



Attendance Policy

At Brindishe Schools we believe that good attendance and punctuality are essential for the following reasons:

- ❖ research shows that children who attend school regularly do better at school and make better progress
- ❖ people who establish good patterns of timekeeping at an early age tend to keep these patterns for life
- ❖ children who attend school regularly and on time do not miss lessons, parts of lessons or vital pieces of information; they see themselves as 'in the picture' and as important members of the group
- ❖ children are entitled, in law, to receive a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- ❖ schools and parent/carer(s) are legally obliged to ensure that all children receive their entitlement
- ❖ it is not only a child's learning that is affected by missing school; they also miss out on social aspects and this can affect their ability to make and keep their friendships - a vital part of growing up.

Our guiding principles for good attendance and punctuality at Brindishe Schools:

- ❖ All children have the right to their full-time education
- ❖ All children have the right to arrive at and leave school at the appropriate time each day. Responsibility for promoting school attendance is shared by everyone in the school and is not left to a particular individual or group of people
- ❖ Having a clear and effective attendance policy which supports good attendance and punctuality improves all aspects of a child's school's life, especially its values, ethos, curriculum and achievement.

How do we mark and monitor attendance and punctuality?

The attendance register for all children on the school roll is taken twice a day - at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. For each child, the register is marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site or absent. If the child is absent, the teacher (or person taking the register) will indicate the reasons for absence where known. For details of our start and finish times for each school please contact the school office or visit our website at www.brindisheschools.org

How do we promote good attendance and punctuality?

- ❖ We will make sure that all classes know what their attendance rate is and encourage within each class a positive and supportive attitude towards attendance and punctuality.
- ❖ We will talk to individual children about their pattern of attendance and punctuality so that they can be aware of their goals and their progress towards them.
- ❖ We will report data on attendance rates regularly to all parent/carers and carers.



- ❖ We will include the attendance and punctuality rate of the child in the annual report to their schools and parent/carer(s) and ensure that it remains part of the child's individual school profile or record.
- ❖ We will give consistent messages about attendance and punctuality by modelling good punctuality, praising good attendance and punctuality and explaining to children why these things matter.
- ❖ We will work with schools and parent/carer(s) who are experiencing difficulties getting their child/ren to school and provide support to help them overcome these. Parent/carers / carers can always contact any member of staff to discuss their concerns.
- ❖ Where family health or circumstances are impeding a child's attendance or punctuality we will work with local services and with other professionals to try to minimise the impact. For example we will work with representatives of the medical profession including the school nurse and with colleagues from Social Care and Health. Our aim will be to ensure that a child's punctuality and attendance improves.
- ❖ We will keep careful records of each child's punctuality and attendance so that our decisions and actions are based on reliable data and so that we can carefully monitor performance at child, class and whole school level.
- ❖ We will look carefully at in-school factors which may impact on a child's willingness to attend school regularly and on time. This will include such areas as relationships between adults and children, between children and their peers, the child's behaviour and progress in school and their attitude towards specific events (such as lunchtime), activities (such as tests) and subjects (such as PE). We will be especially aware of how a child's happiness and well-being at school can have a significant effect on their attendance and physical health.

Does this policy apply to nursery-aged children?

The regulations governing school attendance apply to children of statutory school age. They do not apply to nursery-aged children. However habits are established young and we actively encourage schools and parent/carer(s) of nursery-aged children to ensure that the child attends regularly and punctually in the nursery. Schools and parent/carer(s) are therefore asked to ensure that their child is only absent from nursery for authorised reasons.

Who is responsible for promoting good attendance and punctuality?

- ❖ **Parent/carers** have the main responsibility and we are fortunate that the vast majority of parent/carers fully support and uphold our high expectations.
- ❖ **All staff** are encouraged to see themselves as responsible for promoting good attendance and punctuality, not least by modelling it themselves and by keeping it high focus. They work to identify and if possible remove barriers to a child achieving good attendance and punctuality.
- ❖ **The Headteacher and Governing Body** are responsible for ensuring that the school works in ways which enable its children to achieve at least the national average rates and where possible to exceed them.



- ❖ **The Senior Leadership and/or Attendance Officer** at each school are responsible for monitoring and responding to patterns of attendance and/or punctuality which impact on a child's ability to make progress in school.
- ❖ **The LA's (Local Authority) attendance and welfare officer** has a duty to monitor registers and punctuality and to respond to concerns by working directly with the school, child and family.

What happens if a child arrives late?

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start to the day.

Teachers provide early learning tasks to settle the class before they begin to take the register. If children arrive late, they must go to the school office to be registered for late entry. This ensures that a record of late arrivals is made, for monitoring purposes, and also ensures that the learning of the other children is not disturbed.

We fully understand that a late arrival does sometimes happen due to unavoidable circumstances. For example there may be a serious traffic delay or a one-off unforeseen event. Whenever possible, it is always better to inform the school by telephone when a child will be late. Where a child has a pattern of late arrival we will investigate causes and seek an improvement. A pattern of late arrivals after the registers have closed may lead to the school referring the family to the LA's attendance and welfare officer for investigation.

What if travel to school causes lateness?

Sometimes a child moves out of the area and then has a long or complicated journey to school. Providing that the journey does not lead to a pattern of lateness the child's place is secure. However if moving further away from the school causes difficulty with attendance or punctuality the Headteacher will liaise with the parent/carers and local education authority to move the child to a school within the area of the child's home address.

What happens if a child is collected late from school?

Schools and parent/carer(s) are asked to ensure that children are collected promptly each day; details of our start and finish times for each school are available on our website www.brindisheschools.org or from our school offices. Children do not like being collected late - they feel insecure and are embarrassed if they are 'the last one'. If the parent/carer or adult collecting finds that they are going to be late (for example because a train has been cancelled) they are asked to ring the school office to let us know. We will then make sure that a member of staff looks after the child (or children) until the collecting adult arrives.

Children who are uncollected at the end of the school day wait in a designated area and, after 15 minutes, we will try to contact the schools and parent/carer(s). If this is still unsuccessful after a further 15 minutes, the calls will be repeated. After a further half hour, Children's Social Care will be contacted to discuss the next step or best option. At this point CSC become responsible for the



child. Parent/carers or carers who persistently fail to collect their children on time on a regular basis may be referred to Children's Social Care.

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of the following categories.

1. **Unauthorised Absence** - This is for pupils where the school has not been able to establish the reason for their absence, or whose absence is deemed to be without a valid reason (i.e a holiday during term time).
2. **Authorised Absence** - This is for pupils who are away from school for a valid reason such as illness.
3. **Approved Educational Activity** - This covers activities such as:
 - Educational visits
 - Sporting activities
 - Approved education off site, for example children going to a transition day for secondary school
 - Dual registration, where children spend part or all of the week at a different school for a period of time

What happens if a child is going to be absent from school?

If a child is going to be absent from school the parent/carer is responsible for letting the school office staff know the reason for the absence and the anticipated length or duration of the absence. Where no message is received about a child's absence, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**.

If a child is absent without explanation when the register is called, the school staff will contact the parent/carers the same day, wherever possible to establish the reason.

Notification of, and reasons for absence must be provided by the child's parent/carer or the parent/carer's adult representative. This may be in person, by phone, e-mail or in writing. We cannot accept messages from primary-aged children.

How do we decide if an absence is authorised or unauthorised absence?

Authorised absence is absence with permission from an authorised representative of the school, normally the Headteacher/deputy headteacher. This includes instances of absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided (e.g. illness).

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from an authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.



What are authorised and unauthorised absences?

The following notes are intended to explain the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence. The Headteacher (or their representative) authorises absence in line with government guidance.

- a) **Illness** - If the school is satisfied that a child is prevented from attending school by reason of illness then the absence will be treated as authorised. We understand that children will have longer absences for the normal range of childhood illnesses such as chickenpox. However, if a child has more than three days of absence for an unspecified medical reason (such as 'unwell' or 'stomach upset') we may ask for confirmation from a medical practitioner before the absence is authorised. Production of a child's prescription or copy of the prescription can be used as proof of illness/absence.

What is Fabricated or Induced Illness?

Fabricated or induced illness (FII) occurs when a parent or carer, exaggerates or deliberately causes symptoms of illness in the child. It is considered to be a safeguarding issue/form of child abuse.

Where we have concerns over a pupil's attendance due to regular illness we will ask for verification of medical appointments. We will also look for explanations for absence within school eg a child is often absent on the day the class does an activity they do not enjoy.

As with all safeguarding issues, the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) may make a referral to children's social care and parents/carers may not be informed of this if we feel it puts the child at further risk. The DSL will then liaise and work with all other agencies, including health, social care and the police to safeguard the child.

- b) **Doctor's, optician's and dental appointments** should be made for after the end of the school's day or for during the lunchtime or in holiday times if possible. However we understand that this may not always be possible and so leave for medical or dental appointments may be given (i.e. the absence may be authorised). In order to authorise the absence for an appointment we will need confirmation from the parent/carers either in person, in writing, by telephone, or by production of an appointments card of where the appointment is and when it is timed to take place. We will not authorise a whole day off school for medical appointments. The child should attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.
- c) **Exceptional circumstances** - It is for the Headteacher, following government guidance, to determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not: much will depend on the circumstances of the particular case. It is impossible to cover all circumstances within this document but as a general rule authorisation under this category



will be *very rare* and the circumstances will be *truly exceptional*. Birthdays, day trips, cost of flights and visiting relatives are not deemed to be exceptional circumstances or a reason for absence. Please see Appendix 1 for a list of what may be considered exceptional circumstances.

Exams and tests associated with extracurricular activities or school entry exams. Every effort should be made to organise exams to be taken out of school hours. Where this is not possible requests will be treated sympathetically with consideration given to the following:

- the frequency of the event
- contribution to the child's learning and achievement
- the overall attendance of the child

Requests for absence for exams and tests should be made to the Headteacher giving details of purpose, time and venue.

- d) **Family Bereavements** - The death of an immediate family member is a particularly traumatic and sensitive event and any request for absence (e.g. to attend a funeral or associated event) will always be dealt with sympathetically.
- e) **Days of Religious Observance** – An absence of a child in order for them to take part in a **day** set aside exclusively for religious observation by the religious body to which the parent/carers belong is classified as authorised absence. Children whose religion or faith tradition prevent them from taking part in religious events celebrated at school, will be given alternative learning or may be given permission to be absent.

What happens if a child's attendance causes concern?

Parent/carers have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. There is a national target of **96% attendance** for primary-aged children. This takes into account the normal range of childhood illnesses. We appreciate that children with special medical needs or conditions may find this target difficult to achieve. Where the need or condition is professionally supported and documented the target of 96% attendance is relaxed and a more appropriate target set for the individual child. **A child will be considered persistently absent if their attendance falls below 90%.**

Parents and carers can view their child's attendance percentage through our on-line management information service (Arbor), which can be accessed through your school's individual website.



If a child's attendance falls below 96%, it alerts us to look more closely at the pattern of attendance.

We would look for the following patterns:

1. Three days or more absence with no known or satisfactory reason.
2. Roughly 3 broken weeks in any six
3. Regular patterns of absence (e.g. Mondays or Fridays)
4. Friends or siblings absent together
5. Persistent lateness
6. Reported concerns for a child's well-being, welfare or safety
7. Changes in family circumstances, changes in delivery or collection arrangements

It is recognised that the attendance rate of a child may have fallen because the child has had a series of medical absences, over a relatively short period of time, and that the rate of attendance will rise with the child's recovery.

If a child does not attend regularly, or there are concerns about the reasons for non-attendance, then we will take the following actions:

- ❖ collect and examine the rate and pattern of attendance
- ❖ talk to the child about their attendance. Discuss with the class teacher, teaching assistants/ member of the Inclusion team to establish the level of concern and any known factors which may contribute to the picture or pattern.
- ❖ the school will contact the child's parent/carers/carer to establish further information and to identify strategies for improvement
- ❖ if appropriate the school will enlist the support of the LA's attendance and welfare officer (AWO).

In all of our actions the intention will be to improve the pattern of attendance and punctuality for the child. Where it is not possible, with the co-operation of the parent/carers, to improve the attendance and punctuality rate of a child the school may decide to take further action. Under current legislation, parent/carers found guilty of school attendance offences could be subject to a maximum penalty of up to £2500 and/or a period of imprisonment for up to three months. Penalty notices will be issued by the education authority and failure to pay will lead to prosecution.

Penalty notices may be issued for unauthorised absences including:

- ❖ parent/carer condoned absences (truancy)
- ❖ unauthorised holidays during term time

More information on penalty notices is available from the school office or from the Attendance and Welfare section of Lewisham Education at Laurence House

<http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/Pages/contact.aspx?directoryid=126>



What about absence during term time?

Current government legislation clearly states ‘Head teachers may not grant *any* leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.’

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. This means that in Brindishe Schools we will not authorise absence in term time unless there are exceptional and professionally documented reasons why the absence cannot be taken during holiday times.

Request for Leave of Absence

Only in exceptional circumstances, where sufficient evidence is provided to substantiate the circumstances will any absence from school be authorised.

The school policy is as follows:

1. Parents/carers should request leave of absence in writing using the leave of absence form (available from the school office).
2. Verbal requests can also be made to the school Attendance, Welfare and Safeguarding Officer or to the school office but these will also be recorded in writing.
3. The request must include the reason why it is necessary to take such an absence during term time, including evidence such as a medical certificate. For an emergency trip, evidence of last minute booking of flights, must be provided.

Removal from the school roll

If a child is absent without authorisation for more than 20 days and the parent/carer has not been in contact with the school, a referral will be made to the Local Authority who may recommend that the child is removed from roll.

For further support and information:

Contact the Education social work service 020 8314 6272 or e-mail attendance@lewisham.gov.uk

Policy updated November 2019
Due for renewal November 2021



Request for Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances during Term Time

Parents/carers are requested not to take their child/ren out of school during term time as this causes disruption to their education. Children attend school for only 190 days a year. At Brindishe Schools we must follow the law* in this regard and may only grant leave in **exceptional circumstances** if certain criteria are fulfilled:

- Parents/carers should not normally take their child(ren) out of school during the school term.
- Leave of absence in exceptional circumstances is authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher (***it is not the automatic right of parents/carers***).
- Please do not book your leave of absence until you have received the permission of the Headteacher.
- Each request for leave of absence will be considered individually, taking into account:
 - the circumstances for the request
 - the supporting evidence provided
 - the overall attendance of your child(ren)
 - your child(ren)'s stage of education, progress and attainment
- If the absence is approved by the Headteacher you will be advised as to how many days the Headteacher has approved for your child(ren)'s absence.
- If the school does not agree the absence and you take the leave without permission, or your child is absent for more than the agreed number of days the absence will be unauthorised.
- You should be aware that a pattern of unauthorised absence is very likely to result in a Penalty Notice, which carries a fine of £120 per parent (for each child), reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. In the event that this is not paid, the Education Authority may institute court action, which on conviction could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and a criminal conviction.

***The Pupil Registration Regulations (England) 2006 and the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**



In order for your application for absence to be considered, please complete the following:

Name(s) of Child(ren)	Class / Year

Adult details:
Email address: Mobile phone number:
Date of absence
From Date of return to school
Reason for request during term time (additional evidence may be required)
Signed: Parent/Carer
Date:

School Data Checklist

For School Office Use Only

Date application for Leave of Absence received:	
Pupil's name	
% Attendance Yr to date	



Attainment/Progress	
SATs/Assessment information	
Previous leave of absence requested/taken (last 2 years)	
Nature of exceptional circumstances and evidence provided	
Outcome	<p>Unauthorised / No of days</p> <p>Authorised / No of days.....</p> <p>Letter sent: Date</p>



Appendix 1

Please note, these are **not considered** exceptional reasons for requesting leave:

- It's cheaper
- We can't afford to go in school holidays
- We can't go in school holidays because it's too hot, hurricane or monsoon season
- Someone else is paying for the holiday/flights to see a relative
- The children's grandparents are getting older/haven't seen children/not been well
- Honeymoon of parents
- We had a baby and want a break

What **may be** considered exceptional circumstances:

- Another sibling is having medical treatment abroad/in another part of the country and the whole family have to go
- Parent of child/sibling is terminally ill and they are asking for time to take a holiday as this is likely to be their last opportunity
- Medical treatment of parent/sibling taken place in school holiday and this prevented the family from taking a holiday
- Parent/grandparent is acutely ill in home country/another country
- Death in immediate family