



THE BISHOPS' BLUE COAT CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Is this policy statutory?	NO
Review period	3 years
Date of approval	October 2016

School Statement

The Bishops' Blue Coat Church of England High School believes that good attendance is vital for all students if they are to gain from the education we provide and achieve their potential. There are clear documented links between regular school attendance and attainment. School Attendance Officers and Form Tutors will regularly check the attendance of each student and will follow up all student absences with appropriate personnel in school and with the student's parent/carer. We hope that all parents/carers will assist us by:

- ensuring the regular attendance of their child;
- informing school when their child is absent (with reasons);
- attending any meetings about their child's attendance.

Aims

Our target attendance has been set by the school Governors with reference to the Department of Education's (DfE's) aim of reducing unauthorised school absences:

- for every student to achieve excellent attendance;
- ensure all pupils and parents/carers understand the issues and procedures for school attendance;
- ensure that all staff including Governors, support and non-teaching staff understand the issues and procedures for attendance;
- allocate resources to support the policy;
- provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students;
- record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimize its occurrence.

Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent or guardian) as either Authorised or Unauthorised. The school will only authorise absences upon receipt of a valid and unavoidable reason from the parent, carer or guardian, usually by telephone or a signed letter. We currently discourage the use of email or text as this is difficult to authenticate.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason; illness, medical/dental appointments, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Where a medical or dental appointment cannot be arranged outside school hours, parents/carers should ensure their child is absent for the minimum time possible. The school acknowledges that some students may have long term medical or health issues, and works to support students and families in minimising the impact of such on attendance.

Unauthorised absences can lead to the school and Local authority employing sanctions and/or legal proceedings use as Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) or even prosecution. This type of absence includes:

- Parents/carers keeping or allowing students to stay of school unnecessarily.
- Truancy at any time during the school day
- Absences, which have never been properly explained.
- Students who arrive too late to get a mark (after the registers have closed (9:30am)).
- Shopping, looking after other children or adult, or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

Persistent Absence

A Student becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops below 86% (equivalent to 1.5 sessions missed per week) during the school year or across a half term **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to any child's education and future prospects and the school requires the full support and co-operation of parents/carers to tackle this effectively.

Student attendance is monitored very closely at The Bishops' High School and parents/carers of any child approaching 86% or at risk of moving towards this level would have received several letters of concern beforehand. If a student is classified as PA, an action plan will be drawn up for that student. This action plan will outline the student's attendance for each half term, as well as actions taken and future actions required. The school's EWOs will work closely with parents/carers and the student, supporting them to ensure this status is removed as quickly as possible. All students returning to The Bishops' High School following a significant period of absence will be offered a reduced curriculum timetable, including time in the Pupil Support Centre. If there has been no improvement in the student's attendance during this phase then the school as a last resort will proceed with a fixed penalty notice and/or possible legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Truancy

An absence is considered a truancy if the student intentionally and deliberately fails to attend school, or an assigned class or activity without reasonable cause during any part of the school day. The truancy will be marked as an unauthorised absence and will incur additional school sanctions.

Requests for absence in term-time

The Bishops' Blue Coat High School strongly urges parents not to book holidays during term time as this can have a detrimental effect on a student's progress and attainment. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off school and the school will not authorise any absence for holidays during term time except in exceptional circumstances. These could include:

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
3. The death or terminal illness of a person close to the immediate family.
4. To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the immediate family.

Any request for a leave of absence should be made in writing to the school for consideration by the Head Teacher in line with the criteria of 'exceptional circumstances' as provided for by the current regulations.

Should you still choose to take your child out of school during the requested period; the leave of absence will still be recorded on your child's registration record as unauthorised.

Special Notice:

The case - *Isle of Wight Council v Jon Platt* - is to be considered by the Supreme Court (the final court of appeal in England); the issue of holidays during term time being one of national 'importance'. While the decision of the Supreme Court is awaited, the local authority will not be issuing any fixed penalty notices or instigating legal proceedings for any leave of absence taken after 19 May 2016 (the date of the High Court decision).

Any request for a leave of absence should, however, still be made in writing to the school for consideration by the Head Teacher in line with the criteria of 'exceptional circumstances' as provided for by the current regulations, until further notice.

Punctuality

The school day starts at 8:45 and it is expected that all students will arrive at their Tutor Base by this time. Students arriving after 8:45 will be deemed late and will be required to attend a break-time detention that same day. Students who are late due to a school bus arriving late will be exempt from this detention. School morning registers will close at 9:30am; any student arriving after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and included within the absence data of the student.

Students who fail to attend the break-time detention will be automatically transferred onto the whole school Amber Warning Lunch Detention (AWLD) and inherit the same strict sanctions applied to this system.

