



Cherish, Nurture, Achieve

Becket Primary School

Attendance and Children Missing from Education Policy

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Introduction

Good attendance is essential if pupils are to take full advantage of school and gain the skills needed to equip them for life.

Missing school for any reason can deprive a child of educational opportunities and hamper their progress at school. There is a strong correlation between good school attendance and academic achievement.

Being punctual is an important life skill valued by employers and we feel that it is important that children learn this early on in their school career to develop a positive habit which will last a lifetime. Many lessons begin straight after registration and it is important that children do not miss the introduction to these lessons as they sometimes struggle to catch up with their classmates. Being late makes children feel uncomfortable and puts them at a disadvantage.

The school aims to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy within which staff, pupils, parents and the Education Welfare Service can work in partnership.

There are 190 statutory school days a year, so there are 175 other days available for holidays that would not have a negative effect on a child's education. By taking a child on holiday in term time, they may be getting an unspoken message that school is not important. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and amendments to the regulations which came into force on 1 September 2013 make it clear that parents/carers **do not** have a legal right to take their child out of school for holidays in term time.

Leave of absence may be granted in special or exceptional circumstances only at the Headteacher's discretion.

Children should come to school every day. They should only be absent if the reason is "unavoidable". Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason; illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences (as detailed in the Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations Version 1 September 2006).

Arrival, Registration and Lateness

Children are allowed onto the school playground from 8.45 a.m. School begins promptly at 8.45 a.m. for all children including Nursery. A register is taken twice a day at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. A day counts as 2 attendances.

Morning registration ends at 9.05 am. If a child arrives after the registration period he/she will be marked in as late (coded **L** in the register). After 9.15 am this will become an Unauthorised Absence (coded **U** in the register) The afternoon register is taken at 1.00 pm. Any child arriving late for school must report to the main reception where their names will be recorded. (Latecomers will have no other access to the building as all external doors will be secured at 9.00 a.m.)

It is essential that children leaving school with a parent/carer outside the normal hours are signed out from the office. All children leaving part way through the day are recorded in the school diary which will be referred to in the case of fire or other emergency. Parents are asked to notify the school office in advance if they need to withdraw their child early to attend an appointment. Children will not be released to an unknown adult.

Registers are checked regularly by the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to ensure they are kept accurately by teachers and to assess the reasons and incidence of any absences or lateness.

Illness and medical appointments

If a child is genuinely unfit for school, parents/carers must contact the school on the first day, in person or by letter or by telephone. This will reassure us that the child has not 'gone missing' on the way to school, especially if the child has been seen by others. If you do not contact school you will be called by a member of the office staff.

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

The school may refer the child to the education welfare officer (EWO) from the local education authority. Schools are required to inform the EWO of children who are not attending regularly and are persistently absent or late for school. Therefore if a child's attendance falls **below 90%** they will be referred to the EWO.

Parents/carers may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask their advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the local education authority.

Holiday Absence

Holidays in term time are not an entitlement and are strongly discouraged by the Government, Local Authority and school.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations that came into force on 1 September 2013 state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Leave of absence requests for the following reasons are **not** considered to be **special or exceptional**:

- availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements
- poor weather experienced in holiday periods
- overlapping with beginning or end of term.

Parents/carers who decide to take a holiday without permission, will incur unauthorised absences for their child. These remain on a child's record and are monitored for further action by the Education Welfare Officer, and could result in a fixed penalty notice being issued and/or court action.

Parents/carers needing leave of absence for exceptional circumstances should complete a 'Leave of Absence Request Form' (available from the school office) at least two weeks before the anticipated start date. The reason for the request should be given in detail.

Applications should be made before the leave is arranged as absences will not be granted retrospectively. The circumstances of some requests may be discussed by the pupils and personnel committee of the Governing Body.

Penalty Notices

Families who take pupils out of school in term time for holidays may be subject to a legal process undertaken by the Education Welfare Service in Derby City. The 2007 Regulations

set out the procedures for issuing Penalty Notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school. The following procedures will be followed:

- On return to school from a period of unauthorised absence the Education Welfare Service is informed and in line with Derby City Council procedures, a penalty notice is requested by the Headteacher for consideration.
- Parents/carers may receive a Penalty Notice issued by Derby City Council of £120 per parent per pupil if paid within 28 days or £60 per parent per pupil if paid within 21 days.
- If this amount is not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will take the parent to court.

Arrangements for absence in other circumstances e.g. family bereavement and exceptional circumstances:

Sudden, serious circumstances do occur occasionally, when it is impossible for a family to bring a child to school. It is essential that school is informed by the parent of the circumstances so that the appropriate code can be written in the register.

Summary

As a school we aim to:

- Achieve and maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 95%
- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

As a parent you can help us by:

- Ringing/contacting us on the first morning of all absences with the reason
- Arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours
- Sending in a note explaining the reason for absence on your child's return to school after an illness
- Keeping us updated by telephone if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness

We shall:

- Follow up all unexplained absences from the first day
- Remind parents/carers of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters.
- Discuss your child's attendance and punctuality at parents' evening.
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance
- Publish your child's attendance rate on her/his annual school report and mentoring records.
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance either verbally and/or with formal letters.
- If we continue to have concerns make a referral to the School Education Welfare Officer, who visits the school regularly to review and support attendance matters.
- Arrange meetings with the EWO and parents to discuss issues of poor attendance and punctuality.

Children Missing from Education

Where a child is no longer attending school and the reasons are not known they are regarded as “missing from education”. The responsibility to locate children who go missing in education in Derby rests with the Education Welfare Service as per Derby Safeguarding Children Board’s Runaway and Missing Children Strategy.

Admissions to Becket Primary School are coordinated and managed centrally by Derby City Admissions Team.

The school strives to minimise the risk of children going missing from education by:

- Making ‘First Day’ contact with parents.
- Keeping a child on role whilst an application is being processed for admission to another school.
- Children remaining on role until we receive confirmation that they have been admitted to another school.
- Processing applications for admission by the prescribed date given by Derby City Admissions Team
- Liaising with Derby City Admissions Team and reporting incidences of children not being admitted to the school by the agreed date.
- Obtaining written details and confirmation from parents that their child is leaving the school to return overseas and informing the EWO of this.
- Liaising with the welfare team of ‘Looked After Children’ and reporting their attendance at school daily.
- Keeping exclusions as a last resort and reporting any exclusions to Derby City Council.
- Informing the EWO of any children who have not attended school for ten days despite repeated attempts to contact parents.
- Informing the EWO and Local Authority of any parents opting to ‘Home Educate’ their children.

Data will be processed in line with the requirements and protections set out in the General Data Protection Regulation.