

Attendance Policy

Beecroft Academy Attendance Policy

Introduction

We, the staff and Governors at Beecroft Academy, work really hard in order to encourage all children on roll to attend on time and every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Aims

We aim to:

- Help children to have a positive attitude towards school Encourage all children to attend school on time, every day
- Provide a safe, warm and welcoming educational provision that will ensure the needs of all children are met in order that they are happy to attend school regularly
- Ensure that all children, regardless of their age, ability, gender, ethnicity, culture, special educational or physical needs, are given an equal opportunity to attend school regularly raise awareness, so that all children and parents/carers understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Prepare children for adulthood by helping them to understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Support children and their parents/carers effectively so that they are able to ensure regular and punctual attendance
- Work with a range of agencies to ensure effective and appropriate action is taken to support families so that all children attend school regularly and on time

Raising Awareness – The Importance of Regular and Punctual Attendance

The school will take the steps needed to raise awareness, both with children and parents/carers, of the importance of regular and punctual school attendance.

This occurs via a number of mechanisms:

Parents/Carers (see information below for further details):

- The school prospectus (this includes the school's Attendance Policy)
- Newsletters and other written communication
- School displays
- Direct communication, written (e.g. traffic light letters) and verbal (e.g. attendance meetings or panels), with individual parents/carers
- Late Patrols with EWO

Children:

- Planned assemblies and curriculum activities
- Displays
- Competitions e.g. design an attendance poster
- Reward systems (see information below for further details)
- Direct communication with identified children e.g. those that arrive at school after the morning bell has rung
- Attendance Bears which are awarded weekly, in celebration assembly) for the class with the highest attendance in KS1 and KS2

Rewards for Good Attendance (See Attached Sheet for Further Details)

The children are rewarded for regular and punctual attendance as part of the school's Star Attendance Scheme (see Appendix 1 for details). Other rewards for good attendance include:

- The CAP Award (this is for children who demonstrate a commitment to attendance and punctuality)
- Attendance Bears which are awarded weekly, in celebration assembly) for the class with the highest attendance in KS1 and KS2
- Letters and certificates for improving attendance

The school also partakes in a number of ad hoc promotions and schemes designed to help the children understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance; these are often lead and supported by the Education Welfare Service.

Pupil Absence

If a child is absent

Parents/carers are encouraged to contact the school in the event that their child is going to be absent from school; the absence will then be recorded appropriately in the register with the correct code.

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register; as a result the secretarial staff will endeavour to contact a parent/carer to confirm a reason for the absence (first day response).

NB If there is any concern over a child's absence the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The office staff will then make contact straight away with the parent/carer, in order to check on the safety of the child. If contact cannot be made then the office staff will inform the Well Being Liaison Officer who will take appropriate action (including informing the Headteacher).

If the school is unable to make contact with a parent/carer a note should be brought to school by the parent/carer to explain the absence on the child's return.

NB A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence. For example, if a child has a hospital appointment.

In the event that an absence has not been justified by a parent/carer then the office staff will send a letter and request a reason for the absence by return.

Requests for leave of absence

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are **exceptional** circumstances (close family bereavement, wedding) whereby a parent/carer may legitimately request leave of absence for a child. We expect parents/carers to contact the school at least a week in advance in order to request a leave of absence form. The Headteacher will then consider a number of factors related to the child's attendance in order to make a decision as to whether the absence will be authorised; s/he may also contact the school's Attendance Officer at Central Bedfordshire Council for advice. The school will contact the parent/carer to inform them of the decision with regard to this by sending out a slip.

With regard to parents/carers requesting leave of absence for a holiday, the staff and Governors agree that the school will follow the most recent guidance provided by the Government and advice from the school's Attendance Officer. Holidays in term time will not be agreed under any circumstance.

NB Parents/carers are encouraged to book appointments for children outside of school time, although it is understood that this is not always possible. Parents/carers are expected to provide evidence, such as an appointment card or letter, of such appointments if they take place in school time. A 'leave of absence' form would not need to be completed in this case.

Long-term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for a significant amount of time, the school will do all it can to send material home (where appropriate) so that they can keep up with their school work as long as they are well enough to do so.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will work with a range of support services so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given tuition outside of school.

Children Missing Education

In line with the Local Authority's procedures Beecroft have a duty to report any child that is missing education. A child may fit this criteria if –

1. the child has been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 4 weeks and both the Head Teacher and the local authority have failed after reasonable enquiry, to locate him/her;
2. the child has not returned to school within 10 days following the expiry of an agreed extended leave of absence (more than 10 days) and the head teacher has established that the child's absence is not the result of sickness or any unavoidable cause and the headteacher and the local authority have both failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate him/her;

Pupil Lateness

If a child is late

Children who are late miss a great deal of the school curriculum and can feel uncomfortable about joining their class late; this can result in damage being caused to their self-esteem. Parents/carers are therefore required to bring their child(ren) to school on time, every day. Children should be on the playground, ready to come into the school building, by 8.45am when the school bell rings.

When a child is late they will need to enter the school via the main school reception area. Their lateness will be recorded in the 'Late Book' and a reason for lateness will also be recorded. Members of the office staff will then transfer this information to the class register.

Children who arrive late but before 9.05am will be recorded in the register as an authorised late; those arriving after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised late. Children who arrive regularly after this time will be referred to the school's Attendance Officer who will take appropriate action.

Partnership with the Education Welfare Service

The school warmly welcomes the support of the Attendance Officer from Central Bedfordshire Council, which as an Academy the school buys into. The school is advised by him/her when issues relating to attendance arise; the school takes action based on the advice given.

Additionally, the school's Well-Being Liaison Officer (sometimes in conjunction with the EWO) works hard to support the school in order to improve the attendance figures; regular activities include:

- Organising late patrols
- Carrying out register checks (which are followed up with agreed actions)
- Organising attendance panels
- Accepting referrals
- Supporting parents/carers to help them improve their child's attendance
- Agreeing fixed penalty notices where appropriate
- Taking court action as required

Repeated Absences

There is a procedure that will be followed if a child is recognised as having unacceptable levels of attendance (below 90%) in order that children do not become PERSISTANT ABSENTEES; details are written below:

Initially, a letter will be sent to the child's parent/carer to inform them that there is a concern over their child's absence. The depth of concern will be indicated by the contents of the letter and the colour of the paper on which it is printed; a traffic light system will be employed. This will give parents/carers time to improve their child's attendance.

NB Letters that are sent will often be linked to other actions such as a meeting with the Headteacher or support from the school's Well-Being Liaison Officer; these may lead to the school organising others support strategies in order that attendance can be improved.

Once a red letter has been sent, if there is no improvement in the child's attendance, then a referral will be made to the school's Attendance Officer. As a result, s/he will contact the parent/carer and request their presence at an Attendance Panel. The Attendance Officer, the Headteacher and the Well-Being Liaison Officer (or singularly) will attend the Attendance Panels.

These meetings will be an opportunity to discuss concerns over a child's attendance with the parent/carer, offer support and set targets in order that the child's attendance improves.

In the event that a child's attendance continues to be poor, the school may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (a fine for unauthorised absence) or the Attendance Officer may begin court proceedings as the Governors, supported by the Central Bedfordshire Council, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents/carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

NB Parents/carers should also be aware that if their child's absence drops below 85% then any further absences will be recorded as 'unauthorised' unless they provide evidence to support the absence. Supporting evidence may include:

- An appointment card/letter
- A note from a GP/Practice Nurse (giving reasons for absence)
- A copy of a prescription made out for the children

When the evidence is presented a decision will then be made as to whether the absence will be authorised or not.

Attendance Records

As denoted in legal documentation, the Governing Body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

Definitions

Authorised 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/carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent/carer writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping or celebrate a birthday during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent/carer.

Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.

Monitoring and Reporting

Class teachers, office staff (including the Well-Being Liaison Officer) and the Headteacher will be responsible for monitoring attendance on a daily basis; all parties will take appropriate action in terms of:

- Recording attendance and absence
- Reporting concerns about a child's attendance

It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor the school's overall attendance, and they request a termly report from the Headteacher with regards to this matter. The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy and for seeing that it is carried out. The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided and seek to ensure that the attendance figures are as high as they should be.

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

J. Hughes (Headteacher) and R.Clark (Well-Being Liaison Officer)
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