

BROOKLAND INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is Brookland Infant and Nursery School's policy to make all pupils and parents aware of the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

The most vital part of encouraging good attendance is to ensure that our school is a place that pupils want to come to, a place where the children are considered as individuals, where their needs are addressed and their successes celebrated.

Good attendance helps the children in our school to maximise their learning. This policy will support us all to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

AIMS

Brookland Infant and Nursery School aims to:

- encourage and assist all pupils to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them
- reduce Persistent Absence in order that all pupils are assisted in reaching their potential
- establish a commitment to work which will be carried forward into adulthood

Brookland Infant and Nursery School believes that good school attendance assists children and young people to achieve the following 5 outcomes:

- ❖ to be healthy
- ❖ to stay safe
- ❖ to enjoy and achieve
- ❖ to make a positive contribution
- ❖ to achieve economic well-being

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Every child is required by law to attend school regularly at the school where he/she is registered.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied with the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

TARGETS/MONITORING

The Department for Education (DfE) is firmly of the view that unnecessary absence is unacceptable and must be prevented and tackled by schools.

The DfE expects all schools and local authorities to focus on reducing overall absence, particularly unauthorised absence and persistent absence. Absence will be monitored closely by the DfE via the pupil level school census and the Secretary of State has the power to require an individual school to set absence targets where a school's absence record is of particular concern.

However good the teaching, it does not benefit pupils if they are not present.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Promoting good attendance at Brookland Infant and Nursery School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community.

Brookland Infant and Nursery School:

- will provide a safe learning environment
- will ensure that records of attendance are maintained according to Government legislation and guidance on a daily basis
- will encourage good attendance and will investigate all unexplained and unjustified absence
- staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality
- will follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality

Parents:

- are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance
- are expected to ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn
- will inform the school, on the first day of absence, the reason for their child's absence
- will not arrange family holidays during term time
- will ensure that the school is informed of any changes of contact details

REGISTRATION

The Attendance Register is marked twice each day, once at the beginning of the morning session and once at the beginning of the afternoon session. Registers are marked in accordance with DfE guidance. One day's absence is counted as two absences (one for the morning, one for the afternoon). Children arriving after the registers have been closed will be marked as an unauthorised absence for the whole of that half day.

ATTENDANCE

Attending school on a regular basis is the key to your child doing well at school. It will also give your child the opportunity to:

-  make friends and feel included
-  learn new things and develop many skills
-  increase their confidence and self-esteem
-  improve their social skills

If a child misses just one day a week, over the course of their school career they will miss two years of schooling. Helping your child into good habits from an early age can help these carry through to adult and working life.

However it is accepted that if children are ill they should be kept at home and it is also accepted that when children first start school they can sometimes be ill quite often although this usually settles down after a little while.

If you have any concerns about your child's attendance levels the Headteacher will be happy to discuss this with you.

All unexplained absence will be followed-up. If your child is not at school you should phone the school office as soon as possible to explain the absence. The school operates a 'First Day Response' system where if a message has not been received on the first day of absence the School Office will contact you. If a reason is not received for your child's absence then a 'Reason for Absence' form will be sent home for you to complete. If this is not returned and no reason for the absence is given then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Once a reason for absence is received it is the school that decides whether to accept the reason and authorise the absence.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

An absence is authorised on receipt of a written note, an e-mail, a telephone message or a verbal message giving an acceptable reason for the absence. If no message has been received we may send an 'Absence from School' form home with your child for you to record the reason for the absence and return it to the school.

It is the school and not the parent who authorise the absence and we will use the following criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence:

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- the child is ill
- the child had to attend the doctor's surgery, hospital, dentist or any other medical consultation
- for a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's family belongs
- for an exceptional special circumstance such as a family bereavement, to attend a family wedding or to take an examination (the authorisation and length of authorised absence to be at the discretion of the Headteacher)

Absence is **unauthorised** if:

- no explanation is forthcoming
- the Headteacher is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the child is absent for unexceptional special occasions (eg a birthday treat)
- if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming
- a child is taken out of school for a family holiday even though the parent has already been notified that the absence will be recorded as unauthorised

Registers are inspected once every half term by Hertfordshire County Council's Attendance Improvement Officer who may investigate any periods of unauthorised absence or children with less than 80% / 85% attendance levels.

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Parents should be aware that:

- **From September 2013 requests for leave of absence will not be authorised except in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Headteacher**
- If exceptional circumstances apply then leave must be requested, if possible, two months before the absence
- It remains the discretionary power of the headteacher/governing body to authorise leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
- If absence is authorised due to exceptional circumstances the Headteacher/governing body will determine the length of authorised absence

The conditions under which leave of absence may be granted are laid down in regulation 7 of 'The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and 'The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

Regulation 7 states that:

(1) Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school:

(1A) Subject to paragraph (2), leave of absence shall not be granted unless—

- (a) an application has been made in advance to the proprietor by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides; and*
- (b) the proprietor, or a person authorised by the proprietor in accordance with paragraph (1), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.*

Parents must arrange family holidays during school holidays.

Parents are able to request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances for their child, however, **parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child and permission must be requested in advance.**

A 'Request for Leave of Absence' form for this purpose is available in the school office. This should be completed and sent into school in advance of the absence. You will be notified as to whether the absence has been authorised or not. The headteacher may want to meet with you to discuss your request.

The exceptional circumstances together with your child's attendance levels will be taken into consideration when making the decision.

When deciding whether to take your child out of school you should remember:

The school year only accounts for 52% of the whole year

-  If parents remove their child from school during term time the absence may be unauthorised
-  If parents remove their child from school during term time they must accept that their child will miss the work being covered. We do not routinely give work for a child to take on holiday, or save work for a child to do on their return.
-  All members of the class suffer even if one child is absent for a family holiday in term time as the teacher may have to spend time helping that child catch up.
-  Children find it very difficult to catch up on the learning they have missed and in the longer term this can have a negative impact on their progress.
-  Children miss out on the social side of school life if they are absent particularly at the beginning of the new school year.

PENALTY NOTICES

At Brookland Infant and Nursery School we expect parents to work with us to address attendance problems. If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day equals 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term (including unauthorised holidays), the headteacher may ask Hertfordshire County Council to issue a Penalty Notice. The penalty is £60 (per parent) if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, or £120 (per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid Hertfordshire County Council may prosecute the parents for their child's irregular attendance. Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.

Copies of Hertfordshire County Council's Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absences can be obtained from the school office.

REWARDS/INCENTIVES

Brookland Infant and Nursery School currently have the following incentive system in place for good attendance:

-  On Fridays in our Celebration Assembly, we award the class with the best attendance a certificate and a trophy for the week. This way every child is being rewarded for the good attendance of the group as a whole
-  Certificates are given out termly for children with exceptionally good attendance
-  Children whose attendance improves significantly will be awarded an improvement certificate

We hope this will help motivate children and reward the many children who will have good attendance.

LATENESS

Obviously there are times when despite your best efforts your child will be late for school, but for all the other times please try to get your child here on time. Our daily timetable is:

Morning session

8.55am	Children invited into the classroom
9.00am	Register is taken
9.05am	First lesson starts

Afternoon session

1.20pm	Children back in classroom after lunch
1.25pm	Register is taken
1.30pm	Lesson starts

If your child arrives in the classroom late:

-  they are often embarrassed and upset having to come into a settled classroom
-  they missed the chance to answer their name
-  they missed the register
-  they missed the important news of the day
-  they will be unsettled because they do not know the purpose of the lesson
-  it could take them a while to catch up with the information they missed

Please try and avoid arranging routine appointments for Doctor's and Dentist's during the school day. However if this is unavoidable please, if possible, inform the class teacher in advance so that your child's absence will be correctly recorded in the register and, if appropriate, a school meal ordered for them.

Schools are required to record children as absent for that session if they arrive after the register has been closed. Regular lateness will be monitored and followed up.

ATTENDANCE DATA

The school uses a computerised system to record attendance. We will send you a 'Registration Certificate' for your child with their report at the end of the summer term for that academic year. This shows your child's total % attendance and number of absences. On request we can send you a 'Registration Certificate' showing your child's current attendance at any point in the year. Any queries about the recorded marks on this 'certificate' should be directed to the school office.

One day's absence is counted as two absences (one for the morning, one for the afternoon). Attendance and absence is recorded and monitored over an academic year, September to July.

The Department for Education collects data on attendance termly from the school as part of the Schools Census. The Governing Body regularly reviews attendance data and absence levels.

Any concerns about a child's attendance will be followed-up by the Headteacher usually by sending a letter to the parent and/or meeting with the parent.