

# **BROWNLEE PRIMARY SCHOOL**



## ***Pupil Attendance Policy*** **2020**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Governors in October 2020

It will be reviewed by the Board of Governors in September 2022 or at such times as new guidance becomes available or relevant legislation is passed.

# **Brownlee Primary School Pupil Attendance Policy**

## ***Introduction***

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them.

Brownlee Primary School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy has been developed in consultation with Governors, Teachers, Education Welfare Services, pupil's parents and guardians. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

The policy will aim to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- ◆ Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- ◆ Raising the awareness of the importance of a differentiated and relevant curriculum
- ◆ Promoting opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements
- ◆ Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance
- ◆ Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently

## **Statements of Expectations;**

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

## **What is expected of the Pupils:**

- ◆ To respect themselves and others
- ◆ To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually
- ◆ To inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are being bullied
- ◆ To encourage friendship and a sense of belonging
- ◆ To be happy and encourage others to feel happy

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure

that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. Parents should also make sure that the children arrive on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a fit state to benefit from the education offered to them. Parents may be sent to court by the Education Welfare Service if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually. This consequence is to ensure that parents carry out their duty to secure suitable education for their children.

If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, Education Welfare Services and the Social Services where such a child's attendance is irregular.

### **What is Expected of the Parents;**

- ◆ To keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum
- ◆ To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence
- ◆ To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness
- ◆ To work closely with the school and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance
- ◆ To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be refused except in special / exceptional circumstances.
- ◆ To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especial vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic periods.
- ◆ To support their child and recognise their successes and achievements

The school will endeavour to provide an environment that is conducive in educating every individual pupil. School attendance will be positively supported wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount. The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions. A register of attendance has to be taken once at the start of the morning session. The register has to record whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil is absent the register must record whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

### **What is Expected of the School:**

- ◆ To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- ◆ To meet the legal requirements set out by Government
- ◆ To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance
- ◆ To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- ◆ To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences
- ◆ To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and

- ◆ long term absenteeism and promote good attendance
- ◆ To encourage open communication channels between home and school
- ◆ To develop procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees
- ◆ To develop procedures leading to a formal referral to the EWO
- ◆ To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum

The Education Authority (EA) has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) the Education Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. The EWO is the enforcement agency of the Education Authority and as well as providing guidance and support through its officers may take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty in relation to school attendance.

## **School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance**

### **Recording**

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school at **9.00am** and the register is then taken to the school office. Any late pupils should then enter the school through the main entrance. If any pupil arrives late this will be recorded on the attendance sheet.

Absences will be recorded onto the attendance section of SIMS and all the present pupils marked present. The offered reasons for any lates or absences will be assessed and the appropriate code entered into the system.

Reasons for absence must be communicated to the class teachers through ClassDojo on the first morning of absence. The school may then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence.

The following reasons are deemed as acceptable reasons for an authorised absence.

- ◆ The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause
- ◆ The child is self-isolating due to COVID-19
- ◆ The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith
- ◆ The child is absent 'with leave' for very exceptional circumstances. This refers to leave being granted by the school, not by the parent, and would normally relate to no more than 10 school days in any 1 year.

A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason for absence and after a three-week process will mark the absence as unauthorised if no reason is provided.

## **Attendance Codes**

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the electronic register (SIMS) as required and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences. COVID-19 absence codes will also be used when appropriate.

## **Monitoring**

The principals or senior management team and the EWO will review the attendance of all the school's pupils on a termly basis and any pupils identified as cause for concern or less than 88% attendance on a more regular basis. A letter will be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having attendance problems informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending. The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and if after a two-week period there appears to be no improvement the parents of the pupil will be invited to a meeting with the head teacher to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the pupil from attending. If the parent/s do not attend the meeting or after such meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve a formal referral to the EWO will be made.

The SIMS attendance module provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant and provide information to assist the school strategically manage attendance issues. The EWO will also have access to this information and will use the reports to support their role.

## **Requests for Leave of Absence**

If a parent wishes to request a period of leave they are required to write to the Principal and complete a generic form detailing the reason for absence and how the child will be supported while away and on his / her return to school.

The school does not approve of family holidays taken during term time unless this is due to exceptional circumstances. An example might be a parent working in the services returning after a 6-month tour of duty in a theatre of conflict.

The school will NOT provide any work for children who are absent from school due to a family holiday. Work will only be provided in the case of long-term sickness, bereavement etc.

## **Strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality**

- ◆ Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- ◆ Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
- ◆ Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports.
- ◆ Positive verbal reinforcement is given to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time.