

# BUXTON JUNIOR SCHOOL



## Attendance Policy

This policy was agreed by the Governing Body:

Signed by: ..... (Chair of Governors)                      Date: .....

Minute Number .....                      Date for Review: .....

## **Attendance Policy**

### **Introduction**

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education, and guidance from the Local Authority. Parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

### **Rationale**

At Buxton Junior School we believe that good attendance and punctuality are essential if children are to take full advantage of school and gain educational and social skills that will equip them for life. We will consistently strive towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children by working in partnership with pupils and parents/carers.

### **Aims and Objectives**

This Attendance Policy ensures that all staff, governors and parents/carers in our school are fully aware of, and clear about, the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Give all stakeholders an understanding of the steps we will take to strive for excellent attendance.
- Clearly state the steps we will take when attendance and punctuality are not excellent.
- Make the legal position clear.

### **Definitions**

#### **Authorised absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate unavoidable reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the Headteacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if an absence is supported by a parent, an absence will be unauthorised.

#### **Unauthorised absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school even if the absence is supported by the parent.

### **Procedures**

At Buxton Junior School we will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- We have a designated member of the Senior Leadership Team who analyses attendance data regularly.

- Parents/carers whose child's attendance is 90% or below will receive a message informing them of their child's attendance and offering support if they need it. It will also be explained that attendance of 90% or below is classed as 'persistent absenteeism'.
- If, after receiving a message, attendance doesn't improve, parents/carers will be invited into school to attend an attendance panel meeting.
- The purpose of an attendance panel meeting is to explain the importance of regular attendance and to explore why attendance is low and to offer support if needed.
- If attendance does not improve following the first meeting, a second attendance panel will be convened to explore why the steps we discussed at the last meeting were not successful and where appropriate new initiatives will be agreed upon.
- If, after two attendance panels meetings have been held, there is still no improvement in attendance, then a fine will be issued.

### **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

Below is a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have:

- Mrs Carter (Headteacher), Mrs Dowling (Deputy Head and SLT member with responsibility for attendance) and Mrs Smith (Business Manager) will take lead responsibility for the analysis of attendance.
- Class teachers will raise any concerns that they have with attendance and punctuality with SLT, e.g., is there a pattern of a child missing the same day?
- Mrs Dowling will make parents/carers aware of falling attendance and offer support.
- Mrs Dowling will lead attendance panel meetings.
- All members of SLT who answer the phone in the morning will be aware of any concerns we have with attendance and will challenge parents/carers.

### **Class teacher(s)**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- raising any concerns that they have with attendance and punctuality with SLT e.g., is there a pattern of a child missing the same day?
- Having discussions with parents/carers during parent/carer consultation evenings.
- Talking to children about the importance and value of regular attendance.

### **Headteacher**

- Mrs Carter (Headteacher), Mrs Dowling (Deputy Head and SLT member with responsibility for attendance) and Mrs Smith (Business Manager) will take lead responsibility for the analysis of attendance.
- Mrs Carter has responsibility for authorising when a fine is issued.

### **Parents**

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that children attend school every day (unless their child has a legitimate reason not to attend e.g., illness or medical appointment).
- Informing school every day (before 9.05am) if their child will be absent that day.
- Making school aware of any upcoming medical appointments in advance and providing medical appointment letters.

### **Registration**

The school doors open at 8.45am and children are expected to be in school by 9.05am. This gives plenty of time for all pupils to come into their classroom and be ready to learn when lessons start.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for marking the attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

All attendance records are documented using Arbor. Attendance registers are legal documents and must be kept secure and preserved in line with the relevant retention schedule.

Mrs Smith (Business Manager) and Mrs Shirt (Business Assistant) ensure any absent marks are annotated with the reason where known, such as specific illness and number of days of absence.

### **Lateness**

Children who are persistently late after close of register soon fall behind with their learning.

Any pupil who comes into school after 9.05am but before 9.20am will be marked as an authorised late. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school after 9.20am but before 9.40am will be marked as an unauthorised late after close of register (attendance code U). Any child who arrives in school later than 9.40am will be classed as unauthorised absence (attendance code O). Code O is an unauthorised absence for the whole session and will affect the child's overall attendance percentage and can be used to calculate absence thresholds for legal decision making.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (attendance code M).

### **Persistent Lates**

Parents/carers of children who are persistently late will be given a personalised level of support. This support may involve:

- An invitation to our school Breakfast Club to ensure that the child is in school on time.
- A close working relationship with our school Family Resource Workers (FRW).
- Other incentives to encourage the child to arrive in school on time.
- An attendance panel meeting to discuss the reasons why the child is not arriving in school on time and to discuss strategies.
- Persistent lates marked as U or O will result in a fine.

## **Absences**

### **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any contact from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check registers each morning to identify those pupils who are absent without explanation and as a safeguarding requirement make contact with the parent/carer of these children by telephone. If a parent does not respond to the telephone call, then this is followed by a message through ParentHub.

### **Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time**

In September 2013 the government introduced regulations making it clear that Headteachers **MUST NOT** give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents/carers must make any requests for term time leave through a 'Leave of Absence Form', available from the school office or the website, and this should be handed in to school at least 3 school weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. Parents/carers must have received written authorisation before a child can be absent from school.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken within an academic year (this may be one block of 5 or more days or multiple absences which together total 5 days or more) which is not authorised by the Headteacher (attendance code G) or where unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold (attendance codes G/O/U).

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

At Buxton Junior School we expect attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents/carers are always informed of our concerns.

If parents have any concerns or require assistance regarding attendance, they should speak to their child's class teacher in the first instance. If things don't improve or further support is required, Mrs Dowling (SLT member and Deputy Headteacher), working in consultation with Mrs Carter will become involved and will offer support, which may include arranging for Family Resource Workers to be involved.

If a child's attendance does not improve and absences are unauthorised this may lead to consideration of parental responsibility measures which may include the issue of penalty notice fines or other statutory action.

### **National Framework for Penalty Notices**

The new national threshold for consideration of legal action is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence, including lates after close of register (attendance code U) and unauthorised leave in term time (attendance code G).

If a child's absence falls into this category school will decide if further offers of support are likely to improve the situation or if a request for legal action should be submitted to the Local Authority.