



## Attendance and Punctuality Policy 2023 onwards

**At Bird in Bush School, we strive and achieve excellence and enjoyment in the education we provide for our pupils by ensuring we provide a safe, secure, caring family environment, where all are valued and respected as individuals.**

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. At Bird in Bush Primary School, we aim to develop an ethos which demonstrates to pupils, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people.

**To these ends, we will do all we can to ensure that all pupils attend to their fullest and that any problems which impede this are identified and acted upon as soon as possible.**

Attending school is a habit and it helps pupils if they build the habit from the start. Arriving in school punctually and attending every day is as important in the Nursery as it is in Year 6. **Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and can lead to educational disadvantage affecting future choices and opportunities.** When pupils are away from school they miss what is being taught. They lose out on friendships because relationships are constantly being formed while they are away. If a pupil is away without good reason, they get a message that school is not as important as other things and this strongly affects the attitude they have to their schoolwork. It places pupils at risk and in some cases it can result in pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

**Lateness** disrupts the whole class or assembly, and can be upsetting for some pupils (the latecomer and peers). When a pupil is in school on time s/he is part of the class from the beginning of the session and hears the information about the day.

The publication of schools' attendance levels is increasingly becoming a significant indicator of a school's performance. It is accepted that the regular attendance of pupils is closely related to raising achievement, and this underlines the importance of improving attendance rates in school.

**Our school attendance target 2023-2024 is 96% and we have been close to achieving this exceptional target in recent years. In 2022-2023 we secured a whole year attendance of 95.6% which is well above national averages which were as low as 92.7%.**

As parents/carers, Headteacher, teachers, administrative staff, governors, and Local Authority (LA) staff, we **all** have a role, and share legal responsibilities, in promoting and ensuring regular attendance and punctuality of all our pupil in Bird in Bush Primary School.

## **Our vision for attendance and punctuality**

At Bird in Bush School, we have

- have high expectations for every pupil's attendance at school
- communicate these expectations clearly, strongly and consistently to parents and to pupils
- set expectations about attendance from the outset – from Nursery onwards
- explain to parents and pupils why good attendance is important and how it helps pupils to achieve
- listen to parents carefully to find out why their child/ren are not attending well enough so that they can act accordingly
- challenge parents who do not make sure that their child/ren attend, but also offer support where needed
- have the right people in place to have these conversations with parents
- ensure that attendance is always recorded accurately
- systematically analyse attendance information so that they can see patterns and trends
- use this analysis to target their actions, both for individuals and at a whole-school level
- make sure that attendance is 'everyone's business' in school
- understand that good attendance does not happen in isolation – there is an interrelationship between attendance and the quality of the school's curriculum, ethos, behaviour and inclusivity
- do not stop pushing for whole-school improvement once attendance reaches the national average
- see the process of securing good attendance for all pupils as an ongoing process, never something that is 'finished'

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised Absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a pupil 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**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a pupil is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.

## Term Time Leave

- The School expects family holidays to be taken out of school term times. All such absences in term time are deemed as 'Unauthorised Absences'
- Requests for term time leave for family matters and holidays must be made prior to making any travel and accommodation bookings. Parents/carers must complete a request form, available from the school office. The school will then make a decision on each case. As stated above, holidays during term time will not be authorised.
- The Deputy Head for Inclusion and EWO, liaising regularly with the Administration Officer responsible for Attendance, when possible will meet with the parent/carer involved before such absence. Records of travel arrangements showing proof of outward and return journeys (dates etc) **MUST** be submitted to the Administration Officer responsible for Attendance, who provides the parent/carer with a letter explaining the procedure.
- If parents/carers take their child/ren on holidays during term time, they will be referred to Southwark Early Help Service for issue of a Fixed Penalty Fine of £60. If this happens a second time, the local authority will take the parents/carers to court for breaking the Education Act.
- The Deputy Head for Inclusion and administration staff will write to the parents warning them of the FIXED PENALTY NOTICE (FPN) procedures. For illnesses either side of a school holiday period – the school expects medical evidence, otherwise the case will be referred to the EWO for issue of a fixed penalty notice.
- The Deputy Head for Inclusion records all holiday term time absences. The EWO is informed. In the case of absences exceeding twenty school days, the pupil will be off-rolled, after liaising with the parent/carer and Early Help. In certain cases, the family will be referred to Early Help by the Deputy Head for Inclusion.

## Exceptional Circumstances

*The Headteacher will consider authorisation for requests for pupils to attend family funerals. The school requires evidence, such as death certificates before granting such requests. Consideration of other requests would be in exceptional circumstances only and the pupil's record of attendance over the past years would be taken into account when deciding on permission being granted.*

## Roles and Responsibilities

### **The Governing Body is responsible for:**

- Ensuring that registers are properly kept;
- Submitting regular returns of attendance figures to the LA;
- Asking the Headteacher for an annual report on attendance;
- Providing a framework for in-service training of governors on attendance-related matters.

### **The Headteacher is responsible for:**

- Overseeing the implementation of Attendance Policy and procedures;
- Ensuring the collection of accurate statistical data;
- Development of efficient monitoring and evaluation systems;
- Forming positive links with outside agencies such as EWO / Social Services;
- Referral of appropriate pupils to the EWO;
- Reporting back to the Governing Body and the Behaviour Strategy Panel on matters of attendance / punctuality.
- Making decisions regarding exceptional circumstances for term time leave

### **Parents/Carers responsibilities:**

We expect all parents/carers to support the school in its aim to raise the achievement of their pupils through full attendance and excellent punctuality at school. Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility for making sure that their pupils attend school regularly and on time;

### **We expect parents/carers to:**

- Ensure their pupils arrive(s) on time at school for 8.40 am start (Reception to Year 6). Nursery opens at 8.45am. Entry for Nursery in through the Bird in Bush Road entrance. The main Windermere Gate is closed at 8.50 a.m. If a parent/carer is later than 8.50 a.m., they enter the school via the front office, where the name of their pupil is recorded as 'Late' and a reason for lateness needs to be provided to the staff member on duty. Lateness is monitored and a letter is sent home if this continues to happen.
- Ensure that their pupil attends school regularly.
- Contact the school on the first day of absence. Parents/carers are asked to let the school know the reason for any absence from school by telephoning the school, calling in to the office or telling the teacher. A pupil may be absenting her/himself from school without the parents'/carers' permission. If parents/carers get notification of absence or poor punctuality but do not think their pupil should have been absent or late, the school should be told as soon as possible so that the matter can be picked up quickly. A weekly update is required for absences of over one week, which may be due to sickness or 'other circumstances';
- Ensure the pupil has the necessary equipment, eg. P.E/swimming kit, reading folder/glasses etc. for the school day
- Pick up their pupil promptly by 3.15pm. At 3.20 p.m., the pupil must go with an adult to register their name on the Late Register (after school). A lateness record of pupilren's names is kept and a fine system is in place.
- If a pupil has been left at school beyond 3.30 p.m., the school makes every effort to contact parents/carers. If contact cannot be made with parents/carers, and there is no secondary/emergency

back-up, Social Services/Police will be contacted. The school will consider referral to Social Services if a pupil has been regularly left at the end of the school day. Governors of the school are informed.

- Ensure that the school is promptly informed when there is a change of address and/or contact telephone numbers (mobile/landline)
- Provide the school with an additional telephone contact number in case the school needs to contact a pupil's parents/carers in the case of an emergency.

## **Pupil responsibilities:**

### ***We expect that each pupil will:***

- Attend school regularly;
- Arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day;
- Tell a member of staff about any problem which is making it hard for them to attend school regularly and/or to be punctual.

## **Expectations of the School**

### ***The school is expected to (as detailed in Registration Procedures, below):***

- Keep efficient and accurate registration of pupil. **Please refer to section on 'Responsibility of the class teacher' and 'Registration Procedures';**
- Make immediate, first day of absence contact with a parent/carer if a pupil fails to attend without an explanation (Unauthorised Absence). **Please refer to section on 'Registration Procedures';**
- provide regular reports on the school's attendance statistics to outside agencies such as the Early Help Service, OFSTED, DfE etc.
- To promote positive attendance and punctuality;
- Work with the Early Help Service on all issues of Attendance and Punctuality.
- Refer using the Common Assessment Framework [CAF] if there is persistent non- attendance, if no further contact can be made by the School or there is no response from the parents/carers. The Deputy writes the referral/CAF and sends it to the Link EWO.
- Hold Team Around the Pupil [TAC]/Team Around the Family [TAF], multi-disciplinary meetings, when appropriate and necessary, to improve a pupil's attendance/punctuality, in particular when older siblings are attending secondary school etc.
- Provide Registers and records of previous registration for any register inspections.

### **Responsibilities for class teachers**

- Accurate keeping of the electronic class Register, completed before 8.55 a.m. and at the start of the first afternoon lesson
- Communicate with Administrative Officers, the Deputy Head regarding individual messages about absence, lateness and/or possible change of address, school etc, that has been communicated to them by parents/carers, to ensure prompt recording;
- Positively promote good attendance and punctuality within the classroom, with regard to the School's Attendance and Punctuality Policy;
- Make positive links with parents/carers to work together to create a positive school life
- Use the school policy with regard to absence and punctuality in triggering letters to be sent by the administrative support.

## **School Administrative Officers**

- Receive telephone communication from parents/carers, record information in registers and communicate to teaching staff in matters of consideration of authorisation;
- If a parent/carer fails to contact the school on the first day of absence, the school will contact them by phone or letter.
- Reasons for absences must be recorded electronically on each pupil's register, authorising the absences or not. Reasons must be specified, e.g. type of illness (not 'unwell' or 'sick') by administrative staff.
- Make a record of late arrivals and send out standard letters on Unauthorised Absence and Lateness. Class teachers (support staff, if they complete the electronic register) may inform administrative staff of issues about pupil attendance each morning;
- follow up absence on the first day, by telephone;
- assist the Headteacher and Leadership Team in collection of data;
- refer the names of persistent latecomers and poor school attenders to the Deputy Head for Inclusion;
- assist in 'on and off rolling' procedures in liaison with the Deputy Head for Inclusion;
- assist in casual admissions;
- complete totals of Authorised and Unauthorised Absences and make a record of attendance statistics

## **Registration Procedures**

- Registers are taken electronically twice a day in class, at 8.50 a.m. and at the start of the first afternoon lesson. Morning registration closes at 8.55 a.m. Any pupil arriving after class registration time is marked 'late'. If any pupil arrives late s/he must report to the office so that a member of the administrative staff/support staff team can record a lateness mark by the pupil's name. The time of the pupil's arrival in the school office is recorded in the register. If the pupil arrives with their parent, with a valid reason, such as lateness due to a medical appointment, usually the lateness will be authorised (with evidence) In other situations, the lateness becomes 'Unauthorised' this will affect the pupil's overall attendance.
- Should punctuality continue to be a problem, an appointment is arranged to meet with the Deputy Head, followed by referral to the EWO. If a pupil arrives after 9.25 a.m., this is recorded as an unauthorised absence, and a note of the time of their arrival is recorded on the register.
- Persistent Unauthorised lateness may constitute grounds for prosecution.
- Every pupil must have the appropriate electronic mark by his/her name.
- Following first day of absence contact, a letter will be sent home requesting a response and reason for absence from the pupil's parent/carer.
- The electronic registers will be checked by the school administrative officers on a daily basis in order to carry out first day contact procedure, carry out other registration checks and ensure correct recording in registers. The Deputy Head for Inclusion will advise teachers of procedure when necessary

**Where there is persistent non-attendance that is authorised through sickness, and this is affecting a pupil's progress in any way, a parent/carer will be requested to seek further medical advice and possibly medical certificates for the pupil. The school may arrange for a school health check with the permission of the parent/carer.**

## Promoting Good Attendance

*We will encourage good attendance and punctuality by:*

- Accurately completing electronic attendance registers at the beginning of each session and following up previous absences, reminding pupil regularly to bring in notes about absences, from parents/carers;
- Following up absence on the first day;
- Undertaking attendance checks at appropriate times;
- Recording attendance and punctuality on Annual Reports to Parents/Carers;
- Celebrating the classes with the highest attendance/punctuality of the week by presenting them with a certificate in assembly
- Publicly rewarding 100% Attendance once a term for individual pupil and over the course of the whole school year, by the presentation of certificates in class and in assemblies;
- Providing parents/carers with attendance figures;
- Promoting good practice in Attendance and Punctuality regularly on the Parents'/Carers' Newsletter.

### Review

This policy will be subject to review annually, subject to changes in local and national policy.