents may be issued with a penalty notice if a holiday is taken without permission
* To promote good attendance at meetings with parents where appropriate e.g. new Reception parents initial meeting, parents evening

**The role of the Governing Body**

* Ensure that the school has a whole school attendance policy in place
* Receive timely attendance reports via the lead governor for attendance and the Family Liaison Worker. To be undertaken within the Curriculum, Standards and Diversity Meetings
* Monitor the effectiveness of the whole school policy
* to have regular meetings between the Family Liaison Worker and lead governor for attendance,
* ensure context is understood around those pupils with persistent absence. To take place at least half termly
* Attendance governor ensure all staff remain accountable and understand their in roles and responsibilities.

**The role of the Local Authority**

* support and challenge schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
* upon the request of the school, the Local Authority has the power to issue parents or carers with a fine for unauthorized absence under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
* The Local Authority also has the power to prosecute parents or carers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if the fine is not paid
* To offer termly link meetings to support the school with attendance and persistent absenteeism

**Monitoring absence**

The school is committed to following clear and consistent internal escalation processes for all levels of attendance and we work closely with all appropriate staff members to ensure absences remains a high priority. We follow rigorous consistent processes as outlined below to ensure that our children and families are well supported.

If a child is not able to attend school, the parents/carers should ring school, or use the Studybugs App on the **first day of absence.** If we have not received a phone call or Studybugs alert about an absence by 08:45, the school will send a text to ensure the parents contact the school to let the school know the reason for the child’s absence. If we have still not heard from the parents/carers a letter will be sent home and if no further reason given or the explanation is not acceptable as a legitimate reason for authorisation the absence will be unauthorized

**Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.**

**If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor’s note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.**

If your child is absent for more than 3 days or more due to illness, evidence will be requested (GP appointment details, medical letter, discussion with a medical professional). Without evidence, absence from the 4th day, may be recorded as unauthorized.

For all pupils that have fallen within the persistent absence category (attendance was less than 90%), absences may be recorded as unauthorized unless appropriate evidence can be provided

Children are generally expected to attend school if they have:

* Runny nose, cold or cough
* Tummy ache
* Headache
* Nits
* Conjunctivitis

We will always contact you if your child becomes increasingly unwell or we don’t feel they are

well enough to be at school.

Sickness/diarrhoea:

If a child is vomiting or experiencing diarrhoea, they need to be completely free of physical symptoms for a period of 48 hours before returning to school. If a child comes back to school earlier than this required time, the parent/carer will be advised to collect their child from school.

For children that are on a CPP (child protection plan); those identified as CiN (Children in Need) and those who are defined as a child in care (CiC) or previously in care (PiC) absence from school can be a cause for concern.

* These children are prioritised when undertaking first day contact with parents/carers
* The tracking and systems will start when the child falls below 96% in any half term period and the social worker will be informed
* If the child is absent and no contact is received from the parent as to the reasons why or the school are concerned about the reasons given, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the social worker

**Categorising absence**

Absences follow the agreed codes that are put into the register. Persistent absence is classed as an attendance of **90% or below.**

If your child has attendance that has fallen below 90% over a six-week period, the school will follow the Brighton and Hove City Council guidance set out in their School Attendance Toolkit. This will involve raising awareness of the attendance concern with parents/carers, seeking medical evidence to explain low attendance, consistently reviewing attendance every two weeks and inviting parents to attend an Attendance Support Meeting to discuss concerns.

Parents and carers will receive standard letters at every stage in the process to inform them of the school’s concerns and any potential consequences of a failure to improve attendance. If there is little or no improvement in attendance, despite the intervention and support detailed above, the school will refer the case to the Council’s Behaviour and Attendance Team to request that a fixed penalty notice be issued. A family may receive up to three fixed penalty notices in a 12 month period.

If a family has received the maximum of three fixed penalty notices in a twelve month period, and there has been little or no improve in attendance, the school will refer the case to the Council’s Behaviour and Assessment Team to consider prosecution.

