



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

Ben Rhydding Primary School



<b>Policy document:</b>	Attendance Policy (pupils)
<b>Legislation: education/ other</b>	Statutory document for school
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<b>Lead governor:</b>	Paul Craggs
<b>Governor committee:</b>	School Improvement
<b>Committee approval date:</b>	December 2016
<b>Review Frequency:</b>	Every 3 years
<b>Reviewed by SI committee</b>	12.03.2020
<b>Date of next review:</b>	March 2023



## **Vision Statement**

At Ben Rhydding Primary School everyone is valued and respected as a member of our learning community. Our Vision for our school is one of a happy, dynamic learning environment where all members of the school and its wider community have a sense of belonging and understand their responsibility to contribute to the enjoyment and success of the learning community that we all share.

## **Introduction**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. School attendance is subject to education laws and this policy is written within that context.

## **This policy will aim to:**

- Demonstrate a strong attendance ethos that improves the overall attendance of pupils and reduces the number of persistently absent pupils.
- Develop a framework which identifies roles and responsibilities of the whole school community.
- Highlight a clear structure for promoting good attendance and tackling absence.
- Promote effective, non-bureaucratic systems for monitoring attendance.
- Encourage the use of attendance data and other information to improve school and pupil performance.
- Promote the general importance and legal requirements of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Enable early intervention when an individual pupil's absence gives cause for concern.
- Install clear support systems for vulnerable pupils.
- Reward and celebrate good and improved attendance.
- Promote effective partnerships with external support agencies and the Local Authority.

## **Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.



The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present
- Absent
- Present at approved educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Section 444 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/her parent is guilty of an offence.

#### **Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)**

A parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent/carer. It can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to the family and is intended to offer support to families and resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

#### **Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)**

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised.
- A pupil has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.

The procedure for issuing Penalty Notices will be in accordance with the Local Authority's Penalty Notice Protocol.

#### **Categorising absence**

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents/carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return.

#### **Illness**

Parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness.

#### **Medical / Dental Appointments**

Parents/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents/carers should show the appointment card to school to confirm the appointment.



## **Other Authorised Circumstances**

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

## **Leave of absence**

Parents/carers are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Leave of absence will not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances' to support the request. Each request will be considered carefully by the headteacher.

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before arrangements are made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may request that a Penalty Notice is issued.

## **Religious Observance**

Ben Rhydding Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside holiday periods or weekends. Consideration will be given to authorising absence or special leave for religious observance. Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to Ben Rhydding Primary School if they intend their child to be absent.

It is reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance or festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised. In such cases the school may request that a Penalty Notice is issued.

## **Traveller Absence**

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible. To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity or dual registered when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced.



## Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order.
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age.
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed.
- The death of a pupil.
- A pupil has transferred between schools.
- A pupil is withdrawn to be educated outside the school system.
- Failures to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age.
- 20 days of continuous unauthorised absence have occurred, and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil.
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.

The school will follow the Local Authority's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.



## Roles and Responsibilities

**Ben Rhydding Primary believes that improving attendance will involve a whole school approach with every member of the school community having a role to play as a member of staff, a governor, a pupil or a parent.**

At Ben Rhydding Primary School, the Head Teacher, leads on attendance with the support of the Deputy Head Teacher and Safeguarding Lead.

Attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department for Education annually through the census and to the Governing Body half- termly. This information is collected through the SIMS system.

Attendance is discussed as part of the agenda half-termly during Governors meetings and an Attendance Report is presented to the Governors on a half-termly basis.

The school Governing Body must ensure they have a direct role in supporting the school to promote good attendance by identifying one lead governor for attendance and the lead governor, to attend, in certain circumstances, Attendance Panel Meetings.

The Senior Leadership Team will ensure there is a whole school approach to improving attendance and reinforcing good attendance by:

- Disseminating the Attendance Policy to all staff.
- Updating all staff regarding any attendance issues at regular team meetings.
- Ensuring the school has strategies in place for collecting and analysing attendance data.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance to parents, carers and pupils through regular whole school letters and other communications i.e. website, newsletters, certificates, reports sent home.
- Seeking to promote the importance of good attendance to pupils and parents/carers during assemblies and at parent events.
- Ensuring a safe and structured learning environment for all pupils
- Delivering informative lessons that are set to pupils' needs
- Ensuring that there is a consistent approach to the use of the escalation of interventions, across all classes and pupils, applying discretion in exceptional circumstances.

The Attendance Team will support good attendance, respond to concerns and promote improvements by:

- Implementing an escalation of intervention.
- Monitoring and analysing pupil attendance data.
- Undertaking regular attendance meetings with the Senior Leadership Team.
- Implementing the identified strategies for promoting good whole school attendance.



- Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance.
- Managing individual pupil casework files.
- Taking an active lead in delivering whole school initiatives such as positive reward interventions.
- Making referrals to appropriate external agencies and the Local Authority as required.
- Contacting parents/carers by telephone calls and text messages when appropriate and recording all contact.
- Record all actions (letters sent, newsletters, home visits) in an appropriate manner.

