School Attendance – Covid Update March 2021

A very important message for all parents/carers

8th March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

This is a message about school attendance.

Bellfield Infant School is working in partnership with parents and Birmingham City Council to encourage children back into school following several very difficult months for parents, children and schools. We would like to thank parents for the work you have done in ensuring your children have received education during this period.

During the recent lockdown, schools were closed to all but vulnerable children and the children of critical workers.

Now the circumstances have changed, it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development. We know that children have missed being with their friends and the wider social aspects of school. Following the first lockdown the vast majority of children returned to full time school.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. **Therefore, the government has advised that *school attendance is again compulsory from the 8th March 2021***

This means that (unless parents are formally notified of new lockdown arrangements where schools are closed or a child is required to self-isolate), the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to send their child/children to school regularly where they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the option for local authorities to again consider the use of legal sanctions, including penalty notices and prosecution in court.

If you are worried about your child/children attending school the first port of call is to discuss your concerns with the school directly. The school has specialist staff who may be able to help, and all schools work closely with health and council teams who may also be able to help if needed.

Please note that, given the disruption to children's education caused by the pandemic, requests for leave during term time are unlikely to be authorised by the Head Teacher.

Family emergencies also need careful consideration. It is not always appropriate or in the best interests of the child to miss school for emergencies which are being dealt with by adult family members.

No school or local authority wants to take legal action. Every attempt to resolve parents' concerns and improve a child's attendance will be made before any formal legal action, which may include a penalty notice or court action, is considered.

After so much disruption to children's education over the past year, the most important thing is that the school and parents work together to get children back into school. The school is ready to listen so please contact them if you have any worries and they will try to help you. There is also information for parents and carers on attending school during the pandemic here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak

We wish you and your child/children all the best for the remainder of the academic year.

Kind regards

Education Legal Intervention Team
Birmingham City Council

Mrs G Simm
Head Teacher