**Authorised absence may be given in the following circumstances:**

* Exclusion
* Days of religious observance
* Medical/dental appointments (if they cannot be arranged out of school time)
* Illness of the child (if attendance is not a cause for concern and where the parents/carers have notified the school of the reasons for the absence.
* Emergency situations (force majeure) such as bereavement or serious illness of a close family member

Leave of absence during Term Time

A pupil’s absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are absent, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which the School and parents must seek to avoid. Under guidance given by the Department of Education, schools are not able to authorise family holidays during term time. School term dates are published a year in advance; therefore, the School does not see any reason for parents to take their child(ren) out of the School during term time.

Where leave of absence has been granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher’s discretion. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the leave of absence is not applied for in advance, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

**Request for absence during term time**

If a parent is requesting time off for exceptional circumstances then a **letter needs to be written to the Head teacher at least two weeks in advance of the proposed absence except for emergency situations**. Each case will be looked at on an individual level. All requests will receive a personalised, individual written response from the school. If exceptional circumstances are granted, the head teacher will determine the number of sessions the child can be away from school. This absence must not exceed this agreed period of absence. Otherwise, the absence will be deemed as ‘unauthorised’ and a fixed penalty notice may be issued for each child who is away from school in this way.

**Unauthorised absence includes:**

* Holidays during term time
* Sickness of parent/carer who cannot get their child to school
* Medical appointments for other family members
* Child’s illness, with no medical evidence, after the parent has been notified that attendance is a cause for concern
* 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 authorised.

The Attendance Lead may request medical evidence for longer periods of absence and for children who are absent for 3 days or longer.

**Rationale for the administering of Penalty notices (as taken from the Code of Conduct)**

* It is a legal requirement under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 that parents of children of compulsory school age ensure that their children receive full-time education that is suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that they may have. A child reaches compulsory school age at the start of the term on or after their fifth birthday, and continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach 16.

* It is essential for pupils to attend school regularly in order to maximise the opportunities available to them. The Council’s Behaviour and Attendance Team investigate cases of irregular attendance and instigate statutory intervention where appropriate.
* Under the provisions of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, in certain cases of unauthorised absence a penalty notice may be issued to the parent(s)/carer(s) responsible. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice once issued by the local authority. A penalty notice will be issued to each adult who holds parental responsiblity of each child (includes those with parental responsibility who do not live with the child

Brighton & Hove City Council (‘the Local Authority’) considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where **unauthorised** absence occurs (taken from the Code of Conduct). Parents will receive a warning letter from the school prior to the issue of a penalty notice. (please refer to Appendix A)

Circumstances when penalty notices might be issued:

* Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed). Six sessions within a period of 6 school weeks
* Pupils whose attendance has not reached a satisfactory (90% attendance)) level during a six week period following intensive support.
* Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification in a fixed term or permanent exclusion.
* 6 or more sessions of unauthorised absence within a term (O coded). This does **not** relate to unauthorised holidays but any other unauthorised absence.
* Penalty notices **will** be issued for all unauthorised **holidays taken during term time**. The Local Authority recommendation is that this is for any unauthorised leave of 6 sessions (3 days) or more
* Unauthorised leave during Term Time

The Authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather help parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any legal enforcement. However attendance is of such importance to all of us that the Authority **will** use these powers if this is the only way to secure a child’s schooling. If parents fail to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice they may be prosecuted for the original attendance offence,

**Rewards for good attendance**

At West Blatchington we will reward excellent attendance (96% or above) through a variety of strategies. These include:

* The class who has the best weekly attendance will be shared in assembly and written up on the Attendance Notice Board
* Class Attendance heroes are identified, and the attendance trophy for the class with the highest attendance for the week will be awarded during the celebration assembly
* Rewards for the most improved attendance at the end of each term and celebrated in the last weekly assembly of the term
* Gold, Silver and Bronze Attendance certificates provided for the class teachers to give out at the end of each term
* Class attendance percentages shared with all teachers to share with their class
* Individualised incentives and rewards for specific pupils
* End of term attendance rewards for pupils who have consistently high attendance
* Reward sessions for the class with the highest attendance for each half term.
* Recognition of those achieving 100% attendance using Amazon voucher/other rewards based around pupil voice
* Introduction of family prizes for those children whose attendance has improved or remained consistently high during a term

