

Attendance Management (Pupils) Policy

This policy should be used in conjunction with the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council - School Attendance Strategy (Revised November 2015)

Introduction

We recognise that punctual and regular school attendance is central to raising standards in education and improving the life chances of our children. Regular attendance enables children to gain maximum benefit from the range of educational and wider opportunities available to them.¹ We note that for a small but significant number of children poor school attendance is a direct cause of their social exclusion and underachievement; and that absence from school can also be a key indicator of additional safeguarding concerns.² However many of our pupils have complex/severe/profound medical needs and conditions that impact upon their potential to sustain regular attendance. In addition we have a high percentage of Asian heritage families who take extended leave to celebrate major cultural events such as Eid or to take part in pilgrimage.

We believe that children should attend school regularly and punctually because school is where they learn and school is where they are safe.

School's Responsibilities

We are committed to improving levels of school attendance and punctuality. We aim to do this by:-

- a) promoting the value and importance of regular school attendance;
- b) reducing all forms of unjustified absenteeism, especially levels of persistent absenteeism. (As of 1st September 2015 pupils are now classified as 'persistently absent' if they miss around 10% of school)³
- c) adopting a positive and proactive approach towards attendance matters
- d) encouraging parents to take an active role in the schooling of their children

We set a range of attendance and absence targets, including statutory and non-statutory, and incorporate these into our plans.

¹ BwDBC School Attendance Strategy Revised November 2015, pg.3

² BwDBC School Attendance Strategy Revised November 2015, pg.3

³ BwDBC School Attendance Strategy Revised November 2015, pg.7

We believe that success in achieving these targets will be best achieved if principles of active and meaningful partnership (with parents, pupils and other agencies and services) inform all our activities.

It is a legal requirement that we will:-

- a) be open to all pupils for 380 sessions each school year;
- b) maintain attendance registers (either manual or computerised) in accordance with the relevant regulations (see Appendix 1);
- c) accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness;
- d) clearly distinguish between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised according to criteria laid down by the DfE (schools should remind parents that it is the decision of the headteacher as to whether or not an absence will be authorised);
- e) submit termly absence returns through School Census and publish information relating to levels of attendance and absence and include details of these in the school's prospectus and annual report;.
- f) set annual targets to reduce absence and submit these targets in accordance with the relevant regulations.

This whole school policy on attendance has been developed in discussion with staff, governors, parents and pupils taking account of relevant guidance issued by the DfE and good practice identified by the Borough Council.

In order to embed the ethos of the school and this policy on attendance into everyday practice Newfield:

- a) gives a high priority and value to attendance and punctuality and ensures that specific strategies are in place in order to achieve this;
- b) ensures compliance with all relevant statutory requirements (particularly with regard to the maintenance of attendance registers and the setting of targets);
- c) reflects the attendance priorities (such as safeguarding and risk sensible factors)
- d) ensures that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents through the school brochure, through newsletters, through parents' consultations or through other media; (parents should be specifically reminded of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their children's regular and punctual attendance);
- e) collects and make effective use of attendance data to monitor progress/trends and set targets for improvement – for individuals, specific groups and the whole school;
- f) provides clear guidance to staff on the practice of registration and on such connected issues as the appropriate categorisation of absence;
- g) identifies clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness (allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities);
- h) recognises the crucial importance of early intervention and provide appropriate strategies;
- i) makes provision for first-day of absence contact, particularly in relation to pupils who are known to be poor attenders or who might otherwise be considered to be at risk;

- j) identifies a range of both proactive and reactive strategies to promote attendance and address absenteeism, especially persistent absenteeism;
- k) sets up effective networks for liaising with other involved agencies and services such as Education Welfare Officers (EWOs), Social Care, the Police, Health, etc;
- l) takes the lead and/or contributes to CAF/TAF where there is an identified need
- m) makes referrals as required to the Transforming Lives panel and Troubled Families programme to enlist timely support for families where regular attendance is a problem
- n) keeps pupils on roll who have left the school and the area until a new school and LA is identified, in order to safeguard children, using the LA CME system of referral
- o) supports children who, due to illness, struggle to attend a full-time timetable by, in agreement with the LA, creating bespoke (reduced) timetabling and curriculum
- p) carries out home visits/home schooling/hospital visits to maintain education for pupils who have long-term illness or recuperation following illness or hospitalisation
- q) establishes procedures for reintegrating long-term absentees and pupils who may, for specific reasons, have been on a reduced timetable;
- r) identifies an interesting, flexible, and accessible curriculum which encourages regular attendance;
- s) provides for regular structured meetings between designated school staff and the EWO;
- t) ensures that reasonable steps are taken by the school before a referral is made to the EWO;
- u) stresses to parents the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term-time (schools should grant leave for term-time holidays sparingly, if at all);
- v) provides governors with sufficient information about pupils who are not attending or accessing education in the usual way, so that they can evaluate and challenge the effectiveness of the arrangements
- w) identifies a key senior member of staff with overall responsibility for attendance (Pupil Support Manager)
- x) ensures that good practice is identified and disseminated;
- y) conducts regular monitoring and review of policy and practice;
- z) helps create an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance, addressing school-based causes of poor attendance such as bullying, racism, an inappropriate curriculum, etc.

Responsibilities of parents

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are registered regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. (Parents are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered.)

Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children. Parents should:-

- a) take an active interest in their child's school life and work;
- b) attend parents' consultations, annual review meetings and other school events;
- c) ensure that their child completes his/her homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time;
- d) inform school of any issues their child has which may impact on their day in school (lack of sleep, refusal to eat, seizure activity etc)
- e) be aware of letters from school which their child brings home;
- f) ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day/is ready for school transport;
- g) ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness, medical appointments or days of religious observance;
- h) always notify the school as soon as possible - preferably on the first morning - of any absence;
- i) confirm this in writing when the child returns to school;
- j) avoid booking family holidays during term-time;
- k) In the event of an exceptional circumstance – see below – parents should write to the head teacher, outlining the unavoidable event and reason for requesting an 'authorised leave of absence'
- l) talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.

Authorised Leave of Absence

There is ongoing debate about what 'exceptional circumstances' means when Headteachers are deciding whether to grant absences for pupils during term time.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise the absence and so family holidays or extended vacations are generally not considered an exceptional circumstance.

Absences will not be routinely granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

The default school policy should be that absences will not be routinely granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. However, the pupils' education remains the priority and individual circumstances will vary from school to school and there can be no absolute rules on this subject, e.g. schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities.⁴

The Role of Education Welfare Officers

The fundamental purpose of EWOs is to maximise attendance rates for individual pupils, individual schools and for the borough as a whole and to discharge the Borough's legal duty to ensure that all pupils of compulsory school age are in receipt of suitable education. EWOs will also assist in removing barriers which may prevent a child receiving education.

⁴ BwDBC School Attendance Strategy Revised November 2015, pg.8

EWOs will employ three main interconnected and interdependent strategies to ensure that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually:-

- a) as authorised representatives of the Borough Council, monitoring attendance through the regular inspection of registers and liaison with school staff;
- b) undertaking individual casework with non-attending pupils and their parents;
- c) offering strategic advice, support and challenge to enable schools to develop improved systems and practices for managing attendance.

EWO Casework

When a pupil with attendance difficulties is referred to an EWO he or she will engage in individual casework. EWO casework is undertaken with pupils and their parents in order to bring about a pupil's return to regular attendance. The EWO will recognise and take account of individual circumstances and will respond accordingly. The speedy return of the pupil to regular attendance will, however, always be the prime concern. The EWO will employ a range of practices and strategies in his or her casework and will, when necessary, combine assistance with insistence.

All EWO casework will involve the setting of targets for improvement and will be time-limited and subject to regular review. In some instances EWO intervention may be limited to a single EWO home visit in order to remind parents of their legal responsibilities or to help resolve a particular and identified difficulty. In other instances there may be complex and deep-seated reasons why the pupil is not attending. In such situations the EWO may negotiate a plan of support (this might involve referral on to, or the involvement of, other agencies, convening a multi-agency meeting and so on).

All EWO casework will involve close and continuous liaison with the pupil's school. (EWOs will ensure that schools receive regular, written feedback on pupils with whom work is being undertaken.) In cases where the main causes of the non-attendance may be school-related (e.g. alleged bullying or racism, peer pressure, difficulties with a particular lesson or teacher) the EWO will discuss these with the school in order to develop strategies to overcome these difficulties.

EWO Referrals

Referrals to EWOs are usually made by schools. There are, however, occasions when other agencies/services or parents may make a referral.

Before accepting a referral from a school an EWO will expect the school to have first undertaken a number of steps to address the pupil's non-attendance. These would include:-

- a) action by the class teacher/Assistant Head teacher;

- b) action by the Head or Deputy Head;
- c) contact with parents; EWOs encourage schools to work to a '3-letter system', the use of which involves the school sending a sequence of letters of concern to the parents before formally involving the EWO.

The overwhelming majority of referrals to EWOs are made on the basis of non-attendance (referrals are occasionally taken in relation to child protection concerns, transport or school age employment issues).

Referrals will usually only be accepted in relation to absence which has not been authorised by the school. (Only in exceptional circumstances will referrals in relation to authorised absence be accepted).

EWO Visits to School

The EWO allocated to Newfield comes for regular consultation visits, where the designated school staff raise any concerns and take advice and guidance

Referrals may be made to the EWO during the regular consultation visit, or by phone if required. The EWO may then make contact with a family, or seek to refer them to another agency for support – MASH, Transforming Lives Panel, Troubled Families Program

The EWO also carries out Attendance Audits – where they support a school to reflect on how to improve pupil attendance. Key features of this may be:

- examining existing procedures;
- inspecting attendance-related documentation;
- assessing communication with parents;
- interviewing staff and pupils;
- analysing attendance data;
- considering strategies used to promote attendance
- evaluating the effectiveness of EWO support.

The written report produced by the Audit is made available to the school's Assigned Inspector as well as to the school's governing body.

Appendix 1

Useful points of Reference

Blackburn with Darwen Safeguarding Children Board: www.lscb.org.uk

Relevant legislation available on www.legislation.gov.uk

- [The Children Act 1989](#)
- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education Act 2005](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(School Day and School Year\) \(England\) Regulations 1999](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education and Skills Act 2008](#)
- [The Changing of School Session Times \(England\) \(Revocation\) Regulations 2011](#)

Useful Publications

- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council - School Attendance Strategy (Revised November 2015)
- Missing Out – LEA management of school attendance and exclusion (Audit Commission National Report October 1999)
- Improving school attendance in England (National Audit Office Report February 2005)
- Advice: Responsibilities of local authorities and academies – DCSF and National Strategies (Secondary) published March 2009
- Guidance on the attendance of pupils with SEN – DCSF and National Strategies published January 2009
- Improving attendance at school – Review and recommendations by Charlie Taylor, The Government's Expert Adviser on Behaviour & Attendance (DfE April 2012)
- Pupils missing out on education – Low aspirations, little access, limited achievement (Ofsted November 2013)
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (DfE April 2014)
- School Attendance –Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (DfE October 2014)
- NAHT Advice & Guidance on authorised absence in school (October 2014)
- Parental responsibility measures for school attendance and behaviour – Statutory guidance for local authorities, school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and the police (DfE January 2015)

- Children Missing Education: Statutory guidance for local authorities (DfE January 2015)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory guidance for Schools and Colleges (March 2015)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2015)

Appendix 2

Additional BwD Documents & Referral Forms

1. Blackburn with Darwen Procedures and Protocol for Children Missing From or Not Receiving a Suitable Education (updated October 2014)
2. Blackburn with Darwen Local Authority Policy Statement: Considering Applications for Discretionary Leave of Absence During Term Time (June 2013)
3. Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire County Local Authorities Joint Procedures for issuing education related Penalty Notices (updated July 2015)
4. Blackburn with Darwen Elective Home Education Policy (January 2015)
5. EW2 Electronic Referral Form to refer individual pupils to the Blackburn with Darwen Education Welfare Team
6. Transforming Lives Panel Request for Support Form
7. Blackburn with Darwen Education Welfare Team Contact List

Appendix 3

Policy for Supporting the Attendance of CIOC

Responsibilities of Schools

1. All schools are asked to appoint a designated teacher for CIOC. This designated teacher will be responsible for ensuring that practice within his/her school enables any looked after child registered at that school to attend regularly and achieve high educational standards.
2. If a CIOC child fails to attend school and no notification or explanation is received from the child's carer within the first hour of the day of his/her non-attendance the school should attempt to contact the carer immediately.
3. Schools should not authorise any absence of a CIOC child unless they receive a satisfactory explanation from the child's carer.
4. Schools should be alert to any emerging pattern of non-attendance by a CIOC child and should refer this to the child's carer and EWO.

5. If a CIOC child is dual registered and is receiving part or the whole of his/her education off-site the school should ensure that it regularly monitors this attendance and records and reports it accurately. The school should liaise with the other institution / provider where the looked after child is accessing his/her education on a weekly basis.

Responsibilities of Carers

6. Carers should ensure that all children in their care attend school regularly and punctually and that children only miss school for unavoidable reasons such as illness.
7. Carers should endeavour to arrange appointments for CIOC children out-of-school hours.
8. Carers should be alert to any sign that a CIOC child is reluctant to attend school and to any events and occurrences which may subsequently impact upon a child's regular school attendance.
9. Should a CIOC child fail to attend school his/her carer should immediately notify the school on the first morning of any absence and offer an explanation for the child's absence (together with an anticipated return date).
10. Carers should not arrange holidays which involve taking the children for whom they care out of school during term-time.

Responsibilities of Social Workers

11. Social Workers should ensure that, wherever possible, care related meetings are arranged outside school hours.
12. Social Workers should ensure that carers are meeting their responsibilities as outlined above.