The Teaching and Support Staff Team will support and promote good attendance by:

- Highlighting to the Senior Leadership Team any pupils causing concern at meetings.
- Talking to their class about the importance of good attendance.
- Promoting whole school initiatives, reward schemes and celebrations.
- Delivering a diverse curriculum in a child centered learning environment.

The parents/carers of our pupils will be expected to support good attendance by:

- Talking to their child about school life and taking an interest in their child's educational progress.
- Avoiding unnecessary absence such as holidays in term time.
- Contacting Ben Rhydding Primary School when their child is absent and providing a reason for the absence.
- Ensuring their child attends punctually every day.
- Engaging with intervention strategies provided by Ben Rhydding Primary School if their child's attendance becomes highlighted as a cause for concern.

**Strategies for promoting good whole school attendance will include:**

- Updating the whole school community about attendance matters through newsletters and the school website.
- Celebrating good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Rewarding achievements by way of certificates and other awards.

**Strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance will include:**

- A standard approach of escalation regarding school warning letters.
- A letter to parents informing them that their child's attendance is at or below 95% at the end of each school term



- Support for all pupils and families where attendance falls below 93%.
- A commitment to maintaining written correspondence to parents/carers when this is deemed necessary.
- Attendance Panel meetings.
- Parenting contracts with agreed targets.
- Requesting Penalty Notices.
- Referral to the Local Authority for consideration of implementing legal proceedings.
- Referral to the School Nurse where medical issues are a concern.
- First day calling procedure.
- Home Visits in certain circumstances.
- Referral to support agencies.
- Casework with identified pupils/families.

### **Attendance Protocols**

Ben Rhydding Primary nurtures and promotes care and respect for each other. We encourage a caring learning environment where children feel safe and secure.

### **Absence procedure for Ben Rhydding Primary School Attendance Team**

If a child is absent from school, the following will be initiated by the Attendance Team:

- A text service will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register at 9.30 am.
- If there is no contact made from the pupil's parent/carer, a telephone call home will be made in the morning.
- The Attendance Team will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission.

In certain circumstances the Attendance Team may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil.
- Invite parents/carers to discuss the situation in school.
- Invite parents/carers into school for an Attendance Panel Meeting.
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss and offer a Parenting Contract.
- Request a Penalty Notice and/or send a legal proceedings warning letter.
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency.

### **Expected absence procedure for parent/carer**

A parent/carer has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken.



If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents/carers are expected to:

- Contact school by telephone call or text before close of register at 9.30 am on the first day of absence, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return
- A telephone call will be required in all circumstances.
- If no reason is provided, a letter will be sent home asking for the reason for absence.

### **Late arrival at school**

At Ben Rhydding Primary School all pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year.

The school day begins at precisely 8.45 am and we advise all parents/carers to ensure their child is on site prior to this. The school register will be taken at 8.55 am. All pupils arriving after this time will be expected to report to the main office where their arrival will be recorded as late in the register.

The school morning register will officially close at 10.00 am. All pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

All pupils who arrive late, or after the close of registration, will be asked to provide an explanation for their lateness, and, where necessary, parents/carers will be contacted in respect of the late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in a referral to the school's Attendance Team and may also result in a request for a Penalty Notice or legal proceedings to be considered.

### **Leave of absence in term time**

Ben Rhydding Primary School acknowledges all absences result in lost learning and directly affect a child's education. As such, applications for leave of absence in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, with a minimum of 4 weeks' notice, and where a pupil's attendance for the previous academic year has reached the school target.

It is recognised that a pupil who takes 10 days holiday in term time will only be able to achieve a maximum of 94.7% attendance for the full academic year.

The law stipulates that the cost of a holiday is not reasonable grounds for claiming it as an exceptional circumstance.

Where applications for leave of absence in term time are refused and families take the holiday without authorisation, a Penalty Notice may be requested for each parent, for each child. A



Penalty Notice fine is £120 to be paid within 28 days; this reduces to £60 if it is paid within 21 days.

### **Persistent Absence**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops below 85% for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 57 sessions or 28 ½ days. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

All pupils who are PA, or are considered to be on track to becoming PA, will be referred to the school's Attendance Team and may also be referred to appropriate external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section (1) offence and a £2500 fine and up to a 3 month prison sentence, under a Section (1a) offence.

### **School targets**

The school's Governing Body will establish whole school attendance and persistent absentee targets each year at the autumn term full body meeting. These targets will be shared with the wider school community through staff training, notice boards and regular communications such as newsletters.

**Ben Rhydding Primary School supports the national target of 97% for pupil attendance because we know that good attendance is the key to effective schooling and unlocking the true potential of each and every child.**

For each academic year, Ben Rhydding Primary School's Governing Body has set a minimum target of 97% attendance. Throughout the school year we will monitor absences and punctuality to highlight where improvements can be made.

This policy was agreed by the School Governors on December 2016

Reformatted: December 2018

Reviewed: March 2020