**Procedures for attendance of 95% or below**

Every two weeks an attendance report is run showing individual children’s attendance of 95% or below. When a child’s attendance drops below 95% at any point, the reasons given for the absences will be checked. Where there is a cause for concern (e.g. where a pattern of short, regular absences occurs) the following procedures will be followed and we will try hard as a school to support the child/family;

* **94.1-95.9%: monitoring of absence by class teacher/attendance lead within the fortnightly screening process. Class teacher to discuss the drop in attendance with the parent/carer**
* **93.1-94%: First attendance letter to be emailed with a supporting telephone call either by the attendance lead or member of SLT/teaching staff/inclusion team**
* **92.1-93%%: Second attendance letter sent out with a request to provide any supporting evidence around continued absences.**
* **92% and below: Letter sent to attend an Attendance Support Meeting. Targets will be set and attendance will be reviewed on a fortnightly basis until a satisfactory level of improvement has been made. ATTEND questionnaire may also be sent with registration certificate for the parent/carer to complete with their child. This is to prevent pupil from falling into the persistent absence category (**
* **Continued decline in attendance: fortnightly monitoring and consideration (in consultation with the head teacher regarding forwarding to the Local Authority for further action). Letter to be sent confirming further actions/target setting**

**If attendance has improved at any of the stages above there may not be any further action taken but the child’s attendance will continue to be monitored by the class teacher, Family Liaison Worker/Attendance Lead and where appropriate the Local Authority**

**Attendance Support Meetings:**

**During this meeting the following will be discussed:**

* **Attendance Lead, class teacher and parent/carer to meet. Pupil to attend for some of the meeting, if appropriate. Class teacher to attend to provide a summary of academic progress in light of declining attendance**
* **Information within the ATTEND questionnaire which may provide contextual data around ongoing absences**
* **Target setting for parent/school/ pupil**
* **Fortnightly review period clearly stating that if attendance has not improved, what the next steps could be.**
* **Letter to be sent to parent/carer outlining actions to be undertaken during the review period**

# Complaints

At West Blatchington Primary & Nursery School, we work very hard to ensure that we fulfill our legal requirements with regard to attendance. However, should you feel that you have been unfairly treated, in the first instance arrange a meeting with the Head teacher. Once the case has been taken to Court, restrictions may apply on the action that we are able to take.

**Appendix A – Absence Codes**

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| **ABSENCE CODES** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| **/** | PRESENT (A.M.) |
| **\** | PRESENT (P.M.) |
| **B** | EDUCATED OFF SITE (NOT Dual registration) |
| **C** | OTHER AUTHORISED CIRCUMSTANCES (not covered by another appropriate code/description) |
| **D** | DUAL REGISTRATION (ie pupil attending other establishment) |
| **E** | EXCLUDED |
| **F** | EXTENDED FAMILY HOLIDAY (agreed) |
| **G** | FAMILY HOLIDAY (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement) |
| **H** | FAMILY HOLIDAY(agreed) |
| **I** | ILLNESS (NOT medical or dental etc appointments) |
| **J** | INTERVIEW |
| **L** | LATE |
| **M** | MEDICAL/DENTAL (NOT Illness) |
| **N** | NO REASON YET PROVIDED FOR ABSENCE |
| **O** | UNAUTHORISED CIRCUMSTANCE (not covered by another appropriate code/description) |
| **P** | APPROVED SPORTING ACTIVITY |
| **R** | RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE |
| **S** | STUDY LEAVE |
| **T** | TRAVELLER ABSENCE |
| **U** | LATE (after registers closed) |
| **V** | EDUCATIONAL VISIT OR TRIP |
| **W** | WORK EXPERIENCE |
| **X** | DO NOT USE DFES# SCHOOL CLOSED TO PUPILS |
| **Y** | ENFORCED CLOSURE |
| **Z** | DO NOT USE |
| **@** | DO NOT USE |
| **!** | DO NOT USE DFES# Non-compulsory school age absence |
| **#** | SCHOOL CLOSED TO PUPILS |
| **\*** | DFES Z: PUPIL NOT YET ON ROLL |
| **-** | ALL SHOULD ATTEND/NO MARK RECORDED |