

Attendance Policy

Policy No.



The Bramble Academy

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1.0 Rationale

At The Bramble Academy, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents and carers receiving services from the school, irrespective of race, gender, disability, faith or religion or socio-economic background. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in school life.

Children only attend school, for 185 days out of 365 across the whole year. We need them to come every day in order for them to make the best progress possible.

At The Bramble Academy, we believe that:

- Pupils need to attend school every day so that they can take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.
- Poor attendance rates and persistent lateness undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage.
- Children who attend school every day make better progress and have better life chances.

2.0 Aims

Therefore, we aim to:

- Take all reasonable steps to maximise attendance rates.
- Actively discourage late arrival.
- Be consistent in the application of the school's registration and attendance procedures.

3.0 Legal Framework

It is recognised that parents/carers, schools and Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities with regard to school attendance.

It is important for parents/carers to understand that there is a statutory obligation for children to attend school. Section 444a and Section 4441a of the Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their children attend school on every day the school requires them to do so. Failure to do so is a criminal offence which lead to a prosecution or a Penalty Notice fine. The Bramble Academy and Local Authority also have a legal obligation to ensure your child (children) attend school.

4.0 Parental Responsibility

The definition of parent for the purpose of this Policy is any person who has day-to-day care of the child at the time school attendance is required. This can include other family members (such as grandparents) or in families where partners aren't natural parents. In cases where parents split or have separated, both parents are still liable for ensuring regular school attendance under legislation, even though one of the parents may not live with the child.

- Parents/carers are required to ensure that their children receive full time education and are therefore primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school every day.
- Thus, parents are responsible for ensuring that their children:
 - Attend school regularly.
 - Arrive at school on time, in uniform and in a condition to learn.
 - Are absent only for reasons that can be authorised.
- Parents are required to inform the school by 9am of the reason for any absence and the likely return date.

5.0 Registration

The school keeps an attendance register for each class in which pupils are marked present or absent at the beginning of each school session. Register close at 8.55am and arrival after that time is classed as “Late” which will affect the percentage attendance and can lead to prosecution/legal proceedings. Registers are monitored weekly by the school. Letters are sent out and home visits conducted where attendance and/or lateness are of significant concern.

6.0 Reporting Absence

- Parents are asked to make contact on the first day of absence by 9am, by note, personal contact, telephone call or text – informing the school of the reason for the absence and/or nature of any illness. They are also asked to inform the school of a likely return date.
- Notes received by teachers are dated and initialled and sent to the office to be retained until the end of the academic year. The absence is logged as either Authorised Absence or Unauthorised Absence.
- Telephone messages and personal contacts made to the school office are noted and subsequently logged as either Authorised Absence or Unauthorised Absence.
- Teachers advise the office of absence notifications received directly from parents/carers.

7.0 Authorising Absence

- **The law states that only the school can approve absence, not parents.** If doubts remain about the explanation offered – or where no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence will be treated as unauthorised.
- Absences can only be authorised if there are exceptional circumstances.
 - Recent amendments to the 2006 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 make it clear that a Head Teacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Should your child be absent from school during term time, they

will be marked with the Family Holiday Not Agreed Code (G) and this will be treated as an 'Unauthorised Absence'. Parents wishing to request leave of absence should write to the Headteacher explaining the exceptional circumstances. In each case the school will write to the family explaining that the additional days will be recorded as unauthorised.

- If a pupil is absent for a period of time and the Academy has tried to make contact, formal procedures for justification of that absence by the parent/carer will be requested by the Academy to ascertain why the pupil was not present.
- We work very closely with the Local Authority's Family Service, to ensure that we maintain excellent attendance; as lost learning time impacts negatively on each child and often means it is very difficult for them to keep up with their work and achieve their best.

8.0 Persistent Absence (PA)

Once a child has reached 3.5 days (7 sessions) of **unauthorised absence** over a 6-week rolling period, whether the unauthorised absence relates to a family holiday or is more general in nature, the head teacher can request the local authority issue an Education Penalty Notice to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies (see Section 12: Penalty Notice). The school can also request that the local Authority issue an Education Penalty Notice when a child is persistently late on 10 separate instances over a period of six school weeks and where they are signified as a 'U' in the attendance register. (see Section 12: Penalty Notice).

9.0 Lateness

- We recognise that persistent lateness is:
 - Detrimental to the child's education
 - Administratively disruptive
 - A poor preparation for future schooling and adult life.
- Morning registration starts at 8.45am and the registers are closed at 8.55am. Children arriving after this time must sign in late at the office and will receive a mark which denotes 'Late after the register is closed'. This affects the pupil's attendance negatively and can be used in escalation procedures for poor attendance.
- Pupils arriving after 9.00 am will be recorded as a "U" which is classed as an unauthorised absence and may lead to enforcement action by the Local Authority (see Section 8.0 and Section 12.0).
- Afternoon registration starts at 1.00pm and closes at 1.10pm.
- Pupils arriving after 1.10pm sign in late at the office and receive a mark which denotes 'Late after the register is closed'.
- Parents whose children regularly arrive late will receive a warning letter from school. Extreme cases may be referred to the Early Help Unit/Local Authority.

- The Academy operates a late gate system from time-to-time to ensure high standards of punctuality are met and learning time is not missed.

10.0 Mid-Session Arrival/Departures

- It is recognised that children may arrive or depart mid-session for a variety of reasons which may be authorised:
 - Illness or accident in school resulting in a child going home.
 - Medical or dental appointments.
 - Unavoidable delays or reasons to leave early.
- Pupils present for registration who leave early, or for part of a session, should be signed-out on the school Inventory system in the school reception, for purposes of emergency evacuation. *The register itself is not altered.*
- Pupils not present for registration who return later from an appointment should be noted on in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation. The register is subsequently amended to authorise the absence or record an unauthorised absence.

11.0 Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

- Individual pupil attendance is tracked and monitored daily:
 - Patterns of unexplained absences.
 - Any persistent absences any persistent lateness
 - Any prolonged absence (Local Authority informed if more than two school weeks; note made on child's record card).
 - Any unexplained patterns of authorised absence.

A graduated response to the above absences is undertaken in the form of a series of letters and meetings with the parent/carer. If necessary this is escalated to the Local Authority for further support/action. This is led by the Headteacher and the school's Attendance Officer. (see steps below)

- Summaries of attendance rates are prepared weekly for children in years R-6 showing:
 - The number of authorised absences and the number of children affected
 - The percentage of pupils' sessions lost by authorised and unauthorised absences.
- Individual pupil attendance is shared with parents at parents' evenings.
- Year on year summaries are monitored for comparison and class registers are retained for a minimum of three years.
- Whole school and individual class attendance is reported to Governors and Trust Directors termly.

12.0 Penalty Notice

As from September 2015, the Academy introduced Penalty Notices in accordance with the Code of Practice and the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 to parents/carers whose child(ren) is/are either truanting from school, absent from school due to a holiday (above 8 sessions/ 4 days in total), or is late 10 times in a six week period and signified by a 'U' in the attendance register. Any request for a Penalty Notice to be issued, will go through the Local Authority and any money received through the issuing of the Penalty Notice will go to the Local Authority and not the Academy. The Academy has put a range of interventions and support in place and works closely with parents and carers to improve low school attendance. However, if attendance does not improve after these procedures have been followed, school will then refer to the Local Authority who will implement their own procedures which may lead to an issuing of a Penalty Notice.

The penalty is £120 per child per parent if paid within 28 days, this reduces to £60 per child per parent if paid within the first 21 days. There is no right of appeal by parents/carers against a Penalty Notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the Local Authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice. This could lead to a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child.

It is important to note that no more than two Penalty Notices will be issued in a rolling 12 month period. On the third occasion the Local Authority enforcement will be directed immediately to the magistrate's court.

We will also request the local authority issues a Penalty Notice where a pupil has received unauthorised absences totalling 3.5 days (7 sessions) or more in a rolling six-week period.

13.0 Procedure Steps to Absences

See attached appendices for examples of letters:

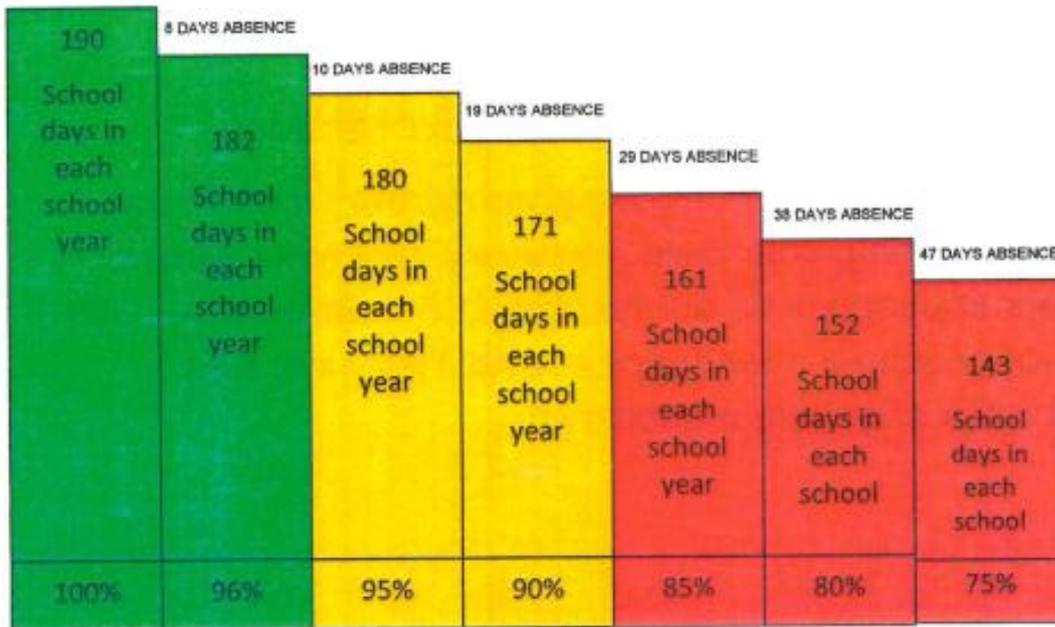
Attendance below 98%	Step 1 = Letter 1	Notification that attendance has dropped below Academy's target of 96%
Attendance below 96%	Step 2 = Letter 2	Notification that there has been no improvement since letter 1 and the absence has continued.
Attendance not improving	Step 3 = Letter 3	Notification of monitoring process for 30 days.
3 days (6 sessions) of Unauthorised Absence	Penalty Notice = Letter 4	Unauthorised absence totalling 3.5 days days (7 sessions) over a 6-week rolling period. A request to the Local Authority for an Education Penalty Notice .
Further absences during monitoring phase	Options may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to Early Help Unit • Referral to Local Authority for Penalty Notice • Extended monitoring phase 	

What is good attendance?

175
 Non school
 days in each
 year



175 days to use for family time, vis-its, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments



He/she is only missing just...	That equals...	Which is...	and over 13 years of schooling that's...
10 minutes per day	50 minutes per week	Nearly 1.5 weeks per year	Nearly <u>Half a year</u>
20 minutes per day	1 hour 40 mins per week	Over 2.5 weeks per year	Nearly <u>1 year</u>
Half an hour per day	Half a day per week	4 weeks per year	Nearly <u>1 and a half years</u>
1 hour per day	1 day per week	6 weeks per year	Over <u>2 and a half years</u>

Appendix A – Step 1 Letter

Dear.....

I am writing to you as we are growing increasingly concerned about X's attendance. To date X's attendance has fallen to X% which means that they are below the academies target of 96%. Ongoing low attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success, it is important that low attendance is dealt with as early as possible to prevent «forename» from developing poor habits of attendance.

If your child is feeling slightly unwell please encourage them to come to school. Coughs, colds, headaches, tiredness, bumps and grazes can be managed in school. If they are too unwell to stay in school we will contact you and arrange for them to go home.

We ask for your support in raising X'S attendance and ultimately, helping X to achieve his/her full potential whilst at The Bramble Academy.

If they are experiencing any problems in school which is affecting their attendance please contact me on (01623) 635928 ext 506.

Yours sincerely

Miss B De'Ath

Educational Welfare Officer

Appendix B – Step 2 Letter

Dear «addressee»

Continued absence - «forename» «surname» «year» «date_of_birth»

I refer to the letter I wrote to you on xxx, since this date «forename» has had a further xx sessions of absence and their attendance is now xx%.

I would like to remind you that it is your legal responsibility to ensure that your child receives a full time education and that you must contact the Academy if «he_she» is absent from school; a reason for absence from a parent/carer is required for safeguarding purposes. Under section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority may issue Penalty Notices to parents of children with unauthorised absences from school

Due to level of the absences we now require you to make urgent contact with us to arrange a meeting to discuss this further, hopefully this meeting will allow us to work together to resolve xx attendance issues. Failure to improve xxx attendance will result in us following the persistent absentee attendance process and could result in a fine being issued but the local authority.

Under section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority may issue Penalty Notices to parents of children with unauthorised absences from school.

The fines are issued to each parent, for each child, and are:

- £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days.

Only in very limited circumstances can a Penalty Notice, once issued, be withdrawn.

Failure to pay the fine will result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Yours sincerely

Miss B De'Ath

Educational Welfare Officer

Appendix C – Step 3 Letter

Parent/carer of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»

«address_block»

Penalty Notice Warning – «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname» DOB «date_of_birth»

Dear «addressee»

The registers at the Brunts academy show that, to date, «chosen_forename»'s attendance is currently «percentage_attendance»%. This means that «chosen_forename»'s absence from school now meets the persistent absence threshold attendance of 90% and under.

As I am sure you are aware, you, as parent, have legal responsibility under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996, for ensuring that your child attends school regularly. As such unless your child's attendance improves you will be referred to the local authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure the regular attendance of your child.

From today Friday 25th May 2018 «chosen_forename»'s attendance will be monitored for 30 days and should it reach 3.5 days (7 sessions) or more of absence over the 6 week period we will request that the local authority issue a penalty notice. The notice can be issued to both parents/carers for each child whose absence is persistent. Due to new legislation from the local authority the monitoring period also covers students arriving persistently late into school, if your child arrives late to school their mark will be recorded as a 'U' code which gives an unauthorised mark for that session.

The penalty notice fines are issued to each parent, for each child, and are:

- £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days

Please take immediate steps to ensure «chosen_forename» gets to school on time every day and obtain medical evidence such as an appointment card, prescription label, medical letter etc. if «he_she» is too ill to attend. Any other reason for absence should be discussed with the school as we aim to work with you and it is the school's decision whether to authorise any absence that is not covered by medical evidence.

Yours sincerely

Miss B De'Ath

Educational Welfare Officer

Appendix D – Penalty Notice Letter for Unauthorised Absence (3.5 days)

Dear

xxx Year DOB xxx

Further to our letter dated X notifying you that a 30 day period of formal monitoring would commence on X for xxx. We are now writing to advise you that a request has been made to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice for failing to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Miss B De'Ath

Educational Welfare Officer