Defford and Besford Church of England
Primary School

"Through Faith, Friendship and Fun we Learn and Grow"

Attendance Policy

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1.Introduction

The Governors of Defford and Besford CE Primary School believe that regular, punctual attendance at school is of vital importance to children's progress and support the Headteacher fully in implementing the regulations required of him by the Department for Education in these matters.

The Office Manager and Headteacher monitor pupils' attendance and lateness for school on a weekly basis. The Headteacher and Office Manager will review attendance figures and identify courses of action during these meetings.

The Bible teaches that, people who follow Jesus' teaching "are strong. Like a tree planted by a river. The tree produces fruit in season, and its leaves do not die. Everything they do will succeed." (Psalm 1) Our school environment and culture are designed to allow all staff and pupils to flourish. Fundamental to this belief is that pupils need to be in school to flourish.

Our 3 school rules are for pupils to Be ready, Be respectful and Be safe. Attendance is important to each and every one of these.

2.Purpose

At Defford and Besford C.E. Primary School we have an expectation that children come to school on time, every day. Our ethos encourages children to feel their presence in school is important and that their contribution to their class and the whole school is missed if they are absent or arrive late. The purpose of this document is to guide parents and school staff in the implementation of school policy regarding pupils' attendance and lateness; it has been drawn up with advice from the government and support from Worcestershire County Council. The contents of this policy are brought to the attention of parents on the school website.

3.Attendance

The gates open at 8.30 am each morning. Children should be in the school by 8.45 am ready for the day's learning to begin.

4.Lateness

Pupils arriving late at the start of the school day means they are severely disadvantaged by missing out on essential literacy and numeracy sessions. The gate is closed at 8.45 am, signifying the start of the school day. Registers remain open for 15 minutes, closing at 9:00 am. Any children arriving after this time will be marked late and an appropriate code will be input in the register. Anyone arriving after 9.45 am, will receive a U code (late after registers close) and the implication of this is an unauthorised absence for the whole of the morning session.

If a child is not recorded as present in the morning register and no contact has been made with the school office, the Office Manager will contact parents to find out the reason for the absence. If no contact can be made an appropriate code is entered on the register to signify unauthorised absence.

5.Illness

When a child is unwell the school office should be informed on the first day of absence, by telephone, email or in person. The reason for the illness will then be recorded on the school information system (Arbor).

We may carry out a 'safe and well' check on your child at home if we have not heard from, or been able to contact, one of the named contacts to ensure their safety.

6.Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents are asked to ensure that routine medical or dental appointments are not made during the school day. Where this is unavoidable, e.g. specialist hospital appointments, a copy of the appointment card should be shown to the Office Manager or Headteacher. A child sent home due to illness will be signed out and the absence authorised for the remainder of the day.

7.Other absence from School

Where it is necessary for a child to be absent from school for reasons other than those given above, e.g. external examination, family wedding, funeral, the Headteacher should be notified in advance in writing using the 'Request for leave in term Time' form which can be obtained from the school office, and approval for the absence obtained.

8.Request for Holidays during Term Time

Parents should not make any plans for holidays during term time. Should circumstances develop that forces a family to consider removing their children from school they should complete thye 'Request for leave in term Time' form notifying the school of the proposed disruption to their child's learning.

We closely monitor parents' requests for holiday during school time, and do not authorise any holiday absence outside of school holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances. There is no automatic right to any leave or holiday in term time.

Applications for leave of absence must be made on the 'Request for leave in term Time' form and sent to the school office in time for the request to be considered at least 6 weeks before the desired period of absence. Parents/carers must allow the Headteacher sufficient time to respond to the application. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any bookings before receiving the school's decision on their request.

Although school attendance does not become a legal requirement until the term after a child turns five, Defford and Besford CE Primary School expects children in Reception (EYFS) to attend school regularly and punctually in line with the attendance expectations for all pupils. Every day in Reception is extremely important, as children take part in carefully planned, sequential learning that builds upon previous lessons. Missing school can result in children missing vital phonics teaching, reading sessions and daily mathematics learning, making it more difficult for them to keep pace with their peers. Where absence occurs, children may require additional catch-up activities and support on their return to help address gaps in learning. Regular attendance from the start of a child's school journey promotes strong educational foundations, positive routines, confidence, belonging and the best possible outcomes for future success.

Each case will be considered on its own merit and will take account of:

- The exceptional circumstances that have given rise to the request
- The overall attendance of the child
- Restricted time for family holidays (e.g. farming or military)
- SEND and their impact on availability for leave and holiday

Leave taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Family birthdays

Where the school and parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is then absent from school the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

9.Persistent Absence

It is agreed that as a school it is our responsibility, wherever possible, to prevent unauthorised absence as well as reduce the number of pupils who miss a great deal of schooling owing to absence for a range of reasons. These affect the progress of individual children and the overall standards that we are able to achieve. The school, in conjunction with the Education Welfare Team, will monitor the attendance of all pupils in line with thresholds for persistent absentee status. Persistent absentee status is measured by a child's attendance being below 90%.

To ensure parents are aware of their child's attendance if school is concerned. Parents will receive a letter offering support with attendance once their child's attendance is below 95%. If a child's attendance does deteriorate below 90%, making them persistently absent, the family will again be offered support and the school's education welfare officer will be notified of the situation to assess how to assist.

The school has an attendance leaflet that is shared with parents alongside letters concerning their child's attendance to remind them of the important of good attendance and the difference that it makes to education.

10.Monitoring Attendance

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality:

Class Teachers are responsible for:

- 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 absence offered by children and their parents/carers.
- Informing the Headteacher 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 (but not necessarily taking this any further – this is the responsibility of the office manager).
- Discussing attendance issues at parents' evenings.
- Setting an example by arriving promptly to lessons.

The Office Manager is responsible for:

- Following up specific requests from the Headteacher for information about individuals.
- Follow the school's procedures for first day calling.
- Monitoring individual attendance on a daily basis where concerns have been raised.
- Informing the Headteacher on a formal and an informal basis of patterns of attendance noted.
- Promptly issuing registers and processing on a daily basis.
- Processing and following up holiday request forms.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance and setting of challenging attendance targets for the school.
- Tracking trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Acting as a point of contact for teaching and non-teaching staff where concerns need to be raised or advice sought.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Ensuring that the Attendance Policy is followed.
- Liaising with and discussing with parents issues relating to attendance.
- Overall preparation and implementation of the Attendance Policy.
- Feedback and discussions with the class teacher over individual cases.
- Promotion of attendance issues during assemblies.
- Report statistics to the Governors as part of the Headteacher's report.

11.Action to be taken in the event of low attendance rates

- When a child's attendance rate falls below 95% (other than in circumstances of major illness or accident), the parents of these children will receive a letter sharing our concerns and information of their child's attendance. This may include a printout of their child's registration data and a copy of the school's attendance information leaflet for parents. They will be offered support to improve their child's attendance, that may include support from Education Welfare.
- Where a child's attendance rate falls below 90% (other than in circumstances of major illness or accident), the parents of these children will receive a letter stating our concerns, and their child's attendance percentage over the term. This will include a printout of their child's

registration data and a copy of the school's attendance information leaflet for parents. They may then be advised that further absences will be unauthorised UNLESS school is provided with medical evidence covering the period of absence. We may also involve the services of the Education Welfare Officer.

- In circumstances where the Headteacher is concerned that a number of absences are becoming unauthorised they, or the Office Manager, will ensure that the support of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is secured in working with the family.
- Where a child's attendance is of concern, we operate a first day call system. The child's teacher will alert the office staff to the absence immediately and the Office Manager will contact the parents to ask why their child is absent. The Education Welfare Officer may also be involved with these children in the course of their regular contact with the school.
- Children's attendance is readily available on the computer in order that we can monitor low attendance on a regular basis.

12.Rates of Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

At the end of the school year, we will record the rate for authorised pupil absence, and the rate of unauthorised absence. This is required by the DfE. A record of attendance is kept on the school's computer system. Parents are asked to help us to avoid absence by refraining from booking holidays during school time.

13.Information about Attendance and Lateness for Parents

Information about attendance and lateness will be given regularly to parents to ensure that policy and procedures are known by all. During Parents' Evening your child's class teacher will share with you details of your child's attendance and this will be discussed in confidence. Punctuality and lateness will also be discussed. Good attendance will also be highlighted and celebrated.

14. Fixed Penalty Notices for absence and other sanctions

We always seek to work with families to promote and ensure positive attendance. However, if a family consistently fail to support their child's attendance we will review whether a fixed penalty notice should be issued to support a child's school attendance.

In this situation the individual needs of the family and pupil would be considered before issuing a notice.

15. Parents who are late to collect their children at the end of the school day

If children are consistently collected from school late, the school may have to put pupils into after school care to be paid for by the parents. Parents will first be warned that this may be required and of the associated costs. This is to ensure the children are cared for after the school day has finished. And will only be enforced if parents consistently do not collect their children at 3:15 pm and the children are not attending an after-school club.

16.Celebrating Good Attendance!

All pupils are warmly welcomed into school every morning. Pupils begin the day with social reading time to ensure a positive start to the day for everyone. Pupils who have been off school (for any reason) will always be enthusiastically welcomed back to school.

We will inform parents regularly of the importance of good, punctual attendance through letters, leaflets and the website

17.Attendance targets

Our target is for all children to achieve 100% attendance.

Attendance data is shared by the Headteacher with Governors throughout the school year at full governing body meetings.