

Bill Quay Primary School



Attendance Policy

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Rationale

Bill Quay Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential as it allows pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. At Bill Quay Primary School, we strive to ensure that all our pupils receive a full time education that maximizes opportunities for each child to reach his/her potential.

Aims

This policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued;
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. The Head Teacher, staff and Governors work together with children, parents/carers, and other agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

This attendance policy applies to all children registered at this school and is made available to all parents on our school website.

The Legal Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act and Regulations of 2006 and 2010 parents are responsible in law for ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of their children.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that pupils attend regularly which means being at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is authorised by the Head Teacher.

Bill Quay Primary School is required to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. Parents/carers are expected to contact the school office to inform staff of the reason for their child's absence. The school will

judge whether or not the explanation given is satisfactory justification for the absence and mark the register accordingly.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Carers

Under education law (section 576 of the Education Act 1996) a parent is defined as:-

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has responsibility for the care
- of a child or young person. This means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent.

It is also important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the pupil, that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

Parents/carers should familiarise themselves with this attendance policy and work closely with school staff to overcome any problems which may affect their child's attendance.

Parents/carers are expected to notify the school promptly on the school telephone number if their child cannot attend and any absence will be recorded as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received.

Parents/carers are discouraged from making medical or dental appointments during school time, and are only expected to remove their child from school for the minimum period of time when this is unavoidable.

School

Bill Quay Primary School will encourage and value high levels of attendance; however, we recognise that many factors (in school and externally) can influence a pupil's attendance and will work in partnership with parents and other relevant agencies to resolve any issues.

The school will take a proactive approach to the promotion of good attendance by defining expectations with pupils and their parents and will provide an effective and efficient system for monitoring attendance in accordance with legal requirements. Parents/carers will be updated on their child's attendance on a termly basis.

Pupils

Pupils will ensure that they attend school regularly, on time, and will not leave the school without permission. Parents/carers are asked to follow the school procedures for signing out.

Registration

Registration will be carried out twice a day. It is important that pupils arrive on time for registration as late comers cause disruption both to themselves and other pupils.

- Morning registration is at 8.55am and registers will close at 9.15am.
- Afternoon registration is at 12.50pm and registers will close at 1.10pm.

Pupil Registration Requirements

There are four broad classifications in attendance registers:

- **Present** – the pupil is on the premises at the time of registration.
- **Approved Educational Activity** – the pupil is engaged in an approved, supervised activity off site, for example, educational visit, sporting activity or work experience.
- **Authorised Absence** – an absence authorised by the school which includes illness, medical appointments, bereavement or other circumstances where the school deems attendance to be inappropriate.
- **Unauthorised Absence** – an absence where the school judges that the pupil does not have good cause to be missing from school. This includes action by parents who initiate or collude with unauthorised absence by pupil. For example, shopping trips, day trips, birthdays, or absence to look after someone else. School may request medical information from parents/carers or consent to share information from the G.P for an ongoing illness.

Parents should contact the school on the first day of any absence. The school will then decide whether or not the absence will be authorised.

Punctuality/Lateness

Pupils, who arrive at school after the registers have closed, will be marked as being present on the school site, but without an acceptable reason, will be given an unauthorised absence (U) mark for that session.

Pupils who arrive at school late should not be admitted to class until they have signed in at reception. This is important for health and safety reasons.

If a pupil is regularly late, parents will be contacted and invited to an Attendance Panel meeting with the Head Teacher and a member of the Governing Body.

Persistent lateness after the register has closed can result in the school referring the matter to the Local Authority for formal action to be taken.

Leave of Absence

Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher will determine the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

While leave of absence may be granted during term time, it is entirely at the discretion of the Head Teacher and it is not a parental right.

The Government and school realise that it is more expensive to go on holiday during the school holiday period than at other times of the year; however, it is the view of the Department for Education that a child should be in school for the 39 weeks of the academic year and that holidays in term time are not considered to be 'exceptional' circumstances.

Any request for leave of absence must be made using the school's Leave of Absence form at least two weeks in advance of the planned absence.

The Head Teacher will consider each request individually before deciding whether to authorise the leave. Parents/carers will be notified of the school's decision in writing within 3 working days of school receiving the request.

Family holidays taken in term time will not be authorised and a parents' decision to go ahead with the holiday without authorisation may result in the matter being referred to the Local Authority and could result in the issue of a fixed penalty notice of £60. If this fine is not paid, this could result in further prosecution in court.

A parent taking an unauthorised holiday whose child has an attendance of below 95% for the previous term's attendance, or who has been taken out of school within the same school year for another unauthorised holiday of 5 or more days will automatically be referred to the Local Authority.

Parents who choose to take their children on holiday during school time will not be provided with school work for their child to complete whilst absent from school.

Leave of absence will be considered to be unauthorised in the following situations:

- where a leave of absence has been taken without the permission of the Head Teacher.
- where a leave of absence has been agreed and the pupil returns to school after the agreed date without explanation.
- where no application for leave has been made.

Procedures for addressing absence and lateness

Bill Quay Primary School closely monitors individual pupil attendance and where there are concerns about poor attendance, a school staged response will be implemented.

This staged response includes:-

- First day contact by school office staff.
- Discussion about attendance with the pupil (if age appropriate)
- Contact with the parent/carer by letter to ensure they are aware of the attendance concerns
- An invitation for the parent/carer to meet with the Head Teacher and a member of the Governing Body to discuss attendance concerns at an attendance panel.
- A request for medical information from parents/carers advising them that further absences will not be authorised without such information.
- Completion of a CAF (Common Assessment Framework) to identify additional support needed
- Referral to outside agencies where appropriate.

Role of the Local Authority

Once all school strategies have been tried but there is no improvement in a pupil's attendance, the school may decide to refer the matter to the Local Authority for formal legal action. This can result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in Magistrate's Court.

The fixed penalty fine is £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days and if the fixed penalty is not paid, the case may proceed to the Magistrates Court for the original offence of failure to ensure your child's regular school attendance.

Prosecution in the Magistrates Court can result in a fine of up to £2500, a Parenting Order, a Community Order, or imprisonment.

Strategies to promote good attendance

Bill Quay Primary School implements a number of rewards and incentives, both on a class and individual basis including:-

- Annual rewards for pupils achieving 100% attendance during the academic year
- Whole school class attendance league is displayed in the school hall
- Extra Golden Time for the best class termly attendance
- Class Dojos-one a week for 100% attendance. Children bank or spend Dojos for items in the Dojo shop.
- Termly information sent home for parents/carers detailing their child's attendance for the term.

Attendance Data

A range of attendance data will be collected and analysed each half term in order to identify individual pupils or groups of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern:-

- whole school attendance rates
- numbers and proportion of persistent absentee pupils
- rates of unauthorised absence
- attendance/absence rates for particular cohorts and groups (year groups, gender, ethnicity, SEN, etc)

Communication

This policy will be communicated through:

- the Home-School Agreement
- the school website
- newsletters

This policy was ratified by the Governing Body: November 2018