



Venerable Bede Church of England Academy

Dayspring Trust



Tunstall Bank, Sunderland, SR2 0SX

Telephone: 0191 523 9745 Fax: 0191 523 9775

Email: venerable.bede@venerablebede.co.uk Website: www.venerablebede.co.uk

Head of School: Mr D Airey (BSc Hons)

Executive Headteacher: Mrs G A Booth (BA Hons/M.Ed.)

CDR/MIB

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Dear Parent/Carer

Attendance Protocol

We are writing to remind parents and carers about absence procedures and the School policy for tackling low pupil attendance. The governing body of the academy are in full support of ensuring that high levels of attendance are maintained for all pupils at Venerable Bede.

Unbroken attendance at school is important for learning. However, we recognise there will be times when absence is unavoidable and acceptable. This letter explains the approach we are following to manage attendance.

Types of Absence

Each absence is classed as authorised or unauthorised. Absences are coded as authorised where reasons are considered valid and unauthorised where no explanation or unacceptable reasons are given.

Unacceptable Reasons

The following are examples of reasons that are deemed not acceptable:

- shopping visits
- care for family members
- days out to theme parks or to attend concerts/shows
- parents' work commitments or business trips
- holidays taken in term time (including long weekends taken on Fridays and/or Mondays)
- parental illness

We are required to refer periods of unauthorised absence to the Local Authority.

Illness and First Day Call

If your child is unable to attend school through illness you should inform us by telephone on the first day of absence before 8.40 a.m. It is useful to know the expected day of return. If you do not supply us with this information we have a duty to contact you so that we may be sure of your child's whereabouts and safety.

Where the child is absent through illness or medical appointments this will normally be counted as an authorised absence if there is supporting evidence. Where we have concerns over excessive absence patterns through illness we will need to discuss this with parents in order to gain a better understanding of the problems and to offer support – for example by involving the School Health Service.



Medical/Dental Appointments

It is generally better if these can be arranged outside school hours, but we know this is not always possible. Where children need to attend such appointments during the school day it is important that parents come to collect their children from the school reception. Please bring your child to the office on returning from the appointment. Medical and dental appointments count as authorised absences if there is supporting evidence to corroborate these absences in accordance with the School's Attendance Policy.

Emergency Occasions

There are some occasions e.g. bereavements, family problems, etc. where it may be inappropriate for children to attend school; we will be sympathetic to such needs, and on these occasions a telephone call to the Head of Year should be made so that provision can be put in place to support the pupil upon their return to school.

Lateness

Please try to ensure that your child arrives at school so that they are present for registration; this is done at 8.40 a.m. each day. Where a genuine reason for lateness exists there should be a written note from a parent/carer to inform school. This will be logged as an authorised absence. Where explanations are inadequate or the lateness is after registers have closed then an absence (late) will be recorded and a call back will be given to the pupil. A text message will be sent out to inform parent/carers of their child being late for school. Two instances of lateness in one week will generate a one-hour detention after school on the Friday of the following week. A separate text message will be sent out informing parent/carers of the detention.

Leave of Absence:

- **Holidays**

It is not our policy to authorise holidays in term time. Where authorisation is not granted then subsequent term time holiday absence will be reported as a matter of course to the local authority. We are under a duty to do this.

- **Approved Public Performance**

Where children are invited to perform in a licensed show or concert (e.g. orchestra, pantomime) you are asked to consult with school about how much time away from school is required. Where possible such requests will be granted provided that the child's education is unlikely to suffer. The school will also be sympathetic towards leave to participate in a recognized city, county or national sporting event. Where parents wish to take their child(ren) out of school during term time for purposes other than holidays, they should complete the leave of absence form. This is available from the School Office.

What we are aiming for:

Average attendance should be over 95% for the year, with outstanding attendance above 96%.

What is considered as poor attendance?

Anything below 94% is weak, under 90% is deemed persistent absence by the government and if attendance dips below 85% this would raise serious concerns. At Venerable Bede we are aiming for every pupil to achieve attendance levels of at least 95%. We monitor attendance and provide information about pupil's attendance in their school report. Pupils whose attendance has fallen below 94% will be invited for a meeting with the Head of Year and Senior Head of Year to discuss what support can be provided to improve the pupil's attendance. We then monitor the pupils' attendance on a weekly basis and hope to see a pattern of unbroken weeks developing.

School should be made aware of any pupil with a chronic illness or condition. We will endeavour to do what we can to support a child and their family in these circumstances.



Our duty of care in responding to unauthorised and persistent absence – possible consequences:

We have a duty of care, shared with the Local Authority, to challenge poor attendance. Where attendance levels are low and where there are invalid reasons, judged by the school or the Local Authority, for a pupil's frequent absence. Or where parents condone absence (e.g. by taking children out of school on unauthorised holidays) Sunderland Local Authority may decide to issue court proceedings. This could result in a fine of £60 per pupil per parent. Unpaid fines could ultimately lead to a criminal conviction. Of course, no one wants this to happen but we need to be very clear about the issue. We hope that this letter and the enclosed notes will help you to have a clear understanding about the academy's expectations regarding attendance.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and we would be very pleased to answer any questions you may have regarding our approach to maintaining and improving school attendance.

Yours faithfully



Mr C Roberts
Assistant Headteacher