Penalty Notices

The Bishops' Blue Coat High School may issue 'Penalty Notices' in respect of persistent unauthorised absence in accordance with section 444 of the Education Act 1996. A Penalty Notice may be issued if a student has 10 or more sessions (there are two sessions per school day) of unauthorised absence in any five week period.

A formal Penalty Notice warning letter will be issued to parents/carers before any Penalty Notices are served, unless the absence is due to an unauthorised holiday in term-time. In cases of persistent or prolonged absence (PA), the school will request parental/carer consent to contact the student's GP or health professionals to provide medical evidence for the reason for absence.

From 1st September 2013, amendments to the 2007 Regulation in England (Penalty Notice SI 2013/757) are in force. Penalty Notices are issued per child to each parent who fails to ensure their children's attendance at school and must pay £60 within 21 days. If unpaid, the fine will double to £120, which must be paid within 28 days. In severe cases of persistent unauthorised absence, the Local Authority may pursue legal action such as prosecution.

Working with other agencies

Poor attendance can be the result of difficulties faced by a child or family, and a cause of other problems such as exclusions; students with low levels of attendance tend to have other complex issues therefore a co-ordinated approach by a number of agencies can assist these students and their families. The school will contact and work closely with these agencies where necessary.

The school's EWOs will work closely with a Local Authority EWO case officer and request support meetings where necessary. This ensures correct and consistent procedures are being applied by the school together with the necessary legal support.

The role of the school

- Fulfil our statutory obligations to keeping accurate records of attendance and punctuality, and provide regular reports to parents/carers, governors and Local Authority (LA).
- To create a culture in which full attendance is 'normality'.
- To monitor patterns of attendance across all year groups and follow up as appropriate.
- Contact parents/carers on the first day of absence. If there has been no contact established between the school and home after 5 days of absence, the school's Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will make a home visit.
- Have clear procedures in place and to be consistent in implementation, both in terms of rewards and sanctions.
- The school will not authorise any holidays taken within term time unless there is a genuine reason.
- Work with external agencies to ensure good attendance.
- Support students in their return to school from long-term absence.

The role of the student

- Aim for 100% attendance and punctuality.
- Poor punctuality is not acceptable; Students who arrive late disrupt lessons and miss valuable teaching time.
- Students who arrive late, three times within a half-term period are expected to attend a 60 minute after school detention.
- All students are expected to be in their Tutor rooms by 8:45am appropriately prepared for the day.
- Students who arrive after 8:55am must report to Student Services to register before going to their form base.
- Students who have been absent must bring a letter upon their return explaining the reason for every absence.
- Students are expected to remain within the school campus all day and are not allowed to leave without permission. All students leaving the campus during the day must sign out at Student Services.
- Students must catch up work missed through absence.
- Truancy from school will be taken seriously and parents will be informed at the earliest opportunity.
- Students who truant lessons will be expected to make up the time they have missed within the same week.

The role of parent/carers

- Parents/carers with parental responsibility have a legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends the school regularly and on time, keeping their child off only for reasons of genuine illness.
- Parents/carers should support the school by avoiding, if possible non-emergency medical/dental appointments for their child during school time.
- Parents/carers **do not** have an automatic right to take their child out of the school for a holiday during term time.
- Parents/carers must contact the school on the first day of absence and if possible indicate the day of return
- Only the school in context with the law can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has offered a note in relation to this absence does not oblige the school to accept the reason for any absence.
- All unexplained absences will be investigated and parents/carers will be kept informed.
- Parents/carers must attend meetings at the school about their child's attendance and support the school in responding to concerns.
- Parents/carers who fail to fulfil their responsibilities can expect legal action; this may include:
 - Fixed Penalty Notices
 - Fast track to Prosecution
 - Parenting Orders

The role of the school's Education Welfare Officers (EWO)

- To work with the attendance clerk / Form Tutors / Learning Achievement Managers (LAMs) to follow up poor attendance.
- To meet with the Assistant Headteacher (responsible for school attendance) to discuss policy and individual concerns.
- To make home visits and maintain contact between parents/carers, school and other external agencies.
- To meet with the LA's EWO services where necessary to discuss individual cases and strategies for improving long term absence.
- To conduct weekly analysis of attendance data and inform Form Tutors and LAMs of concerns.
- To initiate any action regarding attendance between parents/carers and the school.
- To advise the Headteacher for authorising / not authorising term-time holiday requests.
- To advise the Headteacher on Fixed Term Penalty Notices and complete all necessary documentation.
- Liaise with the LA EWO services with all prosecutions and if necessary represent the school in official hearings or court of law