

Bishopton Primary School



Attendance Policy

Prepared by:	Andrew Smith
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1. Introduction

‘Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school’.

School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DFE Aug 2013

Regular attendance means that children are more likely to make good, consistent progress in their learning and development. Where there are concerns about a child’s attendance, the school will seek to support and enable good attendance in order for children to benefit from the learning opportunities on offer and to ensure they are safe and well.

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

This policy supports 'British Values' by focusing on the opportunities for individuals and their entitlement to good quality teaching and learning at their own levels. Children and adults deserve to be treated with mutual respect and be tolerant of each other when in the school environment. Attending school is part of the law of the land and a non-negotiable for children.

2. The Law

It is a government legal requirement that all children of compulsory attend school for 190 days. It is also a government requirement that we monitor attendance and apply the legal requirement.

It is our policy that no child’s attendance should fall below an acceptable level as we recognise that good attendance is central to raising standards and pupil achievement.

3. Aims

We expect all children on roll to attend school every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. In addition we will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

This policy underpins our school ethos to:

- Support pupils and their parents/carers in our establishment to achieve the highest possible level of attendance and punctuality;
- Promote children’s welfare and safeguarding;
- Ensure every child has access to a full time education which they are entitled to;



- Ensure that pupils succeed and realise their full potential whilst at school;
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities.

The governing body is responsible for making sure Bishopton Primary School keeps attendance registers that record which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. Registers will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

If allowed to remain unchecked persistent absence and lateness can significantly undermine the school's efforts to raise standards. The aim of this policy is to inform all members of our school communities of the following:

1. How the school encourages good attendance
2. How the school monitors attendance
3. Authorised and unauthorised absences
4. Holiday absence in term time
5. Role of the Education Social Work Service and ACE (Attendance and Compliance Enforcement) Team

4. Expectations

We expect that **ALL children** will:

- Attend school every day;
- Attend school punctually;
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day (i.e. PE kit, book bag, homework etc.)

We expect that **parents/carers** will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- Ensure that they contact the school daily of any absence, before 9.30am;
- Notify school by email or via telephone detailing the reason for absence and the expected period of time on the first day of illness;
- Update the school promptly if there are changes to these expected period of absence.
- Notify school immediately of any changes to emergency contact details.

Bishopton Primary School will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere;
- Provide a safe learning environment;
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality;
- Monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality;
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality;
- Inform parents/carers of the attendance of all pupils;
- Inform parents/carers regarding their child's punctuality.

5. Encouraging good attendance

The most vital part of encouraging good attendance is to ensure that the school is a place to which the children want to come:

1. that the school is a place where the children are treated with respect and feel valued;
2. a place where their needs are recognised and are being addressed and a place where all children can experience success within a rich, relevant and diversified curriculum.



It is clear that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. From the outset parents are encouraged to take an active role in the work of their school and to share and support their children's enthusiasm. Among the variety of commitments parents agree to undertake within the Home School Agreement regular and punctual attendance is prominent.

All staff make children aware of the importance of good attendance. The child's attendance record is shared with parents as part of written reports and at Pupil Mentoring Meetings. It follows that individual records of attendance are kept on file and are passed onto subsequent schools.

In addition to attendance percentage being reported, class teachers will also report on the number of late marks and level of punctuality.

6. The school day

- The School day starts between 8.45am and 8.55am and ends at 3.15pm;
- Parents are asked to bring their children to the designated entrance for their class for 8.45am so that they are ready to go in when the doors open. Children should then come straight into class.
- There will always be a learning activity (Early Morning Work) available when children enter the classroom. The first lesson will begin after registration.

7. Communication

In order to support a child's learning and development, it is important to maintain good communication between home and school.

- Parents should inform the school by phone or email on the morning of the first day of their child's absence and each subsequent day of absence until their return.
- Parents should follow the leave of absence procedure to request approval for any planned absences.

8. Authorised and Unauthorised absences

The DfE recognises the importance of regular attendance and it is a statutory requirement for the school to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised.

