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Burscough Bridge Methodist Primary School

Attendance Policy

**Mission Statement**

**‘Let Your Light Shine To All’ (John Wesley)**

**Through exciting opportunities in lessons and the wider curriculum our children become well rounded, caring changemakers in our world. Each child is at the heart of all we do to ensure they become the best they can be and are meant to be.**

**Vision**

**As a truly distinctive Methodist school our vision is to be a Welcoming, Worshipping, Witnessing presence in the village and the community. At Burscough Bridge children thrive, emotionally, spiritually and academically to be the person God intended them to be; a school that the Methodist Church and the local community can take great pride through.**

 **Introduction**

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. This policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

**Why Regular Attendance is so important?**

 Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil’s absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child’s regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. The minimum attendance level which is expected for all primary aged children nationally is 95%.

**Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

* Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter.
* Report to you termly on how your child is performing in school, and whether their attendance and punctuality relates to their attainment
* Celebrate and reward good attendance at the end of the year through certificates and rewards.
* Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high school;
* Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
* Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors
* Set targets for whole-school attendance and where appropriate individual pupil targets

**Understanding types of absence**

 Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

**Authorised absence**

* An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason like illness, medical/dental appointments and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
* Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority.

Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

* If there is any ambiguity relating to an absence school may request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

**Unauthorised absence**

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

* Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
* truancy before or during the school day
* absences which have never been properly explained
* children who arrive at school after the register is closed
* shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
* day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
* days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support such as parental advice, individual incentive programmes and parenting contracts All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority Attendance Team.

**Absence Procedures**

If your child is absent you must:

* Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence telling us the reason for the absence and the likely duration of absence.
* A note may be sent or telephone call made to the school, prior to the day of absence. For example, if a child has a medical appointment.
* Keep us informed if the absence continues past the day of your child’s anticipated return.

If your child is absent we will

* Record the absence in the register.
* Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you by 9.30am.
* Invite you in to discuss the situation with the headteacher if absences persist.
* Refer the matter to the Attendance Officer linked with school if attendance moves below 85% as per Local Authority protocol.

**Children Missing from Education** can be a potential sign of abuse or neglect including sexual exploitation, undergoing female genital mutilation, forced marriage or travelling to conflict zones.

* ALL staff and volunteers follow school procedures when a child misses’ education particularly on repeat occasions to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect
* There is an admissions policy and an attendance register
* The Local Authority is informed of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school’s permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more
* Burscough Bridgeholds more than one emergency contact number for the pupils at our school. We ask forsupport from parents to help keep their contact numbers updated.
* ALL staff are aware that children going missing from education can be a warning sign of safeguarding considerations and act on these in line with the policy

**Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have at least two up to date numbers – if we don’t then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

**In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. Burscough Bridge may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

* Colour attendance letters to parents when children’s attendance is a concern
* Meetings in school between parents, pupils, Governors and the Headteacher
* Parenting contracts
* Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority Attendance Officer)
* Attendance Panels
* Penalty Notices

**The Local Authority Attendance Officer**

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child’s attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

**Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

**How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at 8.50am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by 9.00am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

Children arriving after the gate is locked need to enter the school by the main entrance. Children must be accompanied to the main entrance by an adult if arriving late, where for health and safety reasons, parents will be expected to complete the signing in/out book to ensure the child receives the correct registration mark.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could be subject to the attendance improvement strategies detailed above if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

**Appointments in School Time**

Parents are asked to consider making dental/medical appointments for children outside of school hours. If this is not possible then if appointments could be made later in the school day this would be less disruptive for the children and the rest of the class and it means that your child will also receive a present mark for the school sessions. Children must be signed out and back in again by parent or responsible adult if they leave the premises during school time.

**Leave in Term Time**

Taking a child out of school in term time will affect your child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child’s education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.

All applications for leave must be made in advance using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office. Requests will be authorised if the circumstances surrounding the request are considered to be exceptional. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

It is important that parents understand the circumstances when leave in term time will not be agreed by us:

* When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
* Immediately before and during formal assessment periods (e.g SATS, End of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments)
* When a pupil’s attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
* Where a pupil’s attendance rate is already below 90% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave.
* When the request is for a family holiday.

The school will only consider exceptional circumstances in granting leave if:

* The timing of the request will not be detrimental to the pupil’s education
* The length of the request will not be detrimental to the pupils education
* The reasons for the request are considered truly ‘exceptional’

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as penalty notices. This includes: leave which is taken without a prior request being made by parents to the school; leave taken in excess of any days which may have been agreed by school; and leave which has been unauthorised by the school but is taken regardless of this decision.

In such instances, the headteacher will undertake further liaison with the family, the school attendance consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate and a Penalty Notice may be considered if the criteria, of both the LA and the school, for the issuing of a penalty notice are met.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 increased the amounts of penalty notices payable by parents from 1 September 2012. These will apply to any parent who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age (5-16).

The cost of a penalty notice is £120 per parent, per child, per offence, payable within 28 days. There is a £60 reduction if payment is made within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice within the given timescales would result in prosecution for the original offence (section 444 of The Education Act (1996)

**Religious Absence**

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

**Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school**

Parents:

* Ensure children attend regularly and punctually.
* Contact school on 1st day of absence and update the school on any subsequent days of absence.
* Avoid leave in term time wherever possible and apply in advance using the request for leave form.
* Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies should attendance become a concern.

**Pupils**:

* Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
* Attend school/registration punctually
* Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance

**Headteacher:**

* Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
* Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
* Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
* Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
* Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
* Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, following Absence and using Parenting Contracts where appropriate.

**Designated Staff** (School Secretary):

* First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided
* Input and update the attendance registers
* Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups.

 **All School Staff:**

* Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
* Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
* Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
* To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
* To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all school staff
* Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

**Governors:**

* Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
* Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
* Agree statutory targets for the school

**School targets, projects and special initiatives**

The school sets attendance targets each year and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors at the annual target-setting meeting. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child’s attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletter and we ask for your full support.

**Monitoring and review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the headteacher. 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 them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years. The rates of attendance will be reported in the termly headteacher’s report to governors. This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every year, or earlier if considered necessary.

Date of Policy: October 2018

Reviewed : Oct 2019, Oct 2020

To be reviewed annually