



Brindishe
Federation

Attendance Policy

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At Brindishe Schools we believe that good attendance and punctuality are essential for the following reasons:

- ❖ research shows that children who attend school regularly do better at school and make better progress
- ❖ people who establish good patterns of timekeeping at an early age tend to keep these patterns for life
- ❖ children who attend school regularly and on time do not miss lessons, parts of lessons or vital pieces of information; they see themselves as 'in the picture' and as important members of the group
- ❖ children are entitled, in law, to receive a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- ❖ schools and parents/carers are legally obliged to ensure that all children receive their entitlement
- ❖ it is not only a child's learning that is affected by missing school; they also miss out on social aspects and this can affect their ability to make and keep their friendships - a vital part of growing up.

Our guiding principles for good attendance and punctuality at Brindishe Schools:

- ❖ All children have the right to their full-time education
- ❖ All children have the right to arrive at and leave school at the appropriate time each day. Responsibility for promoting school attendance is shared by everyone in the school and is not left to a particular individual or group of people
- ❖ Having a clear and effective attendance policy which supports good attendance and punctuality improves all aspects of a child's school's life, especially its values, ethos, curriculum and achievement.

How do we mark and monitor attendance and punctuality?

The attendance register for all children on the school roll is taken twice a day - at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. For each child, the register is marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site or absent. If the child is absent, the teacher (or person taking the register) will indicate the reasons for absence where known. This is a legal requirement that is guided by the government. For details of our start and finish times for each school please contact the school office or visit our website at www.brindisheschools.org

How do we promote good attendance and punctuality?

- ❖ We will make sure that all classes know what their attendance rate is and encourage within each class a positive and supportive attitude towards attendance and punctuality.
- ❖ We will talk to individual children about their pattern of attendance and punctuality so that they can be aware of their goals and their progress towards them.
- ❖ We will report data on attendance rates regularly to all parents and carers.
- ❖ We will include the attendance and punctuality rate of the child in the annual report to their parents and carers and ensure that it remains part of the child's individual school profile or record.
- ❖ We will give consistent messages about attendance and punctuality by modelling good punctuality, praising good attendance and punctuality and explaining to children why these things matter.
- ❖ We will work with parents / carers who are experiencing difficulties getting their child/ren to school and provide support to help them overcome these. Parents / carers can always contact any member of staff to discuss their concerns.

- ❖ Where family health or circumstances are impeding a child's attendance or punctuality we will work with local services and with other professionals to try to minimise the impact. For example we will work with representatives of the medical profession including the school nurse and with colleagues from Social Care and Health. Our aim will be to ensure that a child's punctuality and attendance improves.
- ❖ We will keep careful records of each child's punctuality and attendance so that our decisions and actions are based on reliable data and so that we can carefully monitor performance at child, class and whole school level.
- ❖ We will look carefully at in-school factors which may impact on a child's willingness to attend school regularly and on time. This will include such areas as relationships between adults and children, between children and their peers, the child's behaviour and progress in school and their attitude towards specific events (such as lunchtime), activities (such as tests) and subjects (such as PE). We will be especially aware of how a child's happiness and well-being at school can have a significant effect on their attendance and physical health.

Does this policy apply to nursery-aged children?

The regulations governing school attendance apply to children of statutory school age. They do not apply to nursery-aged children. However habits are established young and we actively encourage parents/carers of nursery-aged children to ensure that the child attends regularly and punctually in the nursery. Parents and carers are therefore asked to ensure that their child is only absent from nursery for authorised reasons.

Who is responsible for promoting good attendance and punctuality?

- ❖ **Parents/carers** have the main responsibility as they are legally responsible and we are fortunate that the vast majority of parents/carers fully support and uphold our high expectations.
- ❖ **All staff** are encouraged to see themselves as responsible for promoting good attendance and punctuality, not least by modelling it themselves and by keeping it high focus. They work to identify and if possible remove barriers to a child achieving good attendance and punctuality.
- ❖ **The Headteacher and Governing Body** are responsible for ensuring that the school works in ways which enable its children to achieve at least the national average rates and where possible to exceed them.
- ❖ **The Senior Leadership and/or Attendance Officer** at each school are responsible for monitoring and responding to patterns of attendance and/or punctuality which impact on a child's ability to make progress in school.
- ❖ **The LA's attendance officer** has a duty to monitor school attendance, to ensure that it meets the local authority and government standards.

What happens if a child arrives late?

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start to the day.

Teachers provide early learning tasks to settle the class before they begin to take the register. If children arrive late, they must go to the school office to be registered for late entry. This ensures that a record of late arrivals is made, for monitoring purposes, and also ensures that the learning of the other children is not disturbed.

We fully understand that a late arrival does sometimes happen due to unavoidable circumstances. For example there may be a serious traffic delay or a one-off unforeseen event. Whenever possible, it is always better to inform the school by telephone when a child will be late. Where a child has a pattern of late arrival we will investigate causes and seek an improvement. A pattern of late arrivals may lead to the school referring the family to the local authority's attendance and welfare officer for investigation.

What if travel to school causes lateness?

Sometimes a child moves out of the area and then has a long or complicated journey to school. Providing that the journey does not lead to a pattern of lateness the child's place is secure. However if moving further away from the school causes difficulty with attendance or punctuality the Headteacher will liaise with the parents or carers and local education authority to move the child to a school within the area of the child's home address.

What happens if a child is collected late from school?

Parents/carers are asked to ensure that children are collected promptly each day; details of our start and finish times for each school are available on our website www.brindisheschools.org or from our school offices. Children do not like being collected late - they feel insecure and are embarrassed if they are 'the last one'. If the parent or adult collecting finds that they are going to be late (for example because a train has been cancelled) they are asked to ring the school office to let us know. We will then make sure that a member of staff looks after the child (or children) until the collecting adult arrives.

Children who are uncollected at the end of the school day wait in a designated area and, after 15 minutes, we will try to contact the parent or carer. If this is still unsuccessful after a further 15 minutes, the calls will be repeated. After a further half hour, Children's Social Care should be contacted to discuss the next step or best option. At this point CSC become responsible for the child. Parents or carers who persistently fail to collect their children on time on a regular basis may be referred to Children's Social Care.

What happens if a child is going to be absent from school?

If a child is going to be absent from school the parent/carer is responsible for letting the class teacher or school office staff know the reason for the absence and the anticipated length or duration of the absence. Where no message is received about a child's absence the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

If a child is absent without explanation when the register is called, the school staff will contact the parents/carers the same day wherever possible.

Notification of, and reasons for, absence must be provided by the child's parent/carer or the parent/carer's adult representative. This may be in person, by phone, e-mail or in writing. We cannot accept messages from primary-aged children.

How do we decide if an absence is authorised or unauthorised absence?

Authorised absence is absence with permission from an authorised representative of the school. This includes instances of absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided (e.g. illness). Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from an authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.

What are authorised and unauthorised absences?

The following notes are intended to explain the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence. The Headteacher (**or their representative**) authorises absence in line with government guidance.

- a) **Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments** - If the school is satisfied that a child is prevented from attending school by reason of illness then the absence will be treated as authorised. We

understand that children will have longer absences for the normal range of childhood illnesses such as chickenpox. However, if a child has more than three days of absence for an unspecified medical reason (such as 'unwell' or 'stomach upset') we may ask for confirmation from a medical practitioner before the absence is authorised. Production of a child's prescription or copy of the prescription can be used as proof of illness/absence

- b) **Doctor's, optician's and dental appointments** should be made for after the end of the schools day or for during the lunchtime or in holiday times if possible. However we understand that this may not always be possible and so leave for medical or dental appointments may be given (i.e. the absence may be authorised). In order to authorise the absence for an appointment we will need confirmation from the parents/carers either in person, in writing, by telephone, or by production of an appointments card of where the appointment is and when it is timed to take place. We will not authorise a whole day off school for medical appointments. The child should attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.
- c) **Exceptional circumstances** - It is for the Headteacher, following government guidance, to determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not: much will depend on the circumstances of the particular case. It is impossible to cover all circumstances within this document but as a general rule authorisation under this category will be *very rare* and the circumstances will be *truly exceptional*. Birthdays, day trips, cost of flights and visiting relatives are not deemed to be exceptional circumstances or a reason for absence.

Exams and tests associated with extracurricular activities or school entry exams. Every effort should be made to organise exams to be taken out of school hours. Where this is not possible requests will be treated sympathetically with consideration given to the following:

- the frequency of the event
- contribution to the child's learning and achievement
- the overall attendance of the child

Requests for absence for exams and tests should be made to the Headteacher giving details of purpose, time and venue

- d) **Family Bereavements** - The death of an immediate family member is a particularly traumatic and sensitive event and any request for absence (e.g. to attend a funeral or associated event) will always be dealt with sympathetically.
- e) **Days of Religious Observance** - Absence of a child in order for them to take part in a day set aside exclusively for religious observation by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong is classified as authorised absence. Children whose religion or faith tradition prevent them from taking part in religious events celebrated at school, will be given alternative learning or may be given permission to be absent.

What happens if a child's attendance causes concern?

Parents/carers have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. There is a national target of **95% attendance** for primary-aged children. This takes into account the normal range of childhood illnesses. We appreciate that children with special medical needs or conditions may find this target difficult to achieve. Where the need or condition is professionally supported and documented the target of 95% attendance is relaxed and a more appropriate target set for the individual child.

If a child's attendance falls below 95%, it alerts us to look more closely at the pattern of attendance.

We would look for the following patterns:

1. Three days or more absence with no known or satisfactory reason.
2. Roughly 3 broken weeks in any six
3. Regular patterns of absence (e.g. Mondays or Fridays)
4. Friends or siblings absent together
5. Persistent lateness
6. Reported concerns for a child's well-being, welfare or safety
7. Changes in family circumstances, changes in delivery or collection arrangements

It is recognised that the attendance rate of a child may have fallen because the child has had a series of medical absences, over a relatively short period of time, and that the rate of attendance will rise with the child's recovery.

If a child does not attend regularly, or there are concerns about the reasons for non-attendance, then we will take the following actions:

- ❖ collect and examine the rate and pattern of attendance
- ❖ talk to the child about their attendance. Discuss with the class teacher, teaching assistants/ member of the Inclusion team to establish the level of concern and any known factors which may contribute to the picture or pattern.
- ❖ the Headteacher will contact the child's parents/carer to establish further information and to identify strategies for improvement
- ❖ if appropriate the school will enlist the support of the Local Education Authority's attendance and welfare officer (AWO).

In all of our actions the intention will be to improve the pattern of attendance and punctuality for the child. Where it is not possible, with the co-operation of the parents/carers, to improve the attendance and punctuality rate of a child the school may decide to take further action. Under current legislation parents found guilty of school attendance offences could be subject to a penalty of up to £2500 and/or a period of imprisonment for up to three months. Penalty notices will be issued by the education authority and failure to pay will lead to prosecution

Penalty notices may be issued for unauthorised absences including:

- ❖ parentally condoned absences
- ❖ unauthorised holidays during term time
- ❖ persistent late arrival at school

More information on penalty notices is available from the school office or from the Attendance and Welfare section of Lewisham Education at Laurence House.

What about absence during term time?

Current government legislation clearly states 'Head teachers may not grant *any* leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. '

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. This means that in Brindishe Schools we will not authorise absence in term time unless there are exceptional and professionally documented reasons why the absence cannot be taken during holiday times.

Removal from the school roll

There are two areas where a school can take legitimately remove a pupil off the school role for not attending:

- In the case of a pupil granted leave of absence exceeding ten school days for the purpose of a holiday in accordance with regulation.
- The pupil has failed to attend the school within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted;
- The school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and both the school and the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is.
- A pupil has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and at no time was the absence during that period authorised by the school also the school and the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is.

For further support and information:

Contact the Education social work service 020 8314 6272 or e-mail attendance@lewisham.gov.uk