

The Partnership of Bildeston Primary and Whatfield CEVC Primary Schools



Attendance Policy



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Related Policies:

Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

**Working Together to Improve School
Attendance 'September 2022' Guidance**

1. Introduction

Our schools are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and recognise this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

- 1.1 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.2 The policy (has been drawn up after consultation with the whole community and) is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. Our schools will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

2. School's roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at Bildeston Primary and Whatfield CEVC Primary Schools have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
- 2.2 Attendance Leader
A member of the Senior Leadership Team