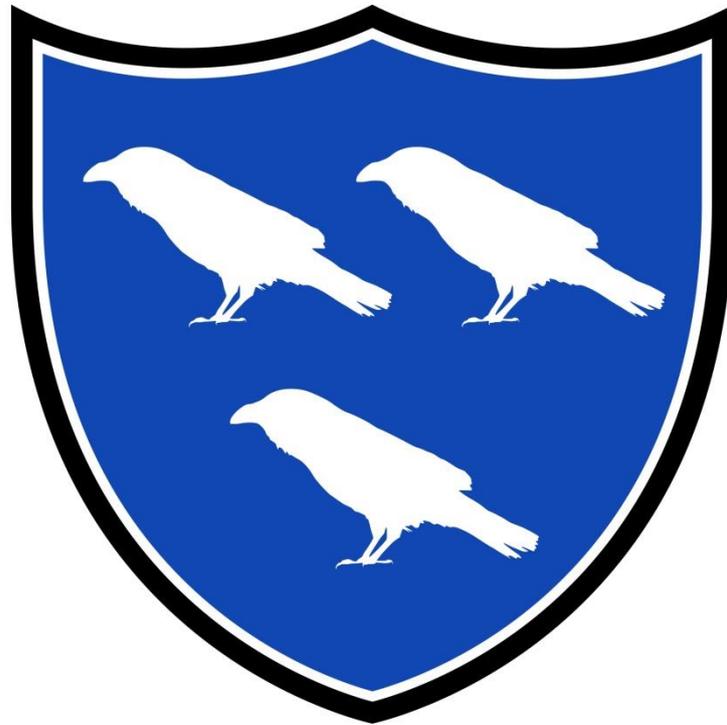


# Valley Primary School



## Attendance Policy

Updated: January 2021

Review Date: January 2023

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Regular and punctual attendance is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. At Valley, we set an attendance target of 97%+ for all pupils.

The school staff, Governors and Trustees believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance and therefore will encourage and support all parents and carers in ensuring their children maximise their educational opportunities through regular attendance, and that any difficulties that impact upon attendance are identified and acted upon promptly.

### **Start of the school day**

Lessons start at 8.55 a.m. If a child misses registration they will be marked 'Late' (L) in the register. If they arrive after the start of the school day, 8.55 a.m pupils must report to the school office. If they arrive after the closure of registration at 9.10am, they will be marked as (U) and the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for the AM session. The start of the afternoon session in the infants is 1.00 p.m. and 1.30pm in the juniors. As in the mornings, attendance after this time will be marked as 'late' (L) and if the arrival is later than 15 minutes after afternoon registration has closed, children will again be marked as (U), an unauthorised absence for the PM session.

### **Parental responsibility**

Parents/Carers should ensure their children attend school regularly and on time and be aware of their legal responsibilities. It is important that children arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day. It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the morning of each day of absence before 9 a.m. giving the reason for the absence and an estimation of how long the child is likely to be away from school. If the child does not return to school within 5 consecutive days, then the school will need medical evidence either in the form of an appointment card, doctor's certificate or a photocopy of the prescription in order to authorise the absence.

If contact is not made by the parent/carer when a pupil does not attend school, they will be contacted by the school office. If there is no response to this, the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will try to make contact to ascertain the reasons for absence.

Any absence that is not explained by an email or phone message will be classed as unauthorised. All children's absence will be monitored by the school and Education Welfare Officer.

### **Staff responsibilities**

The school staff has a legal requirement to ensure that the register is taken a.m. and p.m. and will keep regular and accurate records of all attendance. Attendance will be monitored by school office staff who will attempt to make contact with parents/carers whose child fails to attend school with no reasonable explanation being given.

The Head Teacher along with all other staff will continue to promote and encourage good attendance and ensure that the school provides a safe and welcoming environment and atmosphere for the children. Any irregular and unjustified patterns of attendance, or frequent late arrivals, will be discussed with one of the Senior Leaders at school in the first instance. Some cases are referred to the school's Education Welfare Officer and parents/carers may be asked to meet with the EWO and Head Teacher to discuss their child's attendance.

### **Leave of absence**

Holiday dates are published at least a year in advance and the school is unable to authorise absence other than illness, bereavement of an immediate family member, or forced school closure. Other than exceptional circumstances, all other absence will be recorded as unauthorised. At Valley, exceptional circumstances are

emergency or unavoidable events which relate directly to the child or immediate parents / carers i.e mother / father

If parents wish to withdraw their child from school, then a letter or email from parents/carers will be required explaining the reasons behind the absence and sent to the school office, a minimum of 5 days before the date of departure. The school will consider the application and parents/carers will be notified in writing with the outcome.

### **Fixed Penalty Notice**

Where absences are unauthorised:

- Referral can be made to the Educational Welfare Officer [EWO] where legal sanctions may be applied in the usual manner.
- Where 10 unauthorised sessions i.e. 5 days occur, the school, at the discretion of the Head Teacher, will apply to the Local Authority for the issuing of a penalty notice. This application would be made after consultation with the EWO.
- The offence of non-school attendance is absolute and the legal requirement regarding evidence is simply that the child did not attend.

The penalties are as follows:

- £120.00 fine for each adult/carer with parental responsibility, for each child absent in a household if paid within 28 days.
- £60.00 fine for each adult/carer with parental responsibility, for each child absent in a household if paid within 21 days.

Failure to pay will result in a summons to the Magistrate's Court.

### **Monitoring attendance**

The school will monitor the attendance levels of all pupils on a regular basis. Where children have an attendance between 95% & 93% the school will monitor the pattern and reasons for the absence.

Where a child's absence is 93% and below, the school will issue a first letter informing parents/carers that their child's absence will be carefully monitored. If there is no improvement in the child's attendance, or the absence rate continues to rise, then a second letter will be issued instructing that all future absences must be verified/authorised by a medical professional that the child is not well enough to attend school or, they will be unauthorised. If there continues to be cause for concern, a third letter will be sent informing parents/carers that their case has been passed to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and parents/carers may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss their child's attendance.

Additionally, when a child's absence is 93% and below and absence rates are as a result of repeated illness, the school might invite the parents to a meeting to discuss illness patterns with the School Nurse. Equally, if the child has a diagnosed medical condition and has attendance of 93% and below, a meeting might be arranged with the School Nurse to discuss the option of reviewing or implementing a Health Care Plan.

Where the absence is 90% or below, the Education Welfare Officer will become involved and they too will continue to monitor the absences, and liaise with the family. Parents/carers may also be asked to attend a meeting to discuss their child's attendance. The London Borough of Bromley request attendance data from the school on a termly basis. The names of pupils who have attendance of 90% and below have to be given to the London Borough of Bromley as they are deemed as persistent absentees.

The school requests medical evidence for all absences due to illness when a pupil's attendance is 90% and below. Medical evidence can be:

- Doctor's Note / Letter
- Appointment Card

- Prescription

### **Broken Weeks**

As part of our attendance monitoring, we also look at the number of broken weeks pupils have. A broken week is when a pupil has not attended school for the full week. If a pupil has 6 or more broken weeks, this means that they have been unable to attend school for half a term without an absence. In these cases, parents will receive letters informing them of their child's number of broken weeks and, in the more extreme cases, parents will be invited to attend a meeting with the EWO.

### **COVID-19 and Periods of Lockdown**

Parents are encouraged to send their child to school when the Government dictates that it is safe for schools to be open fully. Senior staff will meet with families to discuss any anxieties that they might have regarding their child attending school.

During periods of local or national lockdown, different codes are applied to the registers to demarcate your child's attendance at school.

Occasionally, during specific periods eg, the first half-term of the school's full re-opening, the issuing of fixed penalty notices relating to pupil absence is relaxed. Parents will be informed by letter when the rules are relaxed and when this policy applies in full.

### **Attending dental and medical appointments**

Dental and medical appointments should, whenever possible, be made outside of the school day or during school holidays. If it is unavoidable that a child should have an appointment during school hours, the school office should be notified in writing of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected/returned to school.

The school does not expect a child to be absent all day for an AM or PM appointment but instead should be collected or returned to school before or after the appointment. Evidence of the appointment should also be given to the school. In all cases, medical evidence of appointments is required to apply the necessary codes to the school register.

### **Other Appointments**

At Valley, we recognise that some of our pupils lead busy lives outside of school whether that be in music and the arts, sport, scouting associations and modelling.

The school will authorise up to three days of absence relating to a pupils' pastime where they are performing at a high level. All absences will require authorising documentation from the club or organisation that is requesting the pupil's absence.

### **Responding to non-attendance**

When a pupil does not attend school, the school will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence if a note or telephone call has not been received by 9 a.m., parents will be sent a text message asking them to provide details of the absence. A subsequent text message will be sent, followed by a phone call if parents have not responded to the first text message.
- If by the second day there has still been no contact made, a staff member might undertake a home visit to check on the welfare of the pupil and their family.
- When concern escalates due to loss of contact with a family, the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) might carry out a safeguarding visit.

- Persistent non-attendance including unauthorised holiday leave and/or lateness that cannot be justified in law could result in legal proceedings or consideration could be given to the issuing of a fixed penalty notice in accordance with the Local Authority's Penalty Notice protocol. In addition, the school will support the Education Welfare Officer in prosecutions brought under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

### **Changing schools**

If parents/carers decide to send their child/children to another school, then they must inform the school as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school's roll until the following information has been received, investigated and confirmed by the Borough of Bromley:

- The date the pupil will be leaving Valley Primary School and date of starting the new school;
- The parents' new home address (if applicable) and that of the new school.

The pupil's school records will be sent on to the new school as soon as possible.

In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Child Missing in Education Officer at Bromley Council.

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Next Review: January 2023

