

# Brookside Primary School

Ellesmere Port, Cheshire



## Attendance & Punctuality Policy

September 2024



## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

Brookside Primary School recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on children's progress, attainment, enjoyment of learning and relationships within school. We believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. Good attendance (including arriving to school on time) is essential for them to gain the appropriate skills which will equip them for life. In addition to this, it helps a child realise their potential and ensure they are motivated, confident and enjoy a diverse range of curricular opportunities and experiences.

The school aims to achieve good attendance by operating an Attendance and Punctuality policy within which staff, pupils, Parents/Carers, the local community and the Education Welfare Service can work in partnership. This policy can be located on our Brookside school website and is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

### **Aims and Objectives**

- To ensure that Parents/ Carers are fully aware of the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy.
- To ensure that children are made aware of the value of regular attendance.
- To create a culture in which good attendance is the norm.
- To promote regular attendance and punctuality by being vigilant and maintaining the school internal absence record.
- To ensure that a child's early learning is not jeopardised by poor attendance.

### **Legislation**

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school. Regular attendance is essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainment, opportunities and future success. Pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless an exceptional circumstance applies. The school monitors attendance and ensures a quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that "The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive an efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

- Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that “if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his parent is guilty of an offence”
- Section 576 Education Act 1996- Meaning of “parent”  
For the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a ‘parent’ and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:
  - All biological parents, whether they are married or not.
  - Any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person- this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative.
  - Any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

### Registers

Registers provide the daily record of attendance for all pupils. They are legal documents and the register may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions. Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day, morning (am) and once during the second session, afternoon (pm) Registers are not open for more than 30 minutes. The registers are marked using the codes advised by the Department for Education (DfE)

#### There are two types of absence:

**Authorised** – Where the school approves a pupil absence. An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell. Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

**Unauthorised** –Where school does not approve the absence. An absence may be coded as unauthorised when:

- No reason for absence has been given
- Medical evidence is not received when requested
- A request for leave of absence has been unauthorised
- A pupil arrives to school after registration has closed at 9.15am.

Parents/ Carers should be aware that Brookside Primary School may contact the Local Authority if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within a 10 week period.

The first penalty notice issued to the parent for that pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days, reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first notice, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. A

third penalty notice will not be issued within a 3 year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) time within those 3 years, a penalty notice will not be issued and alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

### **Procedures**

Brookside Primary School has a duty to safeguard all its pupils. If a child is absent, Parents/Carers should inform the school **on the first day of absence and each following day of absence, stating the reason**. This can be done via telephone (0151 558 1123 option 3 ) or via 'Absence reporting' on our school website. This should ideally be done before 8am, so that the reason can then be recorded on the class register and therefore the teacher is informed. Parents/ Carers should provide as much information as possible regarding their child's symptoms so that the absence can be recorded accurately. Home/school communication is extremely important in supporting your child to achieve and feel settled in school.

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence on the register with an 'N' code. If there has been no contact from Parents/Carers, the Pastoral Manager, Mrs Austin will contact them on the initial day and every day thereafter until contact is made. If no contact is made and no reason is provided this absence will be recorded as unauthorised on the child's record. If there is a continuation of no contact, school will follow the 'Child Missing in Education' process.

Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable for several reasons: Registers provide the daily record of attendance of all pupils; they are legal documents that may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance.

School robustly monitor and analyse attendance data to promptly identify and address possible concerns and allow for early interventions to support the child/ family's underlying needs. Monitoring may identify that a child is experiencing underlying emotional based needs that are contributing to non-attendance.

### **Punctuality**

At Brookside Primary School we apply a robust day to day process to track and follow up absence and poor punctuality. We will ensure registers are completed accurately and on time, twice per day, in accordance with the timings set out below. This will indicate which pupils are absent or late for school.

**Here at Brookside Primary School the school day begins at 8.45am** and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time. **Gates are open before this time.** If your child is in class on time, they will be marked as present.

**Late arrival after 8.45am:** Pupils will receive an 'L' (late) code on their record. Pupils MUST be brought into the main office to be signed in. This is so we can mark them as present in the building.

**Registration closes at 09.15am.** If your child arrives to school after registers have closed, they will receive a 'U' code on their record. This is an unauthorised absence for that session. In accordance with the 'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, if your child arrives after the registers close, they will receive a mark, code U, that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action if the problem persists.

**Afternoon registers are taken at 1.00pm.**

These late procedures are in place so that every child is entered onto the register and can be accounted for in the event of an emergency. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, further action may be taken. You may approach the school at any time for support and advice if you are having difficulty getting your child to school on time or maintaining regular attendance.

### Young Carers

School will be flexible with late attendance where a young carer is concerned and school will make every effort to ensure the root cause of lateness is apparent and appropriate support is given. It is important to ensure that our most vulnerable pupils are given the same opportunities, which may mean extra support in certain cases.

### School procedures for concerning attendance

If a child is regularly late for school or often absent, Parents/Carers will be contacted via a letter in the post outlining the concerns. Following the initial letter, there will be a period where the child's attendance is monitored (a maximum of four weeks). If there is no improvement at this point, Parents/Carers will be invited in for an Attendance Panel meeting with the Head Teacher and/ or Pastoral Manager. An attendance plan may be created and actions/ targets set. In some cases, a follow up meeting may take place.

If attendance continues to decline and the situation does not improve, school may send a letter advising that any further absences will only be authorised if medical evidence is provided. This may also be requested in instances of long term or repeated absences for the same reason. This will enable us to assess whether the child requires additional support to help them attend school more regularly.

