



## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

<b>Approved</b>	<b>October 2014</b>
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## **Purpose**

At Benedict Primary School we aim to ensure that all children receive a full-time education, which maximises opportunities for each child to realise his or her true potential.

We provide a welcoming, loving environment where we will support all children to thrive. All Benedict staff will work with children and families to ensure each child attends school regularly and punctually. We aim to have 96% or better attendance. Punctuality is also a priority for Benedict and we encourage all children to arrive on time and ready to learn each day.

To meet these objectives, Benedict Primary School has effective systems to:

- Communicate with children, their parents and carers and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice and support. Parents receive the school attendance leaflet on arrival to the school and yearly thereafter. It is also available on the website.
- Praise, incentivise and reward the efforts that children and their parents/carers make to improve their attendance and timekeeping.
- Work with those parents/ carers whose children have low attendance and poor punctuality to identify strategies to improve.

## **Statutory Duties**

- The Education Act 1996 requires parents/ carers to ensure their children receive full time education by regular attendance at a school or by using other arrangements. Parents/ carers have the responsibility for making sure their children attend school and are on time.
- Benedict Primary School is responsible for recording children's attendance twice a day, once at the start of the morning sessions and once at the start of the afternoon session.
- Benedict Primary School attendance registers are monitored by the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer and School Attendance Leads ( Head Teacher, Family Support Manager and Attendance officer ).

## **Aims**

- To promote excellent attendance and punctuality through creative means.
- To aspire for children's attendance to be 96+%.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority at Benedict Primary School by all stakeholders including children, parents and carers, teachers, support staff and Local Academy Board members recognising that poor attendance is a safeguarding indicator from Nursery to Year 6.
- To have systems which clarify roles and responsibilities.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and children.
- To have a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To have positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To use a system of rewards for good attendance and punctuality.
- To work in effective partnership in a multi agency framework including the Education Welfare Service to help families where attendance is a concern..

## **Roles and responsibilities regarding attendance**

### **Parents**

- It is a legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their children attend Benedict Primary School. The school expects parents/carers to ensure their child attends every day, on time and prepared to learn.
- Benedict Primary School expects all parents/carers inform the school office on their child's first day of absence by 10.30am. If contact is not made before the child returns to school, communication must be provided to the attendance officer. Medical evidence may be requested by the school if non-attendance is due to illness.
- Parents/carers are expected to know what absences are acceptable. Any absence will only be authorised at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Parents are made aware of the legal consequences of non-attendance.
- Where attendance falls below 90% medical evidence is required until attendance improves to a satisfactory level.
- Parents/carers should be aware that poor punctuality may result in an unauthorised absence being recorded which could lead to intervention by the Education Welfare Service.
- Parents/carers are asked to inform Benedict Primary School of any barriers to their child attending school. This can be via the school office or via a confidential appointment with the Head Teacher or Family Support Manager. Families who are experiencing exceptional circumstances affecting the attendance of children at school are encouraged to come and discuss the situation with the Head Teacher or Family Support Manager. Whenever possible, the school works in partnership with parents to support them and to improve attendance with supportive strategies (e.g. offering temporary attendance at the school's breakfast or after-school club).

### **Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

Benedict Primary School expects all staff to support the regular attendance of children by addressing any barriers that may prevent their good attendance.

#### **Role of the Class teacher**

- It is the responsibility of all class teachers at Benedict Primary School to take their class register accurately and within five minutes of the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Children's absence notification must be passed, promptly, to the school office.
- Teachers are expected to act on attendance data and to monitor the attendance of their children and identify patterns. Concerns should first be discussed with parents and subsequently the Attendance Officer/ Family Support Manager or Head Teacher.

- Benedict Primary School expects all class teachers to encourage punctuality through the appropriate positive meeting and greeting of children. All lateness to sessions must be recorded in the register and challenged appropriately.

### **Children**

- Children should arrive at Benedict Primary School on time and ready to learn.

### **Role of the Senior Leadership Team**

- Attendance is an item for discussion at progress meetings, Strategic Safeguarding meetings, Inclusion team meetings and Local Academy board meetings, in particular the Parent, Partnership, Ethos and Community Committee. The link between attendance and attainment is monitored.
- It is the responsibility of the SLT to have an overview of attendance within their phase groups and act upon any concerns raised by class teachers.

### **Role of the Attendance Team (i.e. Head Teacher, Family Support Manager, Attendance Officer)**

- It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and Family Support Manager to oversee the school's attendance strategy, policy and practice.
- It is the responsibility of the School's Attendance Officer to maintain the day to day attendance systems and communicate with parents about absence and lateness of children.
- It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to make decisions about whether non-attendance is authorised or not.
- The Family Support Manager meets regularly with the school's Educational Welfare Officer to discuss children and families whose attendance is below 90% and to develop strategies to deal with persistent non-attenders.
- In cases of persistent absence, the Head Teacher has discretion to request that the Educational Welfare Officer issues a Penalty Notice Warning, with subsequent fines if appropriate.
- The Attendance Team analyses attendance data to identify any patterns of concern and liaise with the relevant parties, e.g., Class Teacher, parents.
- The Attendance Team promotes punctuality and good attendance throughout the school, using Attendance Assemblies, Rewards, Displays on noticeboards, Newsletters and special events to discourage lateness.
- The Head Teacher submits regular reports to the Local Academy Board regarding attendance.

### **Role of the Local Academy Board**

- There is member of the Local Academy Board allocated to monitor and support the school regarding attendance.
- Local Academy Board members monitor and evaluate attendance and ensure the policy is followed.

### **Role of the Chapel St Community Schools Trust**

The Trust's Board of Directors are ultimately responsible for overall policy setting regarding Attendance and Punctuality at Benedict.

### **Role of the Education Welfare Service (EWS)**

- The school currently buys in to the Service Level Agreement with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service and works closely in partnership with their allocated Educational Welfare Officer.
- In families for which poor attendance is a concern, the EWO and Family Support Manager write to the parents to ask them to meet with them to discuss how to improve their child's attendance.
- The EWS is responsible for issuing Penalty Notice Warnings and for monitoring subsequent attendance, issuing Penalty Fines if appropriate to families of recurring non-attending children.
- The School's EWO attends or submits reports to Child Protection Conferences where attendance is part of the CP Plan for a child.

### **Punctuality**

- Every child is expected to arrive at school punctually when the doors open. School doors open at 8.40 am. Registration is at 9.00 am. Children are encouraged to be on the playground from 8.30 am onwards.
- A record of latecomers and reason for lateness is kept by the Attendance Officer and is reviewed regularly by the Family Support Manager.
- The Attendance Officer records lateness in SIMS.

## **Encouraging Excellent Attendance**

- Children are encouraged to attend regularly and on time in weekly Assemblies.
- There are rewards given to the class with the best attendance each week and month. These are highlighted in the school's weekly newsletter.
- Children who achieve 100% attendance receive a certificate and mufti day.
- Children whose attendance has improved are praised in letters to parents/ carers acknowledging their improvement.
- Where appropriate, Team Around the Family meetings are held to support families where attendance is a concern.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised Absence**

- Educational trips arranged by the school
- Sickness
- Attendance at hospital for treatment
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointment (half day maximum)
- Days of religious observance such as main religious days of Eid, Holy Communion (agreed with the Head Teacher beforehand)
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement, unexpected eviction
- Going to other schools for visits, interviews or examination

### **Unauthorised Absence**

- Looking after brothers, sisters and others. This is a safeguarding issue and school will advise Children's Social Services if this is a concern.
- Shopping
- Celebrating a birthday or other anniversary
- Sleeping in / alarm not working
- One child is ill, so siblings are not brought to school
- Minor ailments such as tummy ache or headache
- Because it is the end of the week or the term
  
- Children arriving after the close of registration without a valid reason will be marked as unauthorised absence.
  
- Children whose parents do not contact the school with a reason on the first day of a child's absence are marked as unauthorised non-attendance.
  
- Holidays in term time are not authorised. Government regulations state that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time except under exceptional circumstances. If children are taken out of school without permission, their absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/ carers may be liable for prosecution.

## **Exceptional Circumstances**

'Exceptional circumstances' will generally require some form of evidence and may include:

- The serious or terminal illness of a parent or close family member involving distant travel .
- Either parent having to take their holiday during term time because of an employer being inflexible about when they take their holiday.
- If there has recently been a death or other significant trauma in the family and it is felt that an immediate holiday might help the child deal with the situation.

## **The legal consequences of non-attendance**

Legal proceedings and Penalty Notices may be used in cases where there has been persistent absence and parents have not engaged meaningfully with the school to try to improve attendance. In these cases, the situation is likely to have resulted in the involvement of Children's Social Services because persistent absence may give cause for safeguarding concerns.

## **Legal Proceedings**

Legal proceedings may be considered after the school and EWO have tried to engage with, and offer support to, a family of a child who has attendance issues.

## **Penalty Notices**

Benedict Primary School can request that the Education Welfare Service issue a penalty warning notice for a child.