

St Mary's Bryanston Square CE Primary School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

April 2021

"Excellence with Compassion"

At St Mary's Bryanston Square School (SMBS), we want all of our children to achieve as highly as they possibly can so they go on to be successful in school and in their lives beyond. Good school attendance is one of the main factors in determining children's future and opportunities in life.

The legal responsibility for ensuring a child's attendance at school lies with the parent, however the governors and staff at this school will work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure pupils are encouraged and supported to attend school if they find this difficult. Therefore we will work on improving attendance and punctuality so that children miss as little learning time as possible and strive to be the best that they can be.

This policy applies to all pupils within the school, from Nursery to Year 6. We are aware that pupils below the age of 5 are below statutory school age, however while attending our school we aim to promote good practice and attendance in all year groups to help prepare all children for the next stage of their education. Additionally, we know that the Early Years Foundation Stage is a key aspect of a child's education – therefore high levels of attendance is crucial to enable later success in education.

We aim to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- To work with parents whose children's attendance falls below 90% and to offer support if they are experiencing difficulty in sending children to school

Parents' Responsibilities

- Parents must ensure that their children attend school every day and arrive on time.
- Parents must notify the school when their child is absent. They may do this in person, by phone, email or by letter. Ideally parents should notify the school before 9.00 on the day of absence. The school office is staffed from 8.30 am.
- Parents must contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that your child is safe.
- If your child is sick for 4 consecutive days, a medical evidence should be sought in order to authorise the absence. You will also need to provide the school with relevant documentation relating to any other absences.
- To ensure that no leave is taken during term time. If this is required, all requests for leave in term-time must be applied for in writing to the Headteacher.

If you are experiencing difficulty in sending your child to school, please contact the school to discuss ways in which we can support you and your child.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded and classified with a code by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only the school can make this decision and record it.

This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

AUTHORISED absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which **unavoidably** fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. Where possible all appointments should be sought outside of school hours.

UNAUTHORISED absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which "leave" of absence has not been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Some examples of this include:

- Parents/carers keeping their child away from school unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences that have not been properly explained;
- Late arrival after the close of registration (morning or afternoon);
- Shopping trips, looking after other children or adults, or birthdays;
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed.
- Illness

Whilst it is understood that any child can have an illness and be away from school for a given period, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are always best sorted out by the parents/carers contacting school immediately to discuss the issues.

If your child is reluctant to attend:

- Please do not cover up the absence;
- Please do not give in to pressure to excuse them from attending.

If you do either of these things, the situation will only worsen and become a habit and the causes will be harder to find and the resolution difficult.

The school needs to give careful consideration to the authorisation of absence for some pupils.

Where a pupil has frequent absences, the school may decide to ask for evidence such as a medical certificate including a dated stamp from the Doctors' reception, appointment card, or a label from prescription medication.

Additionally the school may wish to refer to the School Nursing Service where there are health concerns or if there is a view that illness is being used as an excuse to cover other reasons for absence.

The school may also wish to seek the advice of the family GP having first discussed the matter with parents/carers to seek their permission to do this.

Dental/Medical Appointments

Wherever possible, parents/carers should make every effort to avoid making medical or dental appointments during the school day. It is preferable to try and arrange these during holiday periods or at the beginning or end of the school day. An appointment at the beginning of the school day should not result in a whole day's absence from school. Parents will be asked to provide appointment cards/letters showing that this took place.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they are absent from school for 10% or more across the school year for whatever reason. The reasons can be both authorised and unauthorised. Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational achievement and future prospects. We will need the full support and co-operation of all parents to tackle this.

- We will monitor all absence thoroughly
- If your child's attendance has reached or is in danger of reaching the PA level we will inform you immediately and make the case a priority
- All pupil attendance which falls below 90% will not be authorised unless there is medical evidence to support this.
- Pupils who have reached the PA level will be tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we will combine this with academic mentoring where absence is seen to affect progress and attainment
- All PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: access to individual programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance
- School will engage with any appropriate external agency, such as the school nursing team and children's services where pupils are identified as PA.
- All PA pupils will be made known to the Early Help Team (EHT) within Westminster.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- Or, you can call into the school and report to reception and a member of staff will come and speak to you.
- If your child is sick, you need to contact the school each day to update us on the situation. You will also need to provide the school with any of the following evidence (doctors note, doctors reception stamp dated, copy of the medicine prescribed and dated) to show that the child has sought medical advice for us to authorise these absences. In the case where the absence due to illness is beyond 4 days, you will need a medical certificate in order for us to authorise the absences.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. If contact cannot be made by telephone letters are automatically sent out. *There are standard letters available to request reasons for absence. These letters are usually sent routinely by administrative staff, but teachers can request letters and are encouraged to check with administrative staff that letters have been sent.*
- Where we have been unable to make contact with the main contact on the first day of absence, we will continue to make contact with all of contacts listed, as per our safeguarding procedures. We may also carry out a welfare home visit or request a police welfare visit to the family home.
- Inform parents every half term if their child's attendance is below 96% and offer support on how to improve this
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

- Refer the matter to the Early Help Team if attendance falls below 90%

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. When a child misses the start of every day, they miss important aspects of their learning. Pupils arriving late also disrupts lessons. Additionally, your child may feel embarrassed by arriving late and may fall into absenteeism in order to avoid the ordeal.

In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a late mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and means that they will have an unauthorised absence which will impact on attendance. Children arriving after 9.30am will be marked as absent, as the registered will be officially closed as of this time.

Registration timetable:

- 8.45 – 9.00:** School gates are open and classes are open to all year groups. This soft start enables children to settle in and begin a soft start activity.
- 9.00 – 9.05:** Registration time. The registers in Years 1 to 6 close at 9.05. In Nursery and Reception, the registers stay open until 9.15am to give parents a chance to settle their children into school.
- 9.00:** The playground gate is locked. Children must use the main entrance into school and will be given a registration slip so that their class teacher knows they have been registered by the office. Children arriving in class at this time are marked late. Some children may arrive in class after the register has been taken, but have not been to the office. The class teacher will ask them to go to the office to make sure they have been registered.
- 9.10 onwards:** Late children are added to the registers by administrative staff.
- 9.30 onwards:** Registers are officially 'closed' and any children arriving after this time are marked absent for the morning session.
- 10.00 onwards:** Parents who have not contacted the school will be phoned or emailed about the reason for their child's absence.

Procedures

Registers are legal documents and must be completed accurately and clearly.

- Registers are taken at the start of the day and at the start of the afternoon session by the class teacher (or member of staff covering the class). The registers are inputted into the schools electronic management system (SIMS).
- The time of arrival should be recorded for children arriving late
- At **9.30** the registers will be closed
- In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a late mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and means that they will have an unauthorised absence.
- All reasons for absence should be entered in the register using the codes provided.
- If the problem persists this may mean that you could face the possibility of a penalty notice.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Deputy Head teacher and/ or Learning Mentor to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school.

We work closely with our Early Help Team (EHT) and meet regularly to monitor attendance and plan the best support for parents. You may also wish to seek advice from the EHT if you are finding it hard bringing your child to school. <https://fisd.westminster.gov.uk/kb5/westminster/fis/home.page>

Children missing in education

This refers to children who are regularly absent from school, have missed 10 school days or more without permission without a reason being given. We will inform the local authority of this as when a child is absent or missing from education, the school has a duty to keep them safe and this includes knowing where they are. We must also notify the authority if a child is to be deleted from the admission register due to certain circumstances.

Procedures for requesting Leave during term time (Exceptional leave of absence)

Holidays and unauthorised leave during term time are strongly discouraged and will rarely be agreed to.

Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking their child away in school time.

Leave during term time (Exceptional leave of absence)

Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking their child away in school time.

This school and the LA actively discourages holidays in term time. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

The Headteacher has the final decision as to whether to authorise leave or not and will consider the individual circumstances of each case.

All applications for leave must be made in advance and in writing using the form provided (see Appendix 1); leave will not be given for parties and family weddings.

We may have a further discussion with parents, especially when the reasons are unclear.

We will reply to all applications in writing stating whether or not the absence has been agreed by the school within 5 days of receiving the application.

In exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Head teacher, leave during term time may be authorised but the following will be considered:

- Your child's overall pattern of attendance
- Any previous pattern of leave in term time
- The age of your child
- Whether or not your child has recently started school
- The time of year and whether there are examinations
- The length, destination and purpose of the holiday and whether it is likely to be a rare event in the child's life
- Family circumstances and the parents'/carers' reasons for wanting to take a leave of absence during term time

If the holiday or leave of absence is taken without the agreement of the Headteacher or is in excess of what has been agreed, your child's absence will be marked as **unauthorised** and you may be served with a **Penalty Notice**.

Failure to return after a date has been agreed may result in your child losing their school place.

The Headteacher has the final decision as to whether to authorise leave or not and will consider the individual circumstances of each case.

The Attendance Service

Parents are expected and encouraged to contact the school at an early stage and work together with school staff in resolving problems together. This approach is nearly always successful.

If this does not resolve the problem, the school will refer your child to the Early Help Team (EHT) from the local authority. They are independent of the school and can provide impartial advice.

The EHT will work together with you and the school in order to resolve the difficulty and return your child to regular attendance.

In this school, to ensure that we promote early intervention and prevent absence from becoming chronic.

If, after all efforts have been tried, the unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Full details and information leaflets are available from the school and from the Local Authority.

Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

- Class teachers take registers daily. They should report any issues regarding attendance that they are concerned about. Registers are checked weekly to ensure that any causes for concern are dealt with.
- If there is a period of unexplained absence or pattern of absence, contact should be made with the parents. If explanations are not satisfactory or the situation does not improve then the Headteacher must be informed and a referral to the EHT may be necessary.
- Every half term, the school will monitor attendance. Special attention will be taken to absences at the end and start of the term to check the circumstances of these absences.
- Letters will be sent out to praise and to offer support to families
- The local authority and the school have powers to issue fixed penalty notices to parents who take their children out of school during term time.
- If a child is persistently late, e.g. 3 times a fortnight, the parents should be seen and/or a letter sent home. There is standard letter about the importance of being in school at the start of the school day.
- The school reports attendance statistics to the DfE and LA as required

Improving Attendance and Punctuality

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in helping us to meet these targets and to aim higher in all aspects of their education. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

- Class teachers should make it clear that they expect children to be in school every day and on time.
- The school's learning mentor can work with families who are having difficulties with attendance and/or punctuality
- School newsletters regularly stress the importance of consistent attendance and actively discourage parents from taking children out of school during term time.
- The links between attendance and attainment are made explicit in these newsletters and also at meetings for parents (new Reception Class parent meetings, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 transition meetings for parents, etc).
- The class with the best attendance receive a certificate at the end of the week. At the end of term, the class with the most certificates chooses a treat for this.
- Children who attend school every day for a complete term are given a certificate in a special assembly.
- Children who attend school for a whole year without being absent are given a 'Gold Certificate.'
- An attendance cup is awarded each half term to the class with the best attendance record.
- Other rewards (eg a treat party or raffle prize) will be used to try and incentivise excellent attendance in school.

Lee Duffy – Headteacher
 April 2021
 To be reviewed April 2022

APPENDIX 1

REQUEST FOR CHILD'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

This form needs to be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the proposed leave. Please complete this application form and return it to the school office. **PLEASE USE CAPITAL LETTERS TO FILL THIS FORM IN**

| | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------------|-----------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------|
| Name of child | | Date of birth | | Year | | |
| Full name of parent/guardian | | | | | | |
| Address of child | | | | | | |
| Postcode | Telephone number | | | | | |
| Reason for request | | | | | | |
| Departure date | From (date) | | To (date) | | Total school days missed | |
| Would your child miss any national examinations or tests? | | | | | | Yes/No |
| Is his/her attendance over 96% for the past 12 months | | | | | | Yes/No |
| Has he/she had leave during term time during the last 12 months? (if so, please give dates, reasons, and numbers of school days leave) | | | | | | Yes/No |
| If your child is being taken out of school during time term and the details of their location are not provided, this could turn into a serious safeguarding issue. When a child is absent or missing from education, the school has a duty to keep them safe and this includes knowing where they are. | | | | | | |
| Address whilst away: | | | | | | |
| Telephone number whilst away: | | | | Email address whilst away: | | |
| I certify that the information provided in this form is accurate. | | | | | | |
| Signed: Date: | | | | | | |