Proof of prescribed medicines (with the child's full name on) or a letter/medical cards from hospital/a Doctor regarding appointments related to the absence are classed as medical evidence.



If absences are not authorised, a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be done and a 'Notice to improve' may be issued via a formal letter in the post. Fixed Penalty Notices may be issued for unauthorised absences.

For children who have a medical condition and cannot attend school, the school will refer to the Cheshire West and Chester Council's Medical Needs Team. Their policy states that the referral must come directly from the child's school and must be supported by medical evidence from one of the following health professionals:

- Consultant Paediatrician
- Consultant Child Psychiatrist
- Hospital consultant

Supporting evidence from a General Practitioner alone cannot be accepted.

As of 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024 schools must make a sickness return to the Local Authority and provide the full name and address of all pupils who have been recorded with the I code (illness) and who the school have reasonable grounds to believe they will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. This is to help the school and Local Authority to agree any provisions needed to ensure continuity of education of pupils who cannot attend because of health needs, in line with the statutory guidance on Education for Children with health needs.

### **Leave of Absence during term time**

Parents/Carers are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term time. A leave of absence will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute as an exceptional circumstance. Head teachers are only empowered to approve a leave of absence when it is requested in advance by the Parent or Carer with whom the child resides and when circumstances of the requested leave are 'exceptional' The Headteacher and Governing body will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis.

Any requests for leave of absence should be submitted in advance, on the correct form, available from the school office or on our school website (see attached form at end of this policy). Parents/Carers should not keep their child off school unless it is absolutely necessary and should instead **promote the importance of good attendance**.

It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of a consecutive 5 or more unauthorised days, then school may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to each Parent/Carer. If school have not been notified but suspect a holiday is linked to absence, they will contact you and evidence may be requested.

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away, they are less prepared for the

lessons building on that teaching and learning when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid.

Parents/ Carers should try to make medical appointments outside school hours. If this is not possible, they should try to ensure that the Pastoral Manager and child's teacher are informed in advance. Where possible please provide an appointment letter/card prior to the appointment.

### **Religious Observance**

We recognise that some pupils may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance falls during school time, we ask that Parents/Carers notify school in writing in advance.

### **Reward Systems**

Here at Brookside Primary School, we love promoting good attendance, which is recognised and rewarded as an achievement. We support and encourage children to maintain good attendance at school.

We have several reward systems in place:

- Weekly attendance – Every Tuesday morning there is a whole school assembly. Prior to the assembly the class attendance for the previous week is calculated as a percentage and the class with the highest attendance gains the Attendance trophy for the week along with 10 minutes extra play time.
- Half termly class award – Every half term, the weekly attendance figures are added together and the average is taken and the class with the highest percentage receives a treat.
- End of Term class award – The class with the best attendance over the term receives a treat.
- End of Year class award – The class with the best attendance for the year receives a treat.

At Brookside Primary School we understand that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. Therefore, it is important that attendance is recognised, celebrated and held in high regard, no matter how small the improvements might be. Improved attendance or improved punctuality is recognised and praised, not just 'perfect' attendance. Every child has the right to feel they can achieve and be successful. We like our pupils to see the attendance incentives and competitions as a team effort and not to blame individuals. We recognise that some pupils will require their own individual reward systems.

We have a noticeboard in the main school foyer, that highlights the weekly class winners and overall school attendance percentage for the previous week.

## **Conclusion**

It is important that school and Parents/Carers work together with a shared plan and outcomes when supporting a child's attendance and wellbeing. If despite persistent attempts to work with parents, there continues to be a lack of engagement, then legal procedures may be followed to secure engagement and school attendance.

As a school, we recognise that building respectful relationships with families and working in collaboration is essential to ensuring the best outcomes for children. We require parents to actively support the work of the school. We are committed to ensuring the systems and processes are in place with regards to promoting attendance and would encourage parents to make contact if they have concerns about their child.

We are proud to be a trauma informed school, and as such, all pupils are welcomed back to school when they return from absence.

### **If you are worried about your child's attendance, what can you do?**

- Talk to your child.
- Talk to the Head Teacher, Pastoral Manager or any staff at school.
- Talk to the Education Welfare Service.

In developing this Attendance Policy, we have taken into account the fact that Cheshire West and Chester is an ethnically diverse community. The school has incorporated practice, which guards against disadvantaging any sections of the community. Improving the performance of underachieving pupils is a key priority in the Education Development Plan. This aims to improve the attainment of minority pupils across the County.

Brookside Primary School understands the need for on-going communication with Parents/Carers and pupils regarding this Policy, particularly those new to the school.

**Brookside Primary School Attendance Champion:** Mrs K Austin (Pastoral Manager)

[pastoralmanager@brookside.cheshire.sch.uk](mailto:pastoralmanager@brookside.cheshire.sch.uk)

0151 558 1123



## APPLICATION FOR A PUPIL TO BE ABSENT FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME

SCHOOL NAME:

PUPIL NAME:  CLASS:

DATES: FROM:  TO:  Number of days  
required:

**Please state the reason:**

*We will only authorise a leave of absence when we consider it to be an **Exceptional circumstance**.  
Exceptional circumstances are one off events which are unavoidable.*

**Please give the names of any brothers/sisters who are also affected:**

Name:	D.O.B.	School:	Has school been Informed? (Y/N)

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**(To be completed by School)**                      Date form submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Current attendance:  %                      Last year's attendance:  %

Any previous requests?    Yes / No    details:

Request granted: YES / NO

Fixed penalty notice requested: YES / NO

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_