The following represent the sort of absences, which the school will approve as authorised:

- Medical/dental appointment
- Pupil illness
- Approved sporting activity (playing at a standard of excellence)
- Day of religious observance
- Visits to prospective secondary schools
- Immediate family bereavement or wedding

From time to time children need to be absent from school for reasons such as medical appointments which means that the child is absent for only up to part of the school day. School should be informed of such absences and children should be brought into school for morning registration and returned straight after the appointment.

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.

Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school received no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given. Some examples are provided below.

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the school day;



- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Birthdays and anniversaries;
- Parents/carers unable to drop off/collect a child due to work commitments/appointments.

9. Monitoring and reviewing attendance

Regular checks on attendance are carried out by all class teachers, office administrators and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Attendance Registers are marked twice daily, at the start of the morning session and again in the afternoon. Registers are checked by office administrators.

All absences and persistent lateness are investigated. When the register closes, the office administrators check the messages on the school answerphone and operate 'first day calling' for those pupils absent with no reason given.

Attendance data is held electronically on the SIMS Management Information Systems

The SLT monitors the attendance of pupils regularly and contacts parents if a child's attendance is causing concern. School will refer a pupil to WAS if a child's attendance has been 90% or lower for a six week period.

Returns of school data are made annually to the Department for Education (DfE) and benchmark data exists to compare our school within national contexts.

Bishopton Primary School sets an attendance target each year. This is agreed by the governing body at the first meeting of the school year. Targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years.

10. Leave of Absence in Term Time

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

- The Head teacher will NOT grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
- 2. Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- The Head teacher will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- Bishopton Primary School understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but this does NOT count as an exceptional circumstance.
- The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the 'resident' parent.
- Each application for a leave of absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.
- Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child will be required to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, which may result in legal action being taken against the parent(s), by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

It is important for parents/ carers to be aware that school does not receive any financial gain as a result of these fixed penalty notices.



11. Why attendance matters

- Less than 5 days absence = 98%+ attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 93.5% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 90% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 88% attendance
- 90% attendance = 4 whole weeks off school
- 90% attendance in years 1 – 6 means over half a year off school

90% attendance for your child throughout Primary and Secondary School means they will have missed a whole year of school in their education.

12. Punctuality

Punctuality to school is crucial.

- Children who arrive late, miss out on learning opportunities and this may affect their development and progress.
- Late children miss out on important information about what is happening in the day and this may leave them confused or distressed.
- Late arrivals can cause disruption to the rest of the class and can cause embarrassment for the child.

13. Registers

- Registers close 30 minutes after the start of the school day at 9:25am. A child arriving after the start of the school day but within the 30 minutes before registers close will need to be accompanied by a parent or carer into school via the main entrance. The L code will be used, which means your child has received a late mark for that session.
- Should your child arrive later than 9:25am your child will receive a U code, this equates to an unauthorised absence for that session and will affect your child's annual attendance.
- If a child is absent from school and the school has not been notified of the child's absence an 'O' (unauthorised absence) mark will be awarded.

14. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's education and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Persistent absence is a serious problem for pupils. Much of the work children miss when they are off school is never made up, leaving these pupils at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. There is also clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement.

PA equates to attendance falling below 90%. In order to try and prevent children falling below 90% the school will discuss attendance with parents/carers to alert them of PA when their child's attendance falls below 93%.

15. Role of Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS)

On those occasions when a pattern of poor attendance or lateness is developing the Head teacher or school representative will work directly with the family to seek solutions.

Should the problem persist then a referral to WAS may follow. WAS makes chargeable visits to the school and has a number of statutory powers to assist families with attendance difficulties and, of course, has access to all the support mechanisms of the County's Social Services.



16. In conclusion

It is our belief that good attendance and punctuality is at the heart of a child's progress and is, therefore, fundamental to our school's success. Bishopton Primary School greatly appreciates parental support to reduce the total amount of days lost due to absence. The Head teacher and the whole school team are committed to working in partnership with parents to enable all children to reach their academic targets and to support their social development and for this to happen individual attendance needs to be as high as possible and we all need to play our part.

PROCEDURE FOR ATTENDANCE CAUSING CONCERN		
Stage Trigger Action	Stage Trigger Actions	Stage Trigger Actions
1	<i>Attendance is at or below 93%.</i>	Letter 1 will be sent to parents, unless there is a clear explanation for a child's absence. (E.g Chicken Pox). • Informing parents of the pupil's current %age attendance • Expressing concern about the level of attendance • Remind parents of their legal responsibilities • Inform parents that attendance is being monitored for a set period. • Some parents may be invited to a meeting with a member of SLT to discuss their child's attendance
2	<i>Parents have received a Stage 1 letter and attendance has still not improved during the monitoring period. Letter 2 will be sent to parents</i>	Letter 2 will be sent to parents • Inform parents of attendance during the monitoring period • Remind parents of their legal responsibilities • Inform parents of the definition of 'PA' • Inform parents of a further monitoring period.
3	<i>Parents have received a Stage 2 letter and attendance still has not improved</i>	Letter 3 will be sent out to parents: • Inform parents of attendance hearing • The monitoring period • Remind parents of their legal responsibilities • Inform parents of the definition of 'PA' • Inform parents of a further monitoring period • Request medical evidence in order to authorise absences • Invite parents to a meeting, to discuss the ongoing concerns and establish an action plan to improve attendance.
4	<i>Parents have received a Stage 3 letter and the child's / children's attendance has not met the required standard within the monitoring period</i>	Letter 4 will be sent to parents: • Inform parents of attendance during the monitoring period • Inform parents that the school will refer their case to WAS who will contact them to discuss next steps.



17. Children Missing In Education Policy/Procedures

Definition of Children Missing Education

In Children Missing Education - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (2016), children missing education are defined as those who are not on a school roll or receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. Those who are regularly absent or have missed 10 school days or more without permission may be at risk of becoming 'children missing education'.

There will not always be a safeguarding concern for children and young people who are missing education. Most children and young people are moving schools supported by their parents/carers, schools and local authority admissions services. A smaller number, however, are at risk of dropping out or disengaging from education and, being out of school, they are at risk of exploitation, going missing and significant harm.

18. Risks

These 'missing' children can be vulnerable; it is essential that all services work together to identify and re-engage these children back into appropriate education provision as quickly as possible. It is important to establish, at the earliest possible stage, the reasons for the child being missing. Possible reasons that should be considered include:

- Failure to start appropriate provision and never enter the system;
- Stopped attending, due to illegal exclusion or withdrawal by parent/carers;
- Failure to complete a transition between schools;
- Children from refugee and asylum -seeking families;
- Children from families who are highly mobile;
- Children at risk of a forced marriage;
- Children experiencing abuse and neglect;
- Children supervised by the Youth Justice System.

Children who remain disengaged from education are potentially exposed to higher degrees of risk such as anti-social behaviour and/or sexual exploitation. Families moving between local authority areas can sometimes lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system and consequently missing education. When a child has moved, local authorities should check with other local authorities, either regionally or nationally, and share information to ascertain where the child is living. Once the location of the child is established, the relevant local authority must ensure that the child is receiving an education either by attending a school or otherwise.

19. Recognition

Schools:

As a result of daily registration, schools are particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. If a member of school staff becomes aware that a child is missing education, they should try to establish with the parents/carers, what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the designated safeguarding teacher/advisor should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability.

Schools should ensure that a family's contact details are regularly updated. These checks, however, should not become delaying factors in the admissions process. In the circumstances of a child going missing who is not known to any other agencies, the Headteacher should inform the Children Missing Education (CME) Officer of any child who has not attended for 10 consecutive school days without provision of reasonable explanation. Prior to doing so, the school should have made enquiries to ascertain whether the child is still residing at the home address and is not attending or whether the child is missing.



Other Agencies:

Where any agency in contact with children and families believes that a child is not on the roll of a school or receiving education otherwise, this information should be passed to the CME Officer with any details they have of the child in question.

20. Response

From the first day that a child does not attend school and there is no explanation or authorisation of the absence, the following steps should be taken:

- A staff member will contact the parents/carers (person with parental responsibility for the child) to seek reassurance that the child is safe at home;
- The outcome of the contact should be assessed and if there are any concerns a consultation with the school/establishment Designated Safeguarding Lead should take place to consider the child's vulnerability.

In the following circumstances a referral to children's social care and /or the police should always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime;
- The child is subject of a Child Protection plan;
- The child is subject of section 47 enquiries;
- The child is looked after;
- There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household; the answers to further questions could assist a judgement whether or not to inform children's social care and the police
- In which age range is the child?
- Is this very sudden and unexpected behaviour?
- Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- Was there a significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Has the child been a victim of bullying?
- Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g.: Does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Was the child noted to be depressed prior to their unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g.: Rites of passage, female genital mutilation or forced marriage planned for the child?
- Has the child a disability and/or special educational needs?
- Have there been past concerns about this child and family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying?

21. Children missing from education but NOT missing from home

The length of time that a child remains out of school could, of itself, be an alerting factor of risk of harm to the child. A judgement as to timeliness is required in respect of the referral to the local authority. This timeliness should be on a case by case basis. In exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence can be authorised by the Headteacher, at which point a return date is set. In these cases, the time line for enquiries starts from when the child does not attend school on the expected return date, not from the day the authorised leave started.

22. Notifications and Actions for Children Missing from Education where there are Safeguarding Concerns

If the answers to any of the points set out in the previous section indicate that there are concerns about the child's safety then a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and the Police on day one. Children's social care, who must be contacted as soon as possible in these circumstances, will also liaise with WM Police in order to identify, and act upon, any suspicion of child abuse or child related crime. The



school should work in collaboration with children's social care and the police and the Designated Safeguarding Lead should participate in any strategy discussions, section 47 enquiries and child protection conferences which may arise.

23. Reasonable enquiry

If the judgement reached on day one is that there is no reason to believe that the child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, then the school can delay making a referral to allow them to make further reasonable enquiries. Reasonable enquiries include staff making telephone calls to any numbers held on the school record, sending a letter to the last known address and conducting a home visit where it is deemed safe to do so. School staff may also check with all members of staff with whom the child may have had contact, with the pupil's friends and their parents, siblings and known relatives at school, and others. The speed at which these reasonable enquiries are made will depend upon any known or concerning factors that may arise through the enquiry process.

24. Further Actions

If the above response is unsuccessful, the school should contact the relevant CME Officer, referring the child as missing in education and providing the details of the completed enquiries made by the school. The local authority should make enquiries by visiting the child's home and asking for information from the family's neighbours and their local community - a risk assessment of this activity will be needed along with a decision about whether this is appropriate.

The CME Officer should also check databases within the local authority, use agreed protocols to check local databases, e.g. housing, health and the police; check with agencies known to be involved with the family, with any local authority the child may have moved from originally, and with any local authority to which the child may have moved. The child's circumstances and vulnerability should be reviewed and reassessed regularly and jointly by the CME Officer in consultation with children's social care and the police, as appropriate.

Children missing education are vulnerable and, when reviewed, plans should be put in place to proactively find children. As time progresses, missing education will become a more significant factor as well as needing to be considered alongside any other known factors that were already present.

25. Child missing from school for more than four weeks

A child may not be removed from the school roll before the end of four weeks, unless located in an alternative educational provision. After 4 weeks the child's Common Transfer File should be uploaded to the Department for Education secure site for the transfer of pupil information when a pupil moves between schools. The CME Officer will inform the school when they can remove from roll.

26. Transfer of information when a pupil changes school

The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (SI 2000/297) (as amended by SI 2001/1212 and SI 2002/1680) governs the transfer of information between schools.

- Regulation 10(3) states that 'The headteacher of the pupil's old school shall send the information within fifteen school days of the pupil's ceasing to be registered at the school'.

However,

- Regulation 10 (4) states that 'This regulation does not apply where it is not reasonably practicable for the headteacher of the old school to ascertain the pupil's new school or where the pupil was registered at his old school for less than four weeks'.



If the CME Officer or any other agency becomes aware the child has moved to another school the service should ensure all relevant agencies are informed so that arrangements can be made to forward records from the previous school.

Changes to the Children Missing Education statutory regulations in September 2016 require that all schools must report all starters and leavers to the local authority. This includes starters, no shows, and leavers that are outside of normal transition rounds, following the local authority's processes.

Signed: *Mr. A. Smith*

Date: 19-1-2024

