



A partner in the Berwickshire Learning Community
Committed to achieving success for all

October 2018

Dear Parents/Carers

The Importance of School Attendance

This letter about attendance is designed to provide you with a clear outline about absence procedures and the School and SBC's responses to poor student attendance. The Headteacher through the Home School Link worker is promoting high levels of attendance and the importance of taking action where there are unsatisfactory reasons for absence.

Unbroken attendance at school is important for learning. However, there will be times when absence is unavoidable and acceptable.

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.

Examples of some reasons that are 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

Unauthorised absences are monitored closely by the school and by Scottish Borders Council and must be accounted for.

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 9.00am via the absence line **01890750464** (this is an answering phone so can be phoned at any time day or night) or call in in person at the Office. 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 the child's whereabouts as this is a safeguarding measure. If you receive a text to ask where your child is please get back in touch with the school ASAP. It creates considerable difficulty for us when parents fail to respond. The resulting time spent in following up our initial

enquiry means time away from work done directly on a 1:1 basis with other students. Our school Office Staff and Home School Link Worker is an incredibly scarce resource that given sufficient time can have a considerable impact on the lives of young people at Eyemouth High School. We would ask for your support in making sure that their valuable time is used to best advantage.

Where the child is absent through illness or medical appointments this will normally be counted as authorised. 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 Nurse.

If we do not hear from you, your child will have an unauthorised absence on their school record – early and prompt communication is vital here.

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 first to the Office before collecting children or an appointment card is provided. Please bring your child to the office on returning from the appointment. Medical and dental appointments count as authorised absences.

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.

Child falling ill in the School day

Should your child feel ill during the school day it is important that they report this to a member of staff immediately. Your child will be seen by an appropriate member of staff. If necessary parents will then be called and arrangements made to allow the child to get the appropriate care. It is important that your child does not simply walk out of school without informing us. This is a safeguarding issue and by doing so the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

Lateness

Please try to ensure that your child arrives at school so that they are present for registration; this is done at 8.50 am each day. Meeting and exchanging news with friends before school is important for the children's social development. Lateness causes problems register marking and missed instructions. Where a genuine reason for lateness exists, this will be an authorised absence but where explanations are inadequate, or the lateness is after 8.50 a.m., then an absence (late) will be recorded and could result in a detention.

Leave of Absence

Any leave of absence must be requested in writing a **minimum of 6 weeks** prior to the start date of the requested leave.

Holidays

It is not our policy to authorise holidays in term time. The only exemption to this is where parents serve in the armed forces (this does not extend to the emergency services i.e. Police, Fire, Ambulance etc). Where authorisation is not granted then subsequent term time holiday absence will become a matter where we will have to account for days missed to Scottish Borders Council. Where unauthorised leave is taken, it will be recorded as unauthorised.

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 staff 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 provide a written request which outlines the reasons clearly.

Attendance Levels

What we are aiming for Average attendance would be around 95% for the year, with outstanding attendance above 96%.

What is considered as poor attendance?

Anything below 94% is weak, under 90% is poor and if attendance dips below 85% we will have serious concerns. Below 85% is regarded as having serious effects on the students learning. At Eyemouth High School we are aiming for every student to achieve attendance levels of at least 95%. We monitor attendance and provide reports on each student's attendance. These are discussed regularly and appropriate actions are taken.

Our duty of care in responding to unauthorised and persistent absence

We have a duty of care, shared with the Scottish Borders Council, to challenge poor attendance. Persistent absence will involve your child's Pastoral Teacher becoming involved and organisation of parental meetings. Where attendance levels are very low and where there are invalid reasons for a student's frequent absence or where parents condone absence (e.g. by taking children out of school on unauthorised holidays) then, if deemed appropriate, the School or council may make a referral to the Social Work Department.

We hope that these notes will help you to have a clear understanding about the School's expectations in this matter. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and we would be very pleased to answer any questions you may have about our approach to maintaining and improving our attendance record.

Yours faithfully



R Chapman
Headteacher

Information

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|--------------|--|
| 100% Attendance | 0 Days Missed | Excellent | Gives your child the best chance of success and gets them off to a flying start. |
| 95% Attendance | 9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed | Satisfactory | |
| 90% Attendance | 19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed | Poor | Less chance of success. Makes it harder to progress. |
| 85% Attendance | 27 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed Almost half a term missed | Very Poor | Serious implications on learning and progress |
| 80% Attendance | 36 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed Half a term missed | Unacceptable | |
| 75% Attendance | 45 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed Almost 1 whole term missed | Unacceptable | |