

# **Blossom Lower School and Upper House**



## **ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY**

**Foundation stage, Primary, Secondary, Post 16**

**Reviewed September 2019 by Kellie Todd**

**Next review September 2020**

**POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY** (see **appendix A** for flow chart of Procedure for monitoring Attendance and Punctuality)

The government expects:

- Schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Schools to ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- Schools to act early to address patterns of absence;
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly;
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

Good attendance and punctuality is a vital and integral part of a school, to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

At Blossom House School we believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell.

We understand that because of our children's special needs, it is inevitable that they may have hospital appointments or clinic visits (eg CAMHS) more frequently than pupils in mainstream schools.

### **Communication**

Blossom House School is a happy school. Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All staff show concern and care about each child's welfare.

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.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes small things upset children, which means they become unhappy and may not want to come to school. Parents and the school need to be aware of this.

## **Punctuality and absence (including for illness)**

From 2006/07, independent schools are no longer required to submit absence data on the Schools Census. However we consider punctuality and attendance in school to be extremely important.

Daily attendance is recorded in morning and afternoon registration on the Schoolpod Management Information System (MIS) by group leaders. Parents are asked to email or ring the school office as early as possible if their child is going to be late for any reason or absent that day because of illness. They should inform the school by email or letter if they know in advance that their child is going to be absent from school (eg for a hospital appointment). These details are recorded by the office staff on the MIS and passed on to group leaders. If no notification is received about a child's absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised, and the parents will be contacted.

- If your child is not going to be in school please call the office on 0208 946 7348 or email the school at [admin@blossomhouseschool.co.uk](mailto:admin@blossomhouseschool.co.uk) to report the absence. Please do this before 8.30am **and on every day of absence.**
- If we have not heard from you by 9.30am then we will send you a text asking you to email or call the school office.
- If we do not hear from you by 10.00am then we will start to call all the contact numbers that you have provided in order to gain an explanation for the absence.
- According to the new guidance, if we still have not been able to ascertain where your child is, then a member of staff may go to the family home.
- If we are still unable to get a response, we may report it to the police as your child will then be classed a 'missing child'.

This procedure is to ensure that we know where your child is and that you are all safe, and to ensure that we are following latest government guidance.

The school gate is closed at 8.50am when registration starts, and pupils who arrive after this time have to come in to the main reception and sign in the register in the office or be signed in by their escort. The MIS is then updated so that late pupils are recorded as such. Parents are contacted if a pupil has not arrived in time for registration without a notified reason.

The office gives termly attendance records to Group Leaders. The school monitors attendance below 90% and if a child is regularly late for school or has an attendance percentage under or close to 85%, then the Group Leader will contact parents to discuss this and see what can be put in place to improve the situation. In these cases, monitoring will continue on a weekly basis, and a copy of hospital appointment letters or emails must be provided. In serious cases of absence or lateness (more than 10%) the Local Authority is kept closely informed; we work with pupils' families, case managers or social workers to do everything possible to help pupils be in school and on time. Our Family Support Worker is a key member of this team supporting families whose child has difficulties with attendance or punctuality.

The Group leaders will refer any concerns to the Family Support Officer in the first instance.

In addition to any such serious cases of absence being monitored and dealt with by the Group Leaders as soon as they arise, an attendance strategy meeting is held each term to monitor attendance data and implement action plans. A whole school attendance and punctuality report is produced each term to enable this continual monitoring and action.

The Leadership Team is informed by Group Leaders about such cases of absence and action taken, and the team also looks at the whole school attendance.

### **Unauthorised absences protocol**

- If we cannot get hold of a parent and there is a **specific safeguarding concern**, the family will be referred to the MASH team/children's services
- On day 3 of unauthorised absence, a home visit will be provided by the school
- On day 5 of unauthorised absence, a letter will be written to parents and they will be referred to the Education Welfare Service
- If attendance falls below 85% we may need to inform the LA. If there is not a valid reason for absence, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service.

### **Sickness**

If a child has suffered from sickness or diarrhoea they should be kept away from school for **48 hours** after symptoms have stopped.

### **Post 16 provision**

In the Post 16 provision students are encouraged to contact school themselves re their absence/lateness. If it is a college day, then they contact staff at college by text or phone, and they do likewise with school staff if they are due to be in school. Parents are then contacted to confirm this absence or lateness. This is carefully monitored and if a student fails to contact the college or Blossom House on a regular basis then parents are asked to support and facilitate their child to ensure it happens.

### **Holidays in term time**

Blossom House School follows the latest Government advice on school attendance and absence (October 2016).

- You have to get permission from the head teacher if you want to take your child out of school during term time.
- You can only do this if:

- you make an application to the head teacher in advance (as a parent the child normally lives with)
- there are exceptional circumstances
- It's up to the head teacher how many days your child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Parents are expected to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays rather than in term time, so that their child's education is not disrupted. Our holidays tend to be slightly longer than those for mainstream schools and therefore it should not be necessary to book flights etc during our term time.

Term dates are fixed up to 2 years ahead, and these are on our website or available from the school. Permission **must** be sought in advance from the Principal if parents wish to book a holiday outside normal holiday dates.

The school has become concerned at the number of parents taking their child out of school for holidays during term time for one or more days, with or without first asking permission. We are receiving increased numbers of emails or phone calls simply telling us that a child will not be in school.

Taking a child out of Blossom House:

- sends a message to the child (and their friends – who will always know if a child is going on holiday rather than 'ill') that school is not important;
- is always disruptive to the child's education and to the carefully planned curriculum.
- mainstream schools do not give permission to take a holiday in term time. This is always marked as unauthorised except in very exceptional circumstances, and parents may be fined.

The government expects schools and local authorities to:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- act early to address patterns of absence.
- the regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

We do not believe that it is in the child's best interests to miss school to go on holiday. We also do not believe it is fair, once a child has a place here (usually funded by local authorities at a cost of over £1000 per week) to take them out of school. It can be extremely hard to have a child placed at Blossom House and there is great competition for places and for the LA funding to provide those places. Most parents have gone through lengthy and expensive processes to enable their child to benefit from our provision, and very many parents are not successful.

We are concerned about this increased pattern of absence. Our terms are generally slightly shorter than those of mainstream schools and it should be possible to restrict flights etc to our holiday times, which are published well in advance. From March 2017 we are implementing a drive to reduce this absence, and will be marking as

unauthorised every child who is taken on holiday without prior permission from the Principal (permission will only be given in exceptional circumstances). We may then report this unauthorised absence to the child's local authority.

We understand the impact this will have on our attendance figures but believe that it is important to give the right message to parents (and therefore to our pupils) and to make attempts to reduce such absences.

## Appendix A

### Procedure for Monitoring of Attendance and Punctuality

**Daily: Group Leader** takes register during morning and afternoon form times.  
Data is entered into Schoolpod.

**Daily: Admin** check all registers on Schoolpod by 9:30am and carry out follow up checks with parents/guardians on any pupil who does not have an authorised absence.

**Daily:** Any unauthorised absence, or absence of pupil who is already being monitored, is reported to the **Group Leader**. The Group Leader addresses with parent /guardian that day.  
**If a parent cannot be contacted**, the *unauthorised absence protocol* is activated (refer to Attendance Policy).

**Refer** to Family Support Worker and Child Protection team with any significant concerns.

**Every term: Group Leader** carry out monitoring at the end of every term using Schoolpod data. Any attendance of <85% or repeated lateness is addressed directly with the parents/guardians. This information is entered into the half termly monitoring forms. Follow up actions are recorded. [S:\Attendance\Sept 2018 - July 2019.docx](#)

**Refer** to Family Support Worker and Child Protection team with any significant concerns.

**Every term: Attendance Strategy Meeting** held every term to monitor and review attendance data. Action plan created and implemented.

**Spreadsheet** updated – recording absence data, reasons and actions.

**Every term: Leadership Team** review the attendance and punctuality monitoring forms by cohort and by individuals every half term; checking the follow-up actions and implementing further actions where needed.