

# Bledlow Ridge School



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Signed (HT):

Natasha Harrison

Date agreed: November 2022

Signed (Chair of GB):

Hugh Gage

Review date: November 2024

## **Attendance / Holiday in Term Time Policy**

**At Bledlow Ridge School we have a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance, embedded in the school's ethos, vision and values.**

**As set out in 'Working together to Improve School Attendance' May 2022:**

### **The importance of school attendance:**

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%). At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 4-1. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

**At Bledlow Ridge School we recognise that improving and securing attendance can not be viewed in isolation it must closely be viewed alongside:**

- Robust and engaging curriculum
- Well embedded behaviour approaches and practises
- Proactive and effective responses to bullying
- SEND provision and support
- Support for mental and emotional health and wellbeing

### **Why attendance matters:**

1. If pupils are to achieve their potential, good attendance and punctuality are vital.
2. The link between attendance and achievement is well documented.
3. We want all our pupils to achieve the very best that they can, to develop the whole person and be the 'best they can be'

### **Punctuality:**

Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that their child arrives at school punctually.

### **Parents and Carers**

We have strong relationships with our parents and believe that it is vital that clear communication regarding pupils' attendance is prioritised.

### **What Parents/Carers can do:**

- Ensure pupils arrive on time each day, well equipped and in a fit state to learn. School starts at 8.30 a.m. for all pupils in Reception, KS1 and KS2.

- *[In exceptional circumstances start and finish times may need to be changed]*
- Registers close at 8.45am at which point your child will be given an unauthorised absence mark if they are not in school and have not given a valid reason.
- If you are aware that your child will be absent from school – please phone the school office on 01494481253
- If a child must attend a medical or dental appointment during school hours, then appointment cards must be shared before the event.
- Inform the school if there is a problem that may affect your child's attendance e.g. bereavement.

**If absences are unexplained a telephone call home will be made on the day of the absence and a reason for the absence sought. If contact is not made, a follow up call will be made to all contacts to establish a reason for the absence. If there is still no response, two members of staff will visit the pupils' home. If there is no one in the house, the school will call the attendance officer at Buckinghamshire for advice, alternatively, the school will call the police if advise cannot be sought from Buckinghamshire.**

Examples of how days missed affects % attendance rating:

0 Days missed – 100% attendance

10 Days missed – 95% attendance

20 Days missed – 90% attendance

30 Days missed – 85% attendance

## TERMINOLOGY

### PERSISTENT ABSENCE

90% or less attendance

(equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year)

### SEVERE ABSENCE

50% or less attendance

New terminology introduced in this guidance

### **Responsibilities:**

The Education Act 2004 states that all children of compulsory school age (five to sixteen) must receive a suitable full-time education. Parents/Carers are legally responsible for making sure their child attends regularly.

Bledlow Ridge School welcomes the active support of parents/carers. The school seeks to develop an effective partnership between home and the school based on mutual understanding and trust.

### **Safeguarding:**

The school has a statutory responsibility to safeguard the welfare and safety of its pupils. Monitoring attendance and/or patterns of attendance is part of this safeguarding responsibility.

### **Parental Prosecution:**

When attendance is below an acceptable level and no reasonable explanation has been given, parents will be referred to the Local Authority who will be in contact with parents regarding their child's attendance. This may result in a referral to Early Help/Family Support or a fine of up to £120 each time a referral is made.

### **REASONS FOR ABSENCE:**

**Authorised absence:** is absence with permission from the Headteacher; this includes instances of absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided, e.g. ill health. Medical and dental appointments, where possible should be made for after school or during school holidays. The school understands that this isn't always possible, however, pupils should attend school prior to or following a medical/dental appointment and avoid a full day's absence. Only half a day will be authorised for these appointments.

**Unauthorised absence:** is absence without permission from the Headteacher, this includes all unexplained or unjustified absences e.g. term time holiday or a birthday celebration.

**Holidays in Term Time:** Under Department for Education guidelines, special leave can no longer be sanctioned by the Head Teacher. Leave can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Family holidays do not count as exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised.

Any unauthorised holidays taken during term time will be notified to the local authority and parents/carers may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for each child concerned. Time out of school during term time will only be granted in very exceptional circumstances e.g. a bereavement – every case will be dealt with on a personal basis and will be dependent on the child's previous attendance record as well as the reason for absence.

*A leave of absence request must be completed prior to the leave being taken. These are available on the school's website.*

### **Registration and Lateness:**

1. All registers are marked at the start of the school day and after lunchtime for all pupils.
2. Registers are marked electronically by the class teacher. The school office receives an electronic copy of the register once it has been completed.
3. If a pupil arrives at school late then the pupil (and accompanying parent) should come to the school office. The parent must sign their child in and provide a reason for the lateness.

### **Letters to/meetings with parents regarding lateness:**

1. Staff in the school office will remind parents/pupils arriving late the importance of arriving at school on time.
2. Absence and lateness are monitored by the office and headteacher.
3. Where a pupil is persistently late then a letter is sent home to parents, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Persistently late means more than two occasions in any two consecutive weeks or more than four occasions in any four consecutive weeks.
4. If a pupil's parents have received a letter regarding lateness and punctuality has not improved the headteacher will arrange a meeting with the parent. At this meeting the school should stress the importance of punctuality and discuss with the parent's reasons for lateness to see if any support can be offered. After the meeting the child's punctuality should be monitored.

If the child's punctuality does not improve then the matter should be referred to the Attendance Officer from the Local Authority who will contact the parents regarding this matter.

5. If a parent is unable to make the appointment set for the above meeting then another appointment should be offered. If a parent is still not able to attend this meeting, then the matter should be referred to the Attendance Officer from the Local Authority who will contact the parents regarding this matter. Parents will be informed in writing that this will happen.

6. All letters to parents regarding punctuality should be copied to the child's file. Records of all meetings will be recorded on CURA.

7. Class teachers must share the responsibility for encouraging good punctuality among their class by discussing the impact of frequent lateness on a child's learning in class.

8. The Headteacher reserves the right to accelerate the process directly to a meeting or referral to the Attendance Officer from the Local Authority should a pupil's punctuality or attendance not improve.

### **Absence:**

1. Parents should inform the school office of the reason for their child's absence by the start of the school day on the first day of absence. Notification can be made by phone 01494481253 or email at [office@bledlowridge.bucks.sch.uk](mailto:office@bledlowridge.bucks.sch.uk)
2. A child's attendance should be monitored carefully and if it falls below 95% or if the Welfare Officer notices a pattern of non-attendance; e.g. regular absence on a Monday. The school will write to parents and inform them that their child's attendance has dropped below 95% and is a cause for concern. Parents will also be informed in this letter that their child's attendance is being closely monitored and further action will be taken if attendance continues to fall.
3. If the pupil's attendance does not improve then a meeting will be set up between the Headteacher and the pupil's parents. At this meeting the importance of good attendance should be stressed and the reasons for the absences discussed to see if any support can be offered. At this meeting parents will be asked to bring any evidence (e.g. medical letters) to explain the reasons for their child's poor attendance. Parents will also be informed at this meeting that any further absences will require evidence (e.g. Doctor's note, proof of prescription, letter of appointment/meeting) to support the reason for their child's absence. Without it the absences will be recorded as unauthorised. After the meeting the child's attendance will be monitored closely by the school. If the child's attendance does not improve then the matter may be referred to the School Attendance Officer at Buckinghamshire authority.
4. In serious cases of poor attendance (below 85%) the school may request the involvement of the Local Authority Attendance Officer. This may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued to parents. In more serious cases the Attendance Officer can consider sending parents to court.
5. All meetings with parents regarding attendance will be recorded and information regarding a child's absence will be shared with the class teacher and Headteacher.

See [Code of conduct for issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from school | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

### **Strategies to encourage good attendance:**

1. The office ensures that all class teachers have a copy of their pupil's attendance record for parents evening. The office team must highlight any concerns (e.g. less than 95% attendance) as well as successes (e.g. 100% attendance). The class teacher must use these comments and any additional information during their discussion about attendance with the parents.
2. The office must ensure that a copy of pupils' attendance records is given to parents alongside the pupils' annual school report. The office team must highlight concerns and successes to the Headteacher who will comment on these on the school report.
3. Wrap around care is also offered by the school as another opportunity to encourage pupils not to be late to school. This service is run by an outside provider and is available to all pupils.
4. Certificates will be awarded to classes with the highest attendance at the end of each term.
5. The class with the overall highest attendance throughout the school year will receive a whole class reward.

### **Children collected late:**

1. Parents should collect their child on time.
2. If a parent is late **due to an emergency** then the child should be brought by the class teacher to the school office at 3.10pm. They will be handed over to the member of staff responsible for late pupils as the school office attempts to contact the child's parents. The member of staff will record the child's name in the late collection book. If the child has still not been collected by 3.30pm then the child will be handed over to the care of the Headteacher or the Deputy Head Teacher.

3. If a parent is more than 45 minutes late, has not left a message with the school and cannot be contacted then the Headteacher or Deputy Head Teacher should may consider contacting the Attendance Service for advice. If they are not available, then social services will be contacted and if they are not available then the police.

4. The child must not be allowed to leave school with anyone other than the parent or the adult the parent has nominated on his/her behalf.

5. If a parent is late to collect their child from an after school club then the procedure above should be followed. The after school club place will be cancelled if a parent collects late on 2 or more occasions.

6. If a parent is continually late collecting their child then a meeting will be arranged between the Headteacher and the parents.

### **Collecting children early from school:**

#### **(Illness, medical and dental appointments)**

1. Permission for medical or dental appointments is given if the appointments cannot be made outside school hours or during school holidays. Parents must bring the appointment card when requesting a leave of absence. A copy is made and added to the child's records. If no appointment card or letter can be produced, this will count as an unauthorised absence.

2. Pupils will sign out their child for any appointments or if they have been collected early.

3. Pupils must not leave the site unless they are accompanied by a responsible adult and have been signed out.

### **Exceptional Circumstances:**

1. Only truly exceptional circumstances are sanctioned through authorised absence; e.g. an older brother or sister's graduation/family bereavement and these will be recorded as compassionate leave. The Headteacher will sign off every leave of absence request to determine if the leave is authorised or unauthorised.

2. All requests for exceptional leave must be done by completing a 'Leave of absence' request prior to the date of leave. These are all seen by the Headteacher.

3. The school responds sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals or major life events.

#### **4. Requests for family holidays will not be granted as exceptional leave.**

5. We treat each case individually, however compassionate leave is typically given for a maximum of 2 days.

### **Days of Religious Observance:**

Pupils may request leave of absence on days set apart by their religion for religious festivals. These absences must be notified in writing as soon as the week of the festival is known. A letter must be sent to the Headteacher requesting this absence.

### **Interviews:**

When a pupil attends an interview or examination in connection with an application for a place at secondary school (The 11+), this absence will be recorded as authorised. Parents must notify the school of the date their child will be absent to take part in the said interview/exam.

### **Off-Site Activities:**

These may be divided into two categories:

1. School directed (e.g. educational visits). School directed activities constitute authorised absences.
2. Activities particular to an individual pupil; e.g. music examination is authorised. It is reasonable to request evidence (e.g. a letter confirming the examination) in order to authorise this absence.

### **Excluded Pupils:**

1. When a pupil has been temporarily excluded then the absence is regarded as authorised.
2. When a pupil has been permanently excluded, his or her absence should be treated as authorised whilst any review or appeal is in progress. At the end of the review or appeal process, if the exclusion is confirmed then the pupil must be taken off roll.

Parents will be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss support that may be required.

### **Review and Monitoring:**

The Governors will review and monitor this policy in agreement with our schedule or in response to changes in legislation.

This policy has been written with [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk) in mind.

### **Working together to improve attendance:**

**Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:**

## EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



## MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



## LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



## FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



## FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



## ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

**Effective school attendance improvement and management**

**PREVENTION** of poor attendance through good whole school attendance management

**ALL PUPILS** Developing good attendance patterns through effective whole school approach to attendance (including leadership, ethos and systems and processes)

**PUPILS AT RISK OF POOR ATTENDANCE** Using attendance and absence data rigorously to support pupils with increasing levels of absence, arriving at school late or taking leave in term time without permission before it becomes a regular pattern

**EARLY INTERVENTION** to reduce absence before it becomes habitual

**PUPILS WITH POOR ATTENDANCE** Intervening as early as possible and agreeing an action plan for pupils with high levels of absence and those demonstrating growing disengagement with school

**TARGETED** reengagement of persistent and severely absent pupils

**PERSISTENTLY AND SEVERELY ABSENT PUPILS** Put additional targeted support in place, where necessary working with partners, and agree a joint approach with local authorities for all severely absent pupils

**COUNTY ATTENDANCE TEAM**

**REFERRAL FORM – Irregular School attendance**

Please complete this form for any requests to the County Attendance Team for the issuing of penalty notices for unauthorised absence. Please complete a separate form for **each child**.

<b>Referral for</b>		
<b>Full Legal name of Child:</b>	<b>Name of School:</b>	<b>Date of Referral:</b>
Address:          Postcode:   Permanent or temporary address:	Date of Birth:  School Year:	First Language:  Is an interpreter required (please highlight): Yes No
	Gender:	Ethnicity:
	<b>Penalty Notice Details</b>	
Period of absence for which a penalty notice is requested :		
Reason for the penalty notice from section 4 of code of conduct: (please tick)		
<b>Irregular school attendance;</b> <b>Being in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion</b>		

Please enclose a copy of attendance register.

**Full legal name and title of Parent/Carer details – Please provide details of those to be issued with penalty notices**

Full Name of Parent/Carer 1:

Address:

Contact number:

Date of birth:

Relationship to child (eg. Mum, step-dad):

Does this person have Parental Responsibility? (Yes/No):

Full Name of Parent/Carer 2:

Address:

Contact number:

Date of birth:

Relationship to child (eg. Mum, step-dad):

Does this person have Parental Responsibility? (Yes/No):

Please note if child does not reside with a parent a penalty notice might not be issued

**Please provide copies of the following documents:**

1a letter

Parent Contract Meeting request

Parent Contract Meeting forms (including all reviews)

**Please provide details of any other relevant information:**

**Approval by Senior Manager:** In order to agree a referral from a School or Academy this form must be signed by a named Senior Manager. This will act as an agreement for the Penalty Notice to be issued

Name:	Position in School:
Signed:	Date:
<b>For office use only:</b>	
Date received:	Issue date:
Agreed to issue (Yes/No):	21 days:
Penalty Notice issued to/reference number:	28 days:
	Date paid: