



BRANDLES SCHOOL APPROVED POLICY COVER SHEET

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Children's Services

Integrated Services for Learning

LOCAL AUTHORITY POLICY ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

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CONTENTS

| | <u>Section</u> |
|---|----------------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Statement of Intent | 2 |
| Responsibilities – Parents and Carers | 3 |
| Responsibilities – Schools | 4 |
| Responsibilities – ISL Attendance Teams | 5 |
| The Use of Legal Action | 6 |
| Penalty Notices for Parents of Truants | 7 |
| School Attendance Orders | 8 |
| Admission and Attendance Registers | 9 |
| Authorising Absence | 10 |
| Administrative Codes | 11 |
| Approved Off-Site Educational Activity | 12 |
| Flexi-schooling | 13 |
| Part-time time-tables | 14 |
| Family Holidays during Term Time | 15 |
| Appendices | |
| Policy for Attendance Improvement Officers working with children whose absence has been authorised | 1 |
| Attendance Codes, Descriptions and Meanings | 2 |

1. Introduction

Introduction

This policy outlines specifically the arrangements for ensuring and managing pupil attendance at Brandles School.

This policy was drawn up using the following publications:

- Model policy for managing attendance in schools (Hertfordshire Local Authority 2017);
- Guidance for Schools on Producing an Attendance Policy (Hertfordshire Local Authority CSF 0200 Issue 1, March 2013);
- School Attendance: Advice for Schools and Local Authorities (DfE November 2013).

This policy has the full agreement of Brandles Governing Body. All staff members, governors, and parents/carers can access this policy via the school Website. The implementation is the responsibility of the Headteacher who facilitates the updating bi-annually or as necessary, in consultation with teaching staff and the Full Governing Body. The responsibility for monitoring and review rests with the Pastoral Lead and Home Liaison Manager **Janet Stone**.

Brandles School is committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for individual children. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Brandles School is committed to openness and equality of opportunity in every activity, from the way we employ staff to the way we deliver services. It is a central responsibility of members, managers and employees of the School to ensure that every individual that we come into contact with is treated with dignity and respect.

This Attendance Policy is in place to:

- undertake the school's legal responsibility to ensure all students attend school and lessons regularly;
- ensure that parents/carers and students are aware and understand the expectations of Brandles School;
- ensure effective and supportive interventions take place to enable students to maintain good attendance/return to lessons;
- ensure effective recording, monitoring and reporting of students' attendance;

- provide accurate and prompt information on attendance to relevant stakeholders as required.

2. Statement of Intent

Hertfordshire County Council expects Children's Services, Integrated Services for Learning and all schools to work closely together in partnership with parents in order to achieve excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality for all pupils.

3. Responsibilities – Parents and Carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents will:-

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy
- impress upon their children the need to observe Brandles code of conduct
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with Brandles to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- inform Brandles on the first day and subsequent days of absence of the reason for their son's absence from school. This can be via the school mobile phone number - 07890665157 - or by contacting the school office on 01462 892189;
(The school does not accept messages from another pupil)
- provide an explanation for the absence. This explanation will be confirmed - preferably in writing - when the children return to school

- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- not book holidays during term time

4. Responsibilities - Schools

Brandles are responsible for supporting the attendance of our pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance.

We call attendance registers –

These attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Registers are taken at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session.

Registers record whether each pupil is present; attending an approved educational activity; absent; or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. In the case of a pupil of compulsory school age who is absent the register also indicates whether the absence has been authorised by the school.

Registers are called at 9.00 am and 12.00 pm. Registers are marked consistently by staff using the codes advised in Hertfordshire Local Authority School Attendance Guidance (November 2011) and DfE School Attendance: Advice for Schools and Local Authorities (November 2013).

Registers are closed at 9.30 am and 12.15 pm. Any pupil arriving after closure of the register is marked as absent.

When the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence is recorded as unauthorised and any subsequent correction to the register is made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence has been established.

In order to reduce the possibility of post registration truancy Brandles take class registers in each lesson and carry out regular spot checks.

At Brandles we:-

- work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole
- have clear policies in place to address persistent absence
- have clear policies in place to address the attendance of vulnerable groups
- support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance

- Are sensitive to the needs of individual parents and this is reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed.

Pupils are expected to:

- o attend school and all of their lessons punctually and regularly;
- o remember to hand any note giving reasons for absence to the Mrs Stone or School Office;
- o be ready to learn;
- o report to the main office to sign in if arriving late to school

Punctuality

At Brandles we take steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness is monitored and followed up.

Our School policies and website clearly state that the school starts at 9am for the students and finishes at 3:15pm

When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he will be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and parent provides a satisfactory explanation, he will be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session using the correct code.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and parent fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session. (Code U)

When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, his presence on site will be noted in a book in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation, etc.

At Brandles we are committed to:-

- ensuring that legal requirements are met
- giving a high priority to attendance and punctuality
- Identifying clear channels of communication with parents
- identifying what is considered as authorised/unauthorised absence

- Making first-day of absence contact
- Having clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence
- Prioritising the importance of early intervention
- Identifying a range of strategies to encourage whole school attendance
- Promoting the setting of targets for individual pupils, form groups etc.
- Establishing systems for rewarding good/improved attendance
- Being sensitive to individual pupils' needs
- Establishing procedures for re-integrating long-term absentees
- Establishing clear lines of communication with outside agencies
- Ensuring that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness
- Providing for effective primary-secondary liaison
- Informing and involving governors
- Ensuring that good practice is identified and disseminated
- Explaining how attendance information will be shared with parents (newsletters, website etc)
- Being reviewed at regular intervals
- Making clear to parents that it is the school - not the parent - which authorises an absence.
- Making it clear to parents what is, and is not, acceptable as reasons for absence
- Stating how lateness, both before and after closure of registers, is recorded and monitored
- Making it clear that leave is granted only in exceptional circumstances
- Addressing attendance from a whole school perspective. Actively promoting the link between attendance and achievement
- Encouraging all staff - including ancillary and administrative staff - to see attendance as part of their responsibility

- Actively addressing all issues - such as bullying – which may lead to non-attendance
- Notifying the Local Authority of any pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly, have irregular attendance, or have 10 or more consecutive school days absence without the school's permission.

4. Leaving and Returning to School during the School Day

When pupils leave or return to school during the school day, the school office must be notified. Pupils must provide an appointment card and/or letter from a Parent or Carer to the Home Liaison Manager explaining reasons for the appointment and to inform the school who will collect and return the pupil to school.

If a pupil has an appointment, the Home Liaison Manager will collect the pupil from the appropriate lesson and escort him to the school office.

Pupils are expected to sign in and out of school at the front office on all occasions. It is the responsibility of the office staff to check the signing in and out record in the event of a fire.

5. Truancy

Brandles School works with parents, pupils, carers and staff to reduce truancy.

We also work with appropriate professionals to ensure that truancy by individual pupils does not occur.

Truancy includes:

- Leaving the school site during the school day without permission
- Leaving school transport on the route to school

5. Responsibilities – ISL Attendance Team

The ISL Attendance Teams fulfil the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables Brandles and our parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

We have a link Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who works in close partnership with the school.

6. The Use of Legal Action

If a pupil, who is registered at Brandles, fails to attend regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the Local Authority. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' might include the death of a close relative, certain medically recognised conditions, awaiting SEN placement, specific child protection concerns, change of provision. Legal proceedings can be considered at any stage if no progress has been made and no exceptional circumstances are deemed to exist.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the AIO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.

In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Teams will begin legal proceedings promptly on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the Local Authority will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced.

The Attendance Teams will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance. Education Supervision Orders will not usually be applied for in relation to pupils in Years 10 or 11.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored
- the attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it will be dealt with, will be noted
- the Local Authority will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school

7. Education Related Penalty Notices for Parents of Truants

At Brandles School we expect parents/carers to work with us to address attendance problems. If a pupil has at least 21 sessions (1/2 day equals 1 session) unauthorised absence in one term (including unauthorised holidays), and/or a previous term, the Headteacher may ask the local authority to issue a penalty notice. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days.

If the penalty is not paid the local authority may prosecute the parents/carers for the irregular attendance.

Further information on penalty notices is available at <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/attendance.shtml> or from the local Attendance Team Manager.

9. **Rewards**

We reward good attendance by ongoing recognition through the behaviour management system within the school:

- Weekly celebrations of pupils with more than 90% attendance.
- End of half-term certificates are awarded to pupils with 90% or more attendance;

Registers - Retention

Registers will be kept in a secure place for a period of not less than 3 years.

Removal from Roll

There are strict grounds as to when we may remove pupils from their admissions register. These are outlined in **Regulation 8** of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006. Regulation 12(6) states that when a school has decided to delete a pupil's name from their admission roll they must notify their Local Authority as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

When we are told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, we will establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Confirmation will then be sought from the receiving school. When this information has been obtained, we will complete a Removal from Roll form and return it to the local Attendance Team office.

Whenever a pupil leaves our school a Common Transfer File (CTF) will be completed.

If we are concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has “disappeared” the matter will be drawn without delay to the attention of the Local Attendance Team.

10. Authorising Absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the us to accept it, if we do not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence will be treated as unauthorised and the parent informed.

We keep all absence notes for at least a term and when a pupil's absence is a cause for concern we will retain the notes until there is no longer a concern.

Absence will be authorised if:

- the pupil is absent with leave (defined as ‘leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school’)
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- Brandles is not within walking distance of the child's home; and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following: the child's transport to and from school; the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision, there is a close family bereavement,
- a Year 11 pupil is granted study leave. Study leave will be used sparingly and only granted during public examinations. Provision will still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise
- leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application. (Parents will be reminded that they cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence)

- leave of absence will be granted to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued

Before granting a licence the local authority must be satisfied that the child's education will not suffer. A school letter is requested as part of the licence application as confirmation of this. If a school believes a child's education will suffer as a result of taking part in a performance they will provide reasons to the local authority in writing. The information must be specific to the child (saying for example that it is against school policy is not sufficient). If the school does not provide such information the local authority will issue the licence. The absence will be recorded as code C

- Absence will be unauthorised if no explanation is forthcoming from the parents or if the school is dissatisfied with the explanation

11. Administrative Codes

There are a number of administrative codes which are not counted as a possible attendance in the school census. They must only be used in the circumstances described:

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (Code Y)

This code is collected in the school census for statistical purposes but is not counted as a possible attendance It may be used when:
the school site, or part of it is closed due to unavoidable cause; or
the transport provided by the school or the local authority is not available *and*
where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

- Not required to be in school (Code X)

is used to record sessions that non –compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

- Pupil not on admission register (Code Z)

enables schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

- Planned whole or partial school closure (Code #)

will be used for closures that are planned or known in advance eg holidays, curriculum planning/training days (up to five per year) or the use of the school as a polling station.

- Different Term Dates for Different Pupils (Code #)

can also be used to record staggered starts or induction days. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year.

12. Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

Pupils who are engaged in off-site educational activities will be recorded as attending (or absent from) an approved educational activity using the appropriate code.

The key features of approved educational activity are that they must be:

- educational *and*
- approved by the school *and*
- supervised by the school or someone authorised by the school

(Study leave is NOT an approved educational activity)

A pupil will be recorded as approved educational activity if he/she is attending:

- an approved work experience placement (Code W)
- a field trip or educational visit (Code V)
- an approved sporting activity approved by and supervised by someone authorised by the school (Code P)
- the pupil is attending an interview with a prospective employer, or another educational establishment (Code J)
- an off-site educational activity (Code B)

Note: The B code will be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. By using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils.

- Dual Registered – at another educational establishment (Code D)

Note: This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the school census. This code will be used where pupils are attending an ESC, hospital or special school on a temporary basis or for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller

children where they are known to be registered at another school for the session in question. Each school will only record the attendance/absence for those sessions where the pupil is expected to attend. Schools must ensure that they follow up all absence in a timely manner.

13. Flexi-schooling

Head teachers can agree to flexi-schooling arrangements where the parents take on the responsibility for their child's education for part of the school week. Head teachers are advised to consider any such requests from parents very carefully before agreeing to them and are advised to draw up a written agreement with the parent. Where agreement has been reached, pupils will be marked authorised absent from school during periods when they are receiving home education. (Code C).

14. Part-time time-tables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs. A part time timetable must be time limited and must not be treated as a long term solution and can only be made with parental agreement. The school will mark the sessions were the pupil is not expected to attend as authorised absence. (Code C).

Guidance on part-time timetables is available at -
<http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/attendance.shtml>

15. Requests for Family Holidays During Term time

Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which come into effect on 1st September 2013 remove all references to family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

At the request from Headteachers the local authority has provided a standard letter to be handed to parents and carers to support the governing body and Headteachers in communicating their decision making regarding individual requests for leave of absence for holidays in term time. This is available on <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/attendance.shtml>

Appendix 1

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

| CODE | DESCRIPTION | MEANING |
|----------|---|-------------------------------------|
| / | Present (AM) | Present |
| \ | Present (PM) | Present |
| B | Present at off site educational activity | Approved Education Activity |
| C | Leave of absence authorised by the school | Authorised absence |
| D | Dual registered at another educational establishment | Not expected to attend this session |
| E | Excluded (no alternative provision made) | Authorised absence |
| G | Holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement) | Unauthorised absence |
| H | Holiday authorised by the school | Authorised absence |
| I | Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments) | Authorised absence |
| J | Interview | Approved Education Activity |
| L | Late (before registers closed) | Present |
| M | Medical/Dental appointments | Authorised absence |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence | Unauthorised absence |
| O | Other unauthorised absence | Unauthorised absence |
| P | Supervised sporting activity | Approved Education Activity |
| R | Day set aside exclusively for religious observance | Authorised absence |
| S | Study leave | Authorised absence |
| T | Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational reasons | Authorised absence |
| U | Late and arrived after the registers closed | Unauthorised absence |
| V | Educational visit or trip | Approved Education Activity |
| W | Work experience | Approved Education Activity |
| X | Not required to be in school (non-compulsory school age pupils) | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Y | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Z | Pupil not on admission register | Not counted in possible attendances |
| # | School closed to all pupils (Planned) | Not counted in possible attendances |

Detailed advice on the use of these registration codes can be found at www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance