

# BRIDGEWATER HIGH SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

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### Introduction

High attendance is essential for student progress. Bridgewater High School's aspiration is that all students achieve %100 attendance and we regard attendance below 95% as a cause for concern. In managing attendance effectively we aim:

- To keep an accurate and up to date record of attendance.
- To inform parents of attendance and punctuality issues.
- To identify causes of non-attendance and take action.
- To improve attendance of individuals, groups and the school.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents, carers and students
- To work with other agencies
- To recognise the diverse needs of our individual students, particularly when planning re-integration

### The Law

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend (Education Act 1996, section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). Any absence should be considered unauthorised unless there is a valid reason otherwise. Unauthorised absence at any level is considered unacceptable by both the school and local authority.

### DfE Guidance on leave during term time

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 remove reference to 'Family Holidays' and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. There is no automatic right to any holiday in term time. Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances, Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Such permission is granted in accordance with arrangements made by the governing body of the school as reflected in this policy. Leave of absence must be requested from and agreed by the Headteacher in advance of any absence. If approved, the absence is registered as authorised and if not approved but still taken, as unauthorised. The DfE guidance about holidays in term time makes the following points:

- each request can only be judged on a case by case basis
- even in exceptional circumstances it is expected that Headteachers will use their discretion sparingly

- Headteachers should not apply policies (for example, blanket bans) which might suggest that each application has not been considered on its individual merits
- as a general guide any activity, holiday or event that can be arranged during the annual 13 week holiday time should not be authorised during the school term

## **Penalties for unauthorised absence**

Amendments have been made to the 2007 penalty notices regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments came into force on 1 September 2013. The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure that his/her children's regular attendance at school. The penalty is £60 for those who pay within 28 days and £120 for those who pay within 42 days. Parents who do not pay a fine within 42 days may be prosecuted. The 2013 amendments to 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices.

## **Section A Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The Governing Body will:**

- support the school in ensuring that the importance and value of high attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents/carers.
- review annually the school's attendance policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.
- identify a Committee to review attendance in this case the Safeguarding Committee.
- ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor attendance including those who are educated off site.
- ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data as a point of routine.
- ensure that the data is understood so that strategies can be appropriately evaluated.

### **The School will:**

- identify specific Administrative Support to ensure that attendance is accurately tracked and monitored.
- routinely examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. These will reflect both national and local attendance targets.
- examine attendance data and respond appropriately to areas of concern or large gaps in the attendance rates of particular groups. In particular Pupil Premium or SEN and pupils on the Vulnerable Pupils Register.
- initiate work with parents and external agencies and fully utilise the terms of the SLA in pursuit of the highest attendance possible for all children.
- follow the Attendance Strategy (appendix 1) devised and agreed by the Pastoral Team ensuring the effective daily routines to track attendance are followed and attendance interventions are triggered and acted on at the appropriate times.
- undertake a full review of attendance of Year Group Cohorts with Pastoral Managers through the Pastoral Self Evaluation held twice yearly in February and July.
- undertake a full review of the school's attendance through the Safeguarding Committee of the Governing Body twice yearly in February and in July.
- fully analyse and share with all staff the findings of RAISEonline to ensure that the school's staff understand the schools attendance profile.
- reward pupils who maintain very high levels of attendance through routine school rewards of Positive Points/Pin badges/celebration assemblies and the Excel Award.

- inform parents of the mechanisms for reporting absence and the importance of high school attendance and the mechanism for requesting support from the school to improve attendance.
- advise and incentivise pupils to have the highest attendance they can.

#### **Parents and Carers will:**

- support their child in their pursuit of having the highest attendance possible.
- inform the school daily if the child is absent from school stating the reason why.
- avoid taking children out of school unnecessarily.
- ask the school for help and support if their child's attendance starts to decline without reasonable explanation.
- work with the school to support any authorised absence which may prevent a child from achieving their full potential.
- try to make medical appointment outside of the school day.
- inform the school of any events that the child is or is likely to be involved in which may affect their attendance in school.

## **Section B Statements and procedures**

### **Categorising Absence**

**Illness:** In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent/carers informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parent/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

**Medical/Dental Appointments:** Parent/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day.

**Long Term Health Needs** All pupils with long term health needs known to school have an Individual Health Care Plan (see Medicines Policy) to ensure the condition is known and responded to appropriately in school. Where a pupils with Health Needs does need to be absent from school, we will liaise with the medical practitioner's family and the Local Authority to maintain as good access to education as possible. Where a pupil does require a period of time out of school through health needs the family will be offered a CAF as a means of securing Home tuition form the Local Authority.

**Other Authorised Circumstances:** This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent/carers in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

**Excluded** (No alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The PAM/PAL will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

**Family Holidays and Extended Leave:** Parent/carers are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. Parent/carers do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and should be made aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

However, in exceptional circumstances, leave of absence may be granted but this is only at the discretion of the Headteacher or a member of the Leadership Team with this delegated responsibility.

In the first instance parent/carers wishing to take their child/ren on holiday during term time must send a written request to the Headteacher before holiday arrangements are made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of internal and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing by the Headteacher or the member of the Leadership Team delegated with the responsibility. Where a request has been granted the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parent/carers must contact school should any delays occur
- That the child's place may be withdrawn if the family do not return as expected

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parent/carer has not been made or received, the school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child will lose their school place.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil still goes on holiday, the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice fine.

Only in exceptional circumstances will extended leave of absence be agreed. In such cases, consideration will also be given to cultural needs and family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parent/carers will be required to justify why the holiday needs to be taken during term time.

**Religious Observance:** Bridgewater High School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent/carer to allow their child/ren not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent/carers religious body. Parent/carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

**Traveller Absence:** The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible. To protect Traveller parent/carers from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent/carer is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 100 school days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parent/carers of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school. We will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return. The child and family will be supported in reintegration upon their return.

### **Late Arrival**

Registration begins at 8.45 am and registers are completed at the start of period 1 and no later than 9.00 am when the register will close. Pupils arriving during this time will be marked as present but arriving late. Pupils arriving after the close of registration will be marked in the register but the absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause (see below) as determined by the Headteacher or member of the Leadership Team with this delegated responsibility.

**Unauthorised absence:** Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

### **Deletions from Register**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil has been withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents a pupil's attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- A pupil is in custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- There have been 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- The pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

Bridgewater High School will follow Warrington's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

Section C Key documents/legislation and web links

DfE Guidance can be found as follows:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

<https://www.gov.uk/schools-colleges/behaviour-attendance>

## Appendix 1

# Bridgewater High School Attendance Strategy Appendix 1

It is important that there is consistency throughout the school when dealing with the monitoring of attendance.

Poor attendance can be an issue which impacts on families rather than just individual pupils and we must ensure that all pupils are treated in the same way even if they are working with different members of the Pastoral Team.

It is important that at all points the aim is to improve the pupil's individual attendance to school. Therefore all Pastoral Managers need to know the individual pupil's story behind their attendance.

All Pastoral Managers will monitor their own Year Groups Attendance and with the administrative support of EL in the Lower School Office will utilise the strategies below and strategies of their own to improve their own pupils' attendance.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Trigger</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
September	attendance for previous year	All pupils Admin	Letter reporting
End of each half term	good attendance	All pupils with 100%* Admin	Praise letter 1
End of Year		All pupils with 100%* Admin	Praise letter 2
On-going		Pupils below 93% Admin/PAM/PAL	Warning letter 1
On-going		Pupils below 90% Admin/PAM/PAL	Warning letter 2
On-going		Pupils below 85% Admin/PAM/PAL	Attendance meet Parents & Pupil
On-going		Improved attendance Admin/PAM/PAL	Praise letter 3
On-going		Less than 80% attendance	EWS referral
On-going		Long Term Medical	CAF referral Home Tuition

## Attendance Agreed Daily Procedures

Daily administrative support is provided by EL based in Lower Office supported by both school offices and by CB who makes calls to those pupils Educated Off Site to ensure their attendance at the off-site provision.

### Before School

- EL to follow up calls from previous day
- Each office to ensure registration completed from previous day especially for assembly day.

### Period 1

- Missing Registers followed from each site with a SIMS message and if necessary class visit.
- Staff record completed if staff visit required for RP/TH
- Signing In Book faxed from upper-lower
- PE registers collected site specific

### Period 2-3

- Phone calls and **Schoolcomms**\* to log absence accurately. EL and any office capacity.

### Period 4

- EL and support
- Continue calls and **Schoolcomms**\*
- PE registers and collected site specific

### Period 5

- Missing Registers followed from each site with a SIMS message and if necessary class visit.
- Staff record completed if staff visit required for RP/TH
- PE registers collected site specific

### Registration

Tutors collect register but complete through lesson monitor.

On Assembly day paper copy taken pupils sit alphabetically. Paper copy inputted manually.

### Friday

- EL to run Attendance Reports for school for that week for TH
- EL to check trigger points for Pastoral Intervention letters and advise PAMs of pupils to receive.
- EL to send letters and ensure recording on SIMS and tracking database.

*\* Schoolcomms is a software system*