

BOLTON SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Every child has a right to access education, and everyone is responsible for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality. Bolton School are committed to providing the highest quality of education to our pupils; we recognise the clear link between attendance and the attainment of our pupils.

The aims of this Attendance Policy are to enable Bolton School to provide a consistent practice which actively encourages and supports the highest possible levels of attendance for all our pupils. We take a whole-school approach to maintaining regular attendance and to achieve this, all members of our school community have an important contribution to make. It is vital that we work in partnership to ensure that any in-school or out-of-school barriers are removed at the earliest opportunity. This is achieved through early and meaningful support.

This policy is in line with the DfE statutory guidance “Working together to improve school attendance” – August 2024

We support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly and in addition, promote and support punctuality when attending lessons.

This policy is supported by Foundation policies relating to child protection and safeguarding, and Divisional policies relating to anti-bullying, behaviour, mental health, equality, SEND and teaching and learning and is in line with KCSIE.

It is our duty to strive for a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils so that they can take full advantage of the opportunities offered. It is vital that each child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Therefore, this policy has been created to support the school in effectively managing absences so that our pupils can make the most of the educational and life opportunities available to them.

Bolton School aims to meet its obligations relating to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence by effectively removing barriers to attendance.
- Acting early to address patterns of attendance.
- Minimising the disruption caused by late arrivals or non-attendance to the quality of the education and provision for all pupils.

PARENT AND CARERS RESPONSIBILITIES

The Education Act 1996 (Section 7) states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any Special Educational Needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Whilst Pre-School and Sixth Form pupils are not of compulsory school age, we expect that all pupils attend school on the same basis and therefore their attendance is monitored in the same manner as that of all other pupils and authorised absence will be subject to the same conditions as those applied to all other pupils.

Parents And Carers Should:

- Ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as sickness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, on the first morning of absence. This may be done by phone, email, by letter or in person.
- Not authorise their child's absence. Only the school can do this based on the explanation provided by the parents. Parents need to be aware that their explanation does not in itself authorise an absence. Should a parent fail to provide a satisfactory reason for absence, the school will record such absence as unauthorised.
- Wherever possible, avoid making medical/dental appointments for their children during school hours.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school by 8.45am every morning.
- Avoid booking family holidays during term-time.
- Co-operate fully with Early help, home visits and phased returns
- Ensure that pupils attend school regularly
- Ensure that pupils attend school on time (arrive at school by 8.45am)

PUPILS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Pupils should:

- Attend all lessons punctually
- Not leave the school without permission

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that might prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their Form Teacher or a trusted adult in school.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Schools are required by law to take attendance registers twice daily for all pupils of compulsory school age - once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Registers are a legal document. All staff at Bolton School will provide an ethos that places a high value on regular attendance and good punctuality. They also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

School staff will:

- Record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.
- Complete registers in accordance with the School's guidance (Classroom Teachers should only use the / N or L code when completing the registers).
- Respond to absenteeism firmly, consistently and with care.

- Promote regular school attendance.
- Acknowledge good or improved attendance of individual pupils, classes or tutor groups
- Follow up any absences from lessons to deal with truancy that might occur after morning or afternoon registration.

Responsibilities of the school attendance administrator

Each setting within Bolton School has an identified administrator with responsibility for attendance. The Attendance Administrator's essential purposes are to support parents and carers to meet their responsibilities for ensuring that their children regularly attend the school at which they are registered and to support school to develop effective systems for managing attendance.

The School Attendance Administrator will:

- Contact the parents by telephone or email on the first day of the absence.
- Amend the register – only the Attendance Administrator, or the lead member of SLT will amend Official Registers.
- Differentiate appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence (a letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence - only the school can decide whether the parent's explanation justifies authorising the absence);
- Meet regularly with the assigned member of the Division's Senior Leadership team to discuss the attendance of pupils.
- Monitor and review registers for individuals causing concerns.
- Maintain appropriate records regarding pupil absence.
- Contact staff who have not taken their registers and follow this up with the Head of School where necessary.
- Mark in those pupils who arrive at school after 9am and before 9.30am as Late (L). Those arriving after 9.30am will be marked (U) for the AM session.
- Forward all request for leave of absence due to holidays to Appropriate member of Senior Leadership.

Responsibilities of the Leadership Team

Each setting will identify one member of the leadership team with responsibility for monitoring pupil attendance. It is expected that they will:

- Meet with the School Attendance Administrator each half term to discuss the attendance of pupils
- Ensure that systems are in place to inform the local authority of any pupil absent for ten unauthorised consecutive days or fifteen consecutive days due to illness.
- Ensure that all attendance data, including the original entry and any amendments are retained for at least six years.
- Promote partnership between pupils, parents and school over attendance and punctuality
- Arrange meetings with parents or carers regarding pupil's attendance

- Investigate the cause of absence and plan strategies with tutors, parents or carers and other agencies
- Work with the school and parents to improve the attendance of identified pupils.
- Co-ordinate and plan for the return of long-term absences or truants, liaising with pupils, parents or carers, teachers, Learning Support Coordinator
- Explain the consequences of poor attendance or punctuality to pupils, parents and carers.
- Take the necessary steps with individuals with poor attendance, working with parents and, where appropriate, external agencies, including Family Support Liaison workers or the Early Help offer in order to support a pupil's attendance
- If attendance hasn't improved despite the support offered, or where there has been insufficient engagement from parents, the DSL will consider making a school attendance enforcement referral to the local authority's Education Welfare Service. If the referral is accepted, it may lead to:
 - A formal warning being issued, leading to an Education Penalty Notice (fine) if there are further unauthorised absences within a specified period, or
 - An assessment leading to a formal Parent Contract process led by an Education Welfare Officer from the local authority's Education Welfare Service. This will involve a series of meetings and an agreed action plan relating to attendance concerns. The Parent Contract will be kept under review. If attendance does not improve and there is insufficient engagement from parents, the local authority will consider whether to proceed to prosecution.

MONITORING PROCEDURES

Accurate registers are important as they help in identifying individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees; facilitate and encourage early intervention; and to identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism (for example, time lost to term-time holidays, regular absences on Mondays and/or Fridays, etc).

We recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. We monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the year. We recognise that certain groups of pupils may be more at risk of poor attendance and will provide support and assistance wherever possible. Attendance percentages need to be interpreted differently dependent on the circumstances of the individual and not be purely a mechanical numerical task. The attendance of identified vulnerable pupils in lessons is monitored differently in the various settings within the Foundation as appropriate to the setting, the age and needs of the pupils. Identified staff (e.g form tutors, pastoral support staff, proctors) in the divisions are aware of the importance to ensure attendance in lessons and will implement a variety of strategies to monitor attendance as required.

- Attendance and Punctuality is reported to parents regularly
- Any pupil whose attendance falls below 92% will become a cause for concern and their attendance more closely monitored.
- Any Pupil that falls below 90% will be classed as a Persistent Absentee (PA) and contact will be made with parents regarding attendance.

- Attendance at each School within the Bolton School Foundation is monitored by governors via the Education Committee. Authorised and unauthorised absences as a percentage of available sessions are reported and reviewed annually.
- Elite Athletes may have more frequent absence than other pupils and their attendance is monitored accordingly taking into account the impact on learning as well as any off-site learning undertaken whilst absent due to their sporting commitments.

Children Missing from Education

We have due regard to our statutory duty to safeguard pupils who are CME. We follow the Local Authority's processes for reporting pupils missing from education.

If a pupil fails to return following a period of absence, investigations will be made by staff to their whereabouts. If our investigations fail to contact the parents/pupil the DSL will refer the case to the Local Authority Children Missing Education Team.

APPENDIX ONE

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

When do pupils need to be at school?

Pupils should arrive at school by 8.45am. The morning register will be called by 9am and the afternoon register at the start of the afternoon session.

What happens if pupils are late?

School opens to pupils at 8am every morning. All pupils should be inside the school by 8.45am. Morning registration takes place at 8.45am in form rooms. If pupils arrive at the school after 9am and before 9.30 am for the morning session, they will be marked Late (L) by the attendance administrator and have a late mark on their attendance record.

Pupils arriving after 9:30am will be marked as U.

Pupils who arrive late should report to reception and sign in on the school Inventory System (Boys' and Girls' Divisions) or the school secretary (Primary Division) indicating the time they arrived in school; this time is noted and will be used when generating reports to discuss pupils who are persistently late and in meetings with parents.

Does the school need a phone call on each day of absence?

We expect a parent/carer to telephone the school on the first day of absence preferably by 9am. If you do not telephone us, the attendance administrator will contact parents asking for the reasons for absence. If we are unable to reach you, or leave a message, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be kept on the pupil's record.

Parents are expected to call the school on each day of absence.

What does an unauthorised absence mean?

Unauthorised absence is when no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness - In cases of recurring absences, a medical certificate from the family G.P. or medical specialist will be required. For long-term issues a letter from a hospital consultant will be required and this needs to be updated at least every 6 months.
- Emergency dental/medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays). An appointment card or letter from the G.P. / medical professional explaining the date and time of the appointment should be provided in order for this to be authorised. Please ask your G.P. or dentist to provide this for you so that it can be given to our Attendance Administrator
- Day of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement
- Attending a university or careers-based interview according to the permission process established in each Division

What is unacceptable?

Absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- No explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- The explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house, etc);
- Family holidays (which are taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge and/or are in excess of any time agreed by the school);
- Lateness: when the pupil arrives after the register has closed and fails to offer a satisfactory explanation.
- If a pupil is feeling unwell, they must report to the relevant wellbeing team who will assess them and make a decision if the pupil needs to go home. Pupils must not contact parents via their mobile phones and arrange for them to come and collect them. It is the school's responsibility to contact parents should a pupil become unwell.

What is persistent absence?

A pupil is deemed a Persistent Absentee if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

Will the school contact me if the pupil is absent?

The school operates a first day response to absences. We aim to email or telephone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure pupil's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we are concerned about aspects of the pupil's attendance or punctuality, we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

Can we take family holidays during term-time?

At Bolton School, we actively discourage Parents from taking their children out of school during term time for family holidays. The Legislation for authorising absence in term time states that holiday's will

not be authorised 'except in exceptional circumstances. The appropriate Head of Division will consider your request and respond. You must write to inform us at least three weeks in advance, stating the reason why the holiday is to be taken in term time. **The Heads have been instructed by the government to only authorise family holidays in exceptional circumstances.**

Why should I not take my child on holiday during term time?

Many parents and carers think it is okay to go on holiday during term time, yet this has a negative effect on their child's learning and ability to achieve.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. Contact your child's Year Student Manager immediately and discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with schoolwork, friendship problems or family difficulties. A collaborative and supporting approach could make the difference.

APPENDIX TWO

A GUIDE FOR STAFF

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FORM TUTOR

As the first point of contact with pupils, tutors are vital in promoting good attendance and punctuality.

Form Tutors should:

- Have a formal routine for registers being taken accurately each morning.
- Form tutors should only use the / or N codes when doing the registers in the morning.
- Form Tutors should not authorise pupil absence. Any requests for absence should be acknowledged to the parent and sent to the relevant school office who will deal with it appropriately.
- Acquire explanations of absences required from pupils on their return from school.
- Make enquires about unexplained absences and follow up with pupil to ensure that an explanation has been formally given to the school.
- Look out for trends or patterns in a pupil's attendance and inform the relevant pastoral lead of any specific concerns.
- Inform the attendance administrator of any known future absences for pupils.
- Discuss lateness with pupils and parents (where possible) and the importance of punctuality emphasised.
- Acknowledge and encourage pupils on their return after holidays to catch up on the worked missed.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil.

School will:

- Work with parents to improve attendance, be mindful of the barriers pupils face, make reasonable adjustments, and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. It is also expected that parents will engage with the support offered both internally and with external partners to ensure our children have all the support they need to thrive.
- Encourage positive conversations so that a good support plan can put in place including making reasonable adjustments.
- Consider possible explanations for absence including Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).
- Work with parents to consider whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Ensure relevant referrals are made for pupils who are too ill to attend school, which may include medical panel and or medical agency support such as CAMHS.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers this may include considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place and consider whether a time-limited, closely monitored and reviewed, phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.