



## Somerville Primary School

### Policy on Attendance

#### **Vision statement:**

*Somerville School will provide a caring environment in which each pupil will feel valued, be confident and develop a high self-esteem. Each pupil will reach their full potential, celebrate their success, and have high aspirations for the future.*

#### **Introduction**

At Somerville 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. As the vision statement above states we will do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and have put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is 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 reward those children whose attendance is very good. 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 are 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. The school fully supports the Government viewpoint that:

*Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. When children are not in school they are deprived of the educational opportunities which school has to offer them and they are at much greater risk of subsequently becoming socially excluded and disadvantaged.*

(Attendance matters 2008)

#### **Aims**

At Somerville Primary School we aim to:

- to encourage maximum attendance and punctuality
- develop supportive strategies to encourage good attendance and reduce authorised and unauthorised absences;
- to raise the profile of attendance and punctuality.
- to raise pupil, parent and staff awareness of the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality;

- use attendance data to track attendance trends of individuals groups, classes, year
- groups, key stages and whole school where appropriate;
- offer rewards and incentives for regular attendance and punctuality;
- Set targets for attendance annually with particular regard to the reduction of unauthorised absences.

## **Definitions**

### ***Authorised absence***

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness, medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- study leave;
- exclusion;
- Traveller child travelling;
- family bereavement;
- a child caring for a sick or disabled family member (authorisation should, in such instances, be of limited duration);
- involvement in a public performance;
- 'special' occasions (the nature of such special occasions will be determined by schools on an individual basis);
- lateness (when the child arrives after the register has closed and offers a satisfactory explanation – see below under Punctuality).

### ***Unauthorised absence***

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Absence should not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, minding the house, etc);
- family holidays (which are taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge and/or are in excess of any time agreed by the school)
- lateness when the child arrives after the register has closed and fails to offer a satisfactory explanation; this is often a difficult and potentially contentious issue – see below under Punctuality;
- 'special' occasions (when the school does not agree that leave should be given).

## **Punctuality**

- Designated staff have been deployed to collect the names of children who arrive late.
- Pupils who are late after the register closes will be marked in by the Office staff or Attendance Officer.

## **If a child is absent**

When a child is absent unexpectedly:

- the class teacher will record the absence in the register.
- the Attendance Officer will examine all registers after morning registration
- the Attendance Officer will contact the family as part of the 'first day of absence contact' procedure.
- the outcome of this conversation will be noted in the 'Attendance Book' with the date.
- teacher's will be informed if the absence is an authorised or an unauthorised absence.

Parents and guardians can inform the school of their child's absence by:

- a) telephoning the school or leaving a message on the attendance line
- b) sending a note explaining the absence when their child returns to school.
- c) a note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has a medical appointment. These notes will be recorded in the Attendance Book.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child. If no contact is made, then a home visit will be followed.

### **Requests for leave of absence**

The Governing Body have adopted the Birmingham Authority Policy on extended Leave which states that pupils are only allowed extended leave in exceptional circumstances, at the Headteacher's discretion.

Appointments for meetings to discuss extended leave are made through the office. These meetings will be held with a member of the Leadership team. If the leave is granted then an extended leave contract is agreed and signed by parent/ guardian and Leadership Team member. We expect parents to contact the school at least six weeks in advance.

### **Long-term absence**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If a child is in hospital, James Brindley School will contact parents/carers.

### **Attendance Targets**

- Children with below 90% attendance are targeted.
- Class teachers are given children's individual attendance printouts. These are discussed with pupils and parents. These discussions take place during Pupil-teacher conversations at the end of each term.
- Parents are informed of their child's attendance target during the parents evening.

### **Repeated unauthorised absences**

As a school we believe that pupils will only make progress if they attend school on a regular basis. The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.

The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

### **Children Missing Education (CME)**

In respect of pupils absent from school without authorisation whose whereabouts are unknown, CME guidance clarifies that the local authority (CME Team) must carry out reasonable enquiries into the pupil's whereabouts with schools jointly.

### **Persistent absentees**

#### **Spotlight on Attendance**

This is a streamlined, targeted programme of legal action, designed to improve attendance. Before starting Fast-Track to Attendance, a letter is sent to all parents/carers (1 per household) informing them of the importance of sending their child/ren to school every day. Children whose attendance is 90% or below are involved in the Fast Track to Attendance process. Step 1: Early Help including "Signs of Safety Wellbeing." So any support from the school is given to improve the attendance. STEP 2: If at least one more session of unauthorised absence, parents are invited into school for a School Attendance Review Meeting (SARM). Step 3: If further unauthorised absence adding up to 10 in total over 12 months, an Education Legal Intervention Team Final Warning Notice to each parent individually.

Education Act 1996, Section 444 (1)

"If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

### **Rewards for good attendance**

Rewards are given to each class to encourage pupils to attend school. These are done on a :

1. weekly basis: attendance certificate for best class attendance
2. individual basis : termly attendance party for parents and pupils who have 100% attendance.
3. termly basis: attendance trip for class with best overall attendance
4. annual basis: Pupils with 97% attendance win a bike in each phase

5. annual basis: pupil with 100% attendance over the year will receive a special gold certificate and partake in a trip.

### **Attendance targets**

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Senior Staff, Governors and School Improvement Partner. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

### **Monitoring and Review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance and attendance will be an item on Headteacher's report to the Governing Body.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

The rates of attendance will be reported to the relevant authorities and in the school prospectus.

Monitoring attendance is the responsibility of all in school.

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

***Mike Hughes, Rukhsana Shaheen and Shahin Fazil***

***Reviewed : December 2017***