

The Bellbird Primary School



Attendance Policy

June, 2020

(To be reviewed Summer 2021)

Aims and Objectives

Our policy aims to:

- Emphasise the importance to all students and families that maximum attendance at school is vital for children in achieving their full potential.
- Reinforce the notion that every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled and that parents are responsible in law for the regular and punctual attendance of their child.
- Make explicit to all (students, parents/carers, and teachers) the schools' expectations on attendance levels and support strategies to help students maximise their attendance.
- Stress the need for home and school to work in partnership to achieve high attendance.
- Promote a consistent approach across the school towards attendance matters.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties linked to attendance at school and in the local authority.

The **Bellbird sees 95% attendance as the minimum expectation** for all students.

Introduction

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance, tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995* the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate the reason for an absence and whether it was authorised or unauthorised.

We recognise that early intervention work is essential in order to maintain satisfactory attendance levels. Attendance and attainment are linked. The Bellbird is committed to ensuring that there are strategic approaches to best manage overall attendance and achieve the government persistent absence target of no more than 5%.

Procedures and Practices

Registration

Roll call registration (electronic) takes place twice a day

AM - 8.50 - 9am

PM - 1.00- 1.10pm

Lateness

Any student arriving in school after registration, 9 - 9.15am, will be recorded as 'L' (late). If they arrive after registration period has closed at 9.15am, they will be recorded as 'U' (unauthorised absence). At The Bellbird, registration begins at 8.50am and registers are closed at 9.00am. Any child who arrives after 9.15am will be categorised as U (unauthorised absence). Unauthorised absence at the beginning of the day is particularly damaging to a child's academic and social progress and for this reason will be treated very seriously by the school and the EWO.

Absences

Absences from school will be either Authorised or Unauthorised depending upon circumstance.

Authorised absences are where a student has been absent and a satisfactory and legal reason has been communicated to the school via a teacher, direct to the office team or whilst representing the school or on an educational visit. Other reasons include: genuine illness, days of religious observance, unavoidable medical appointments, exceptional circumstances (bereavement / marriage of immediate family member or traveller children going 'on the road'). The school expects authorised absences to be kept to a minimum and therefore routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours or during school holidays wherever possible.

Where absence through illness has led to attendance of below 95%, parents/carers will be expected to provide evidence of illness and/or appointments.

Unauthorised absences are when no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents / carers or the reason provided is not deemed as acceptable by the school. Examples of these may be lateness after the end of registration, attending a birthday celebration, minding a house, caring for a sibling, shopping, lack of childcare, visiting relatives or going on holiday.

The school, using DfE guidelines, makes the final decision about whether or not any absence is seen as authorised or unauthorised. Parents who wish to request absence may do so by completing an absence request form (available via the school website) and returning it to the school office before the absence occurs. Authorisation cannot be granted retrospectively.

Term-Time holidays

The school strongly discourages holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. The Bellbird Primary School follows the DfE guidelines (July 2019) which state that requests for long-term leave can only be granted in 'exceptional circumstances' and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

No term time leave will be granted, or deemed granted, without a formal request on the appropriate forms (available from reception and on the website) A written response to your request will be forwarded to you by the Head Teacher or Attendance Officer. Interviews following a request may be conducted prior to any decision being made. The school will not authorise any holidays retrospectively and may follow up any reported illness that we feel may have been a term time holiday.

UNAUTHORISED TERM TIME LEAVE (includes Holiday)

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave of more than 6 consecutive sessions over a 4 week period, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice.

Such cases will have to be supported by evidence of previous unauthorised term time leave (more than 6 consecutive sessions over a 4 week period) taken in the last 3 years and evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice.

- See links below

Strategies used to support and improve attendance at school

Students must attend regularly (minimum of 95%) and punctually (before 9am)

Parents

Parents/carers are legally responsible for their child's attendance at school and must ensure that students attend, regularly, on time, in correct school uniform and with correct equipment. They could be subject to criminal prosecution should their child's attendance fall below acceptable levels.

We expect parents to:

- Telephone or email school on or before the first day of their child's absence to notify of the absence (before 10am)
- Provide satisfactory medical evidence when required to do so (e.g. appointment card or text from GP Surgery, hospital appointment letter etc)
- Attend attendance planning meetings when requested to do so with staff from school and the education welfare officer when necessary.

School

School will:

Roll call registration twice a day (am and pm)

- Contact the parent/carer by telephone or email on the first day of absence if no notification is received.
- Monitor attendance when necessary
- **Use the letter system** to communicate with parents highlighting absence and requesting explanations.
- Investigate unexplained absences **(if no satisfactory evidence is received within 10 days, the absence will remain recorded as unauthorised).**
- Hold attendance planning meetings to discuss how school can support parents/carers to improve attendance and to set targets.
- Include attendance information on progress reports
- Refer to the Education Welfare Officer when attendance falls below 90%

- Report all children whose attendance falls below 90% to the LA (as per statutory requirements)

The Local Authority (LA)

The Local Authority (Cambridgeshire County Council) holds the statutory responsibility for school attendance for pupils in all Cambridgeshire schools.

Education Welfare Officers act on behalf of the LA to promote attendance and in partnership with schools, enforce attendance through the use of legal sanctions when necessary.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will:

- Liaise with schools to help identify children whose attendance is unacceptable
- Write to parents requesting their attendance at planning meetings, parenting contract meetings and Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) meetings as appropriate
- Hold planning meetings with schools and parents to assist with the planning to meet attendance targets.
- Carry out home visits when appropriate.
- Carry out assessments and suggest supportive interventions from a range of external agencies such as the locality team (family work, youth support) when necessary.
- Request the imposition of legal sanctions such as penalty notices, parent contracts, education attendance orders and fines.

*Please remember that the more time your child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A **good** understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom.*

USEFUL LINKS

Information about Term Time Holidays

The following information has been taken directly from the Cambridgeshire County Council website:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/term-time-holidays/>

Cambridgeshire County Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct

The following is a copy of the CCC Penalty Notice Code of Conduct taken directly from the Cambridgeshire County Council website:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/term-time-holidays/>

Information about school attendance in Cambridgeshire

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/school-attendance>

School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818204/School_attendance_July_2019.pdf

School Register codes

The DfE offers a comprehensive set of register codes which all schools are required to use. These codes are as follows:

/ \ - Present am/pm

B - Educated off site - Approved Educational Activity.

C - Other authorised circumstances (including public performances licensed by the local authority, family bereavements, exceptional special occasions) - Authorised Absence.

D - Dual registration (i.e pupil attending other establishment) - Approved Educational Activity.

E - Excluded (no alternative provision made) - Authorised Absence.

F - Extended family holiday (agreed) - Authorised Absence.

G - Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess of agreement) - Unauthorised Absence

I - Illness (not medical/dental appointments) - Authorised Absence.

J - Interview - Approved Educational Activity.

L - Late (before registers close) - Present.

M - Medical/Dental appointments - Authorised Absence.

N - No reason yet provided for absence - Unauthorised Absence.

O - Unauthorised Absence.

P - Approved Sporting Activity - Approved Educational Activity.

R - Religious Observance - Authorised Absence.

~~S - Study Leave - Authorised Absence.~~

T - Traveller child travelling - Authorised Absence.
U - Late after registers close without an acceptable explanation - Unauthorised Absence
V - Educational visit or trip - Approved Educational Activity.
X - Non-compulsory school age absence - not counted in possible attendances.
Y - Enforced closure – not counted in possible attendances.
Z - Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances.

- School closed – not counted in possible attendance.

Teachers are only required to use a limited number of the codes. The attendance office, manager and attendance leader should be consulted before entering codes that are different to those on the default settings via the electronic registration system.