

LOW ASH PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

December 2016

(Review Date November 2017)

Rationale

In line with Bradford Local Authority (LA) and national requirements, Low Ash Primary School is committed to promoting and maintaining high levels of attendance.

Parents/carers are legally bound to ensure that their child attends school. It is important that pupils and parents/carers develop a positive attitude to school attendance and punctuality so that pupils do not miss out on opportunities at school. Good habits of reliability and punctuality are also important in adult life. Pupils are encouraged to strive for good attendance and punctuality as part of our commitment to Investors in Pupils.

Poor attendance and/or punctuality, especially when condoned by parents/carers, disrupt a child's education. This causes a lack of continuity and progression in school work and can establish patterns of behaviour which may lead to long-term truancy.

Low Ash Primary School works closely with parents/carers and other partners to ensure this policy is fulfilled.

In implementing this policy due consideration to equal opportunities, with regard to race, gender, religion and ability, should be ensured with reference to the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 (as amended) and all other relevant legislation.

Safeguarding

Low Ash Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the well-being of pupils at the school. Staff are vigilant in identifying safeguarding issues, reporting concerns in writing to the 'Named Person' for child protection in school, namely the headteacher, deputy headteachers, assistant head or inclusion leader. Staff attend child protection awareness training at least every year. The school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy provides detail regarding policy and procedures.

The procedures described in this policy are designed to promote and ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils, acknowledging that pupils with attendance / punctuality issues may be more vulnerable to safeguarding/child protection concerns.

Objectives

- To promote and maintain high levels of attendance and punctuality at school
- To ensure that any absence from school is only for genuine reasons
- To help parents/carers understand the importance of regular school attendance for pupils' social integration and educational success
- To gain the support of parents/carers in implementing the policy

Registration procedures (including late arrivals)

Computerised registers are completed in class at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Reasons for absences are recorded at this stage if they are known. A paper-based class list is kept to show absentees – this is sent to the office and taken out onto the playground if an evacuation occurs. A list of the day's class numbers and print-out of registers is kept in the office for lunchtime supervisors to collect so that they have the information if an evacuation occurs over lunchtime.

Any pupil arriving after registration must report to the office. The name of the pupil, time and reason for being late is recorded in the late book. A member of the admin team amends the computerised register using the appropriate codes. The pupil is given a green 'late card' to hand in to their teacher to notify that they have arrived.

Absences from school

Parents/carers should provide written notification of absence in advance, where this is known, or by telephone or text message on the morning of absence, supported by a letter confirming the reason for absence on return to school. The learning mentor/parental involvement worker checks the registers each morning and contacts the parents/carers of any absent pupils for whom no reason for absence has been supplied.

Records of letters and/or telephone calls explaining absence are kept by the class teacher until the end of the school year, after which they are kept centrally for two years.

The learning mentor/or office administrator amends the computerised registers, recording codes for absence where these have not been previously known.

Authorised/unauthorised absence

Any absence must be classified as authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absences are given for legitimate circumstances such as illness, death of a close family member or unavoidable medical or dental appointments. We encourage parents/carers to arrange appointments outside the school day where possible and we expect that pupils attend school before/after appointments unless they are ill.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider to be reasonable and for which no permission has been given. This includes:

- absences which have not been properly explained, evidenced or no reason given
- arriving at school later than 9.30am
- holiday absence which has not been authorised or requested
- truancy
- keeping children off school for reasons deemed to be unacceptable

Planned absences, including holidays in term time

We do not encourage absence other than through illness or medical reasons during term time. All other absences from school must be requested in advance.

No holiday absence will be authorized unless there are special or exceptional circumstances (as stated in Department for Education Guidance (DfE)). The headteacher has statutory discretion to authorise holiday absence in special or exceptional circumstances. There is no automatic entitlement if parents feel that there are special circumstances for the request, as each case will be treated on its own merit. In addition, the headteacher has to be satisfied that the extenuating circumstances have been substantiated thoroughly. A variety of factors will also be taken into consideration. The national average for attendance for the academic year 2015/2016 was 96.1%. Children classed as 'persistent absentees' by the DfE are those with an absence record of 90% or less.

The parent/carer must make a written application to the headteacher using the Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school office.

Leave of Absence Request forms must be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the first day of the planned absence. All applications will be presented to the headteacher for consideration. Parents/carers may be required to attend a meeting with the headteacher, or contacted by telephone, to discuss the application.

Holiday absence will particularly discouraged in the first month of a new school year (September) as the children need to settle into new routines, and also during (or just before) national statutory assessment periods in April/May for pupils in Years 2 and 6.

Each application for absence will be considered individually to ensure that particular special or exceptional circumstances are given due consideration. Evidence will be required if there are exceptional circumstances out of the control of parents/carers - e.g. an employer stipulates that the employee has to take annual leave in term time or late changes to travel arrangements occur (i.e flight/airport changes). Evidence may also be required if other similar events keep reoccurring.

On the letters informing parents of the outcome of their absence request, parents are reminded that absence taken without the school's permission or failure to return on the agreed date could result in a penalty fine of £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid within 28 days (per parent, per child) being issued by Bradford Council and possible loss of school place at Low Ash as detailed in DfE guidance.

Procedures for addressing attendance / punctuality issues

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with school staff to resolve any concerns or issues around attendance or punctuality. The initial contact for parents would be the school's learning mentor, who monitors attendance and punctuality.

Strategies to address issues are implemented by the school's learning mentor and LA attendance officer when attendance levels fall **between 94% and 90%**.

Pupils whose attendance is less than 90% are referred to as *persistent absentees* by the Department for Education (DfE) and will be considered for formal referral to the Education Social Work Service. The Education Social Worker (ESW) and school staff will then begin a more formal programme of monitoring and support as follows:

- Step 1 – parent/carer, school staff and the ESW (including a School Governor if appropriate) meet to discuss the absences and agree an action plan to improve attendance.
- Step 2 – A letter summarising the discussion and a copy of the action plan is posted to the parent/carer.
- Step 3 – After 6 weeks the attendance printout is reviewed by school staff and the ESW.
- If the percentage has improved to above 90% half-termly monitoring is implemented.
- If the percentage remains below 90% the parent/carer is invited to a second meeting with school staff, Governors or the ESW where further, more formal, actions are outlined.

Monitoring and evaluating attendance

As a school we monitor all areas of attendance and are required to provide the DfE and Education Social Work Service with our attendance data.

Attendance levels are issued to parents/carers at the consultation meetings in the autumn and spring terms and as part of the annual school report in the summer term. Class attendance is monitored weekly.

Attendance data is monitored to identify trends, patterns and individual issues to be addressed. Monitoring and evaluation of data includes consideration of whole school attendance and that of individuals and/or groups of pupils.

Promoting good attendance

Every Friday, each class is notified of their attendance for that week and the class in each Key Stage with the highest attendance is awarded a trophy, stickers and a £5 or £10 voucher. Classes record their weekly attendance on class charts and pupils are encouraged to aim for attendance above 96%. The class with the best attendance in a half term in each Key Stage will have a non-uniform day on the first Friday back after half term.

Certificates are awarded to pupils attaining 100% attendance at the end of each term, with special recognition for 100% attendance for a whole school year.

A postcard recognising improved attendance and/or punctuality is sent to parents/carers to reinforce the importance of attendance and seek to sustain improvements.

Policy review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Full Governing Body.

This policy was reviewed in January 2016.

Signed:

Chair of Governors

Review date: November 2017