

BWT Primary Schools Attendance Strategy

Attendance Expectation

The Brooke Weston Trust expects children's attendance at school to be a minimum of **97.0%** as there is a strong correlation between excellent attendance and attainment. Brooke Weston Trust schools reinforce this expectation by:

- Promoting excellent attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to a full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Working collaboratively with parents and carers to support in ensuring that their children's attendance meets the expected level set out by the Trust.

Definition of a parent

- Department for Education 'School attendance parental measures – Statutory guidance for local authorities, school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and the police' January 2015, states:
- A parent means:
- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.
- The local authority and school will need to decide who comes within the definition of parent in respect of a particular pupil when using the legal measures, but generally parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.

Leave during term time

Should parents or carers be taking their child out of school during term time, they are required to complete a leave during term time form prior to the absence commencing, notifying of the duration of leave and reason for absence. Forms can be collected from each school's Main Reception.

Brooke Weston Trust Academies and the Local Authority are continuing to work together to reduce the amount of leave taken in term time by issuing Penalty Notices under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 (amended regulations 2013).

Northants County Council Regulations (Beanfield, Compass, Gretton, Oakley Vale)

Parents need to be aware that, as of Monday 25 April 2016, NCC changed their Code of Conduct which meant a Penalty Notice could be issued for **five days of absence** (ten sessions). This was placed on hold while the Isle of Wight case was heard. As the outcome is now known, Northants County Council implemented the Code of Conduct with immediate effect.

Absences can include 'late after the register closes' and can be calculated as five consecutive days or cumulative total of five days/ten sessions over a six school-week period. This may result in referral to the Education Inclusion Partnership Team for further action. Such absences can result in a Fixed Penalty Notice of up to £120 or court action resulting in a criminal record and a fine up to £1000.

There is clear evidence that any absence can and will have an impact on attainment. With this in mind, periods of leave taken during term time will not be authorised. Referrals will be made to the Education Inclusion Partnership Team for five days of absence or more where consideration will be given to issue a penalty notice.

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Cambridgeshire County Council Regulations (Peckover)

Unauthorised term time leave (includes holiday): Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for **6 consecutive sessions (3 days)** or more, not authorised by the school, may receive a Penalty Notice. Therefore Penalty Notices will be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional or unavoidable.

To attend school “regularly” means “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”.

Reporting an absence

If a child is going to be absent from school, it is the responsibility of parents and carers to notify the school at the earliest possible convenience. Notification should be made to the school for each day of the child’s absence before the start of the school day. This can be made through a telephone call via the school absence line or visiting school to notify them of the absence.

Absence follow-up – First Day Response

Should a child be absent from school without a valid reason, a telephone call will be made or text message sent by a member of the schools attendance and welfare team. If a valid reason is not obtained on the first day of absence, a home visit may be completed.

Safeguarding and Absence

Contact will be made firstly to the children who are deemed at high risk of a Safeguarding Issue. The Attendance/Welfare Officer will be made aware of these children through liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL will provide regular updates of whom these children are.

Home visits

Parents and carers should be aware that home visits are completed by all Brooke Weston Trust schools as a standard procedure when children are absent from school. Should schools have any safeguarding concerns for a particular child, home visits will be completed to these families in the first instance. Home visits allow school staff to see the child and discuss the absence with parents and carers, as well as being able to offer support if required.

Medical evidence

If a child is absent from school due to an appointment or has received prescribed medication, Brooke Weston Trust schools require medical evidence to be presented upon the child’s return to school.

Medical evidence can be in the form of:

- an appointment card provided by the medical practice
- a text message or email confirmation of appointment
- a doctor’s letter
- a hospital letter/discharge note
- a medical prescription

When medical evidence is seen, authorisation for the absence will be given.

Should a parent or carer have any further queries about appropriate medical evidence, contact should be made to the individual school.

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Attendance Correspondence

Brooke Weston Trust Primary Schools have worked together to devise a set of attendance procedures which are adhered to if a child presents with attendance and/or punctuality concerns. The below diagram highlights the procedures followed:

