



Bushfield School

Attendance Policy

Adopted by Governors 13th February 2008

Bushfield School

Attendance Policy

Year: 2007/2008

Designated teacher: Headteacher

School target for attendance: 95%

School target for unauthorised absence: 0.0%

At Bushfield School we recognise the importance of regular school attendance and believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is also vitally important that children arrive and leave school on time.

Education provides a means of enhancement for all young people. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines the educational process and leads to underachievement and low attainment.

High levels of attendance are the responsibility of everyone in the school community – pupils, parents, governors and all staff.

Aims:

- Bushfield School aims to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Bushfield School sees regular school attendance as essential for all the pupils if they are to be successful, aims to work in partnership with parents to ensure the highest possible levels.
- Bushfield School aims to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

The Law

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive suitable education. Parents are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering the child at a school or by arranging an effective alternative to school.

Local Education Authorities have various powers to ensure that parents meet their duties.

Responsibilities of Parents

There are legal obligations on parents to secure education for their children of compulsory school age, whether at school or otherwise and to send them to school regularly once they are on the school roll.

If the school is to achieve its attendance targets, parents must see themselves as partners with the school in their children's education and support the school in the following ways:

- Ensure the fullest possible attendance of their child by keeping requests for their children to be absent from school to a maximum of 10 school days per year. Extended request for leave may result in the child being taken off the school roll and having to be re-admitted on their return.
- When absence is unavoidable, provide a verbal or written explanation on the first day of absence.
- In cases of long term sickness (more than one week) a medical certificate should be obtained from the GP and a copy given to the school
- Ensure that their child arrives at school and is collected from school on time
- Ensure that the school has up to date emergency contact numbers

Responsibilities of the School

It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to deal with problems which may lead to non-attendance. The school employs a range of strategies to improve and encourage good attendance and punctuality including responding to holiday requests and pursuing unexplained absence with parents. The school will phone parents on the first day of absence if parents have not informed the school of their child's absence by phone or letter. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently with attendance being a regular feature of year group meetings.

The Importance of Registration/Punctuality

Registers are important legal documents and are kept securely. The law requires schools to call the register twice a day:

- At the start of the morning session.
- Once during the afternoon session. At Bushfield the register is called at the start of the afternoon session.

Calling the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by staff, children and parents.

At Bushfield School children are marked either present or absent in the register. Particular attention is given to accurate registration; staff use consistent rules and coding for registration. It is our policy at Bushfield to actively discourage the late arrival of children at school. A child who arrives late may seriously disrupt not only his/her continuity of learning but also that of others. A firm line is taken on late arrivals.

When a child arrives after the registration period the child enters school through the only available entrance as all other entrances have been locked. The child must give a reason to the office staff for their lateness. The child will then be registered 'late' for that session.

When a child is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised. The school administrator enters this information onto the computer on a weekly basis. If this persists the class teacher will inform the person

responsible for attendance who will contact the parent/carer. Unresolved lateness will then be referred to the EWO.

Notification of Absence

All parents are asked to contact school if their child is absent giving a reason for the absence. This can be done by:

- **Telephone:** the school administrator will enter the reason for absence directly into the register;
- **Letter:** the class teacher will place the letter in the envelope which goes up to the office with the register;
- **Personal:** an explanation may be given personally to either the class teacher or the administrator when the child returns to school. This will then be entered into the register.

In the first instance the person responsible for attendance will verbally follow up all absences which are unexplained. If no notification is received about a child's absence a standard letter will be sent to parents asking for the reason.

School Responses to Absence

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Where a child is absent at the time of registration the law requires schools to indicate on their attendance register whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be away or that an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted. The law requires that absences not agreed in advance to be recorded as unauthorised unless and until a satisfactory explanation is given.

The school will:

- Investigate all unexplained absences
- Contact parents for an explanation if no message is received after 5 days of continuous absence[where there is a problem with attendance, we will endeavour to make contact on the first day of absence]
- Contact parents if it has any concerns over attendance
- Involve the Education Welfare Officer if parents fail to support the school in ensuring the fullest possible attendance of their children

By law, only the school can approve absence, not parents. The school need not accept a parental explanation for a child's absence if they doubt the explanation. If the school is satisfied that the circumstances are both genuine and exceptional the absence may be authorised. Where parentally condoned and/or unjustified absence appears to be a problem the school will involve the EWO at the earliest opportunity.

Excessive amounts of authorised absence can disrupt continuity of learning. The school will therefore watch for emerging patterns of authorised absence by individual children.

Examples of Authorised Absence

An absence will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement
- Holidays in term time, authorised in advance by the Headteacher. (The Headteacher is currently able to authorise a maximum of 10 days in any academic year, and will view each case individually taking into account the child's current attendance record).

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

The school cannot accept any of the following:

- Shopping during school hours
- Special occasions e.g. birthdays
- No uniform/shoes
- Overslept
- Haircut
- At home due to family illness

Annual Holidays

Both in the Prospectus and at the pre-school induction meeting parents are asked to try to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child's education is not disrupted. The Headteacher will talk to those parents who persistently take their holidays in term time, reminding parents of the disruption to their child's education.

Parents are asked to complete a holiday form requesting absence from school. The school will contact the parent/carer stating whether the absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised. Each case will be looked at individually and take into account the child's current attendance record.

Exclusions

Where a child has been temporarily excluded [fixed term or permanent] he or she will remain on the school roll. The absence will be regarded as authorised. Once a permanent exclusion is confirmed the child will be removed from the school roll.

Communication with Parents

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, the school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents.

School Prospectus: Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in the School Prospectus. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.

First School Induction Meetings: At the first school induction meetings held in the Summer term for children who will enter our Year 3 in the following September, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for children who can be very upset if they are the only child left in the building.

Children are also admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Headteacher. At this meeting the importance of regular attendance will be highlighted along with other school routines.

Parental Concerns

Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All the staff at Bushfield School are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset a child which means they become unhappy, and may not want to attend school. Parents are encouraged to communicate with the school, so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved.

Discussions with the parent/carer and teachers will take place and appropriate action will be taken.

The Education Welfare Service

Close liaison between the school and the Education Welfare Service is crucial in attempts to improve attendance. The principal function of the Education Welfare Service is to help parents, schools and the LEA meet their statutory obligations on school attendance. At Bushfield School the Education Welfare Officer meets with the

person responsible for attendance regularly to discuss attendance issues and offer advice and support.

At these meetings, the registers are monitored, patterns of absence noted and any concerns discussed with the parents/carers. Where appropriate supportive strategies are put in place, improvement targets are set and review meetings planned.

The EWO also acts as a channel to other agencies e.g. Children's Services.

The Role of the LA

The LA is charged in law with enforcing school attendance and must ensure that schools and parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations, including where necessary, the taking of action through the courts. The LA discharges the enforcement obligations through the Education Welfare Service.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The attendance of pupils will be monitored on a regular basis by the person responsible for attendance and EWO. The Headteacher will keep governors informed on attendance issues through the Headteacher's termly report to the governing body.

This policy and the procedures included within it will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure continued high standards in all aspects of attendance.