

## Attendance Policy and Guidance

**Issued:** January 2017

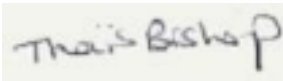
**Reviewed:** March 2015, October 2021, March 2023

**Endorsement:** Full endorsement to this policy is given by:

Name: Thais Bishop

Position: Brighton Waldorf School Trustee

Signed:



Date: 30.03.23

Next review: March 2025

## Policy

### Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Brighton Waldorf School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will have an impact on their progress and ability.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the College of Teachers and School Leadership Team work to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education and applies to all children registered at this school. This policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

### Policy aims

The school intends that all staff, parents and carers in our school should be fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. Specifically we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness amongst parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Early Years children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils their own sense of responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and trustees on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## **School procedures and responsibilities**

Our school follows the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Maintaining daily pupil registers for morning and afternoon sessions. Once morning sessions are recorded the registers are taken back to the classes in time for the afternoon sessions. Coding is used to minimise error.
- Checking all registers and immediately investigating any unexplained absences.
- Maintaining appropriate attendance data
- Communicating the attendance procedures and expectations clearly to all staff, parents and pupils. Keeping consistent and detailed daily records of all absences and lateness.
- Following up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.

- Informing parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Providing support and special measure for children whose attendance is affected by health issues
- Strongly discouraging unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- Working with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality
- Referring to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives.
- Reporting to the Educational Welfare Service any child who leaves, not apparently going to another school
- Reporting attendance statistics to SIS or a recognised official body.
- Securely storing attendance registers for three years after the date they were last used.

## **Staff responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality and raising any attendance or punctuality concerns to the College of Teachers. In addition:

Class teachers and guardians are responsible for

- Recording attendance and the start of each day and afternoon session.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the College of Teachers where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence, including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.

The College of Teachers is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Identifying trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence

The receptionist is responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Log is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.

- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers, and reporting concerns to the class teacher or guardian
- Sending out standard letters/emails regarding attendance

## Parent and Carer responsibilities

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually, unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time, in writing. NB For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence some evidence (eg appointment card/letter) is required
- Making requests to the class teacher or guardian for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary. NB These are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the class teacher as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

## Guidance on Attendance

We rely upon you to ensure your child attends school regularly and punctually, so if the school has concerns about attendance you will always be informed. There will be opportunities for you to discuss reasons for absence or lateness and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

Children in the Main School are expected to attend every day during termtime. Children in the Early Years Department are expected to attend the following amount of days:

**Playgroup** - Children should attend a minimum of 3 days per week.

**Kindergarten** - Children up to four years old should attend a minimum of 3 days. Children aged 4 should attend 4 to 5 days. Children of compulsory school age should attend 5 days.

### Compulsory School Age

- 5th birthday falls between 1st April and 31st August - compulsory school age on 1st September
- 5th birthday falls between 1st September and 31st December - compulsory school age on 1st January.
- 5th birthday falls between 1st January and 31st March - compulsory school age on 1st April.

## Registration and late arrival

- The school gate opens at 8.15am. The main school doors open at 8.30am. Early Years doors open at 8:45am.
- Morning registration is taken for main school at 8.45am and for Kindergarten at 8.50.
- Afternoon registration is taken upon return to lessons after the lunch break.
- Attendance code / and \ is used for pupils who are present and an O for pupils who have not yet arrived when the register is taken.
- Any pupil who comes into school between 8.45am and 9.00am is marked as **late** in the attendance record (code L).
- Any pupil who attend a medical appointment and arrives in school after 9:00am will have the absence recorded as a **medical absence** (Attendance code M)
- Any pupil coming into school after 9am without a valid reason will have the absence recorded as **unauthorised**.

In addition to the procedure for the registration of pupils outlined here the school operates an internal protocol to ensure that accurate registration is maintained for Off Site Visits and Activities, the registration of Afternoon Lesson/Sessions, the registration of pupils to Mixed Afternoon Lessons and the registration arrangements for Saplings KG.

**Please note:** Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning and settling in time. If there are persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the school's concerns, offering opportunities to seek support in addressing these issues.

## Absence

Please contact the school on the first day of your child's absence, either in person or by phone, to provide us with details. Please do not advise your child's absence by email; there may be delays in receiving the information. Continuing absence should be reported every day, even in the case of long term illness, unless or until there is agreement in writing from the College of Teachers or class teacher that this is not required.

All absences have to be recorded as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised' on the register. This is why it is important that we receive accurate information from you about your child's absence. The College of Teachers has the ultimate responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

### Authorised absence :

When a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification or a request from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent 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.

## Unauthorised absence :

When a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## First Day Contact

When a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process.

The receptionist checks the registers from 8.45am to 9.15am every day to identify those pupils who are absent. If we are unaware why the child is absent we will contact you to check the reasons for the child's absence. **Before this, we will double check with the class teacher or guardian whether the child is in class.** If we cannot contact you we may assume the child is missing and initiate our Missing Child Procedure.

## Illness

If your child has an illness that means they will be away from school long term, we will endeavour to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work as far as possible. If, over the course of an academic year, your child has repeated periods of illness, we are required to ask you to provide medical evidence for each period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may also seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

## Parental request for absence from school for a holiday

As an independent school, in special circumstances, we can allow holiday absence; say, if the holiday is of great value to the child or is for a wedding or funeral. However, this cannot be a regular occurrence. You should apply to the class teacher in writing at least 4 weeks before the event for the school's agreement to this absence, giving the reasons that you wish to take your child out of school and what the benefits will be for the child. The College of Teachers will assess your request and let you know their decision, in writing, within 2 weeks of your application. We will be assessing the following:

- Your child's progression in the class
- The importance of being in school at that time in the school year

If we feel that being out of school will be detrimental to your child's education, we will not authorise the absence.

## Taking your child out of school in an emergency

If you need to take your child from school in an emergency, please provide the class teacher or guardian with a note explaining why you need to remove your child and how long you expect this time out to be. Please give your note to the receptionist who will take this to the class teacher or guardian. Under no circumstances are parents allowed to disrupt the class to take their child there and then.

If the class teacher or guardian does not think the request is appropriate, they have the right to contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for further advice.

## **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

We rely upon you to ensure your child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance you will always be informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence, and for support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time, then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

### **See also:**

Parents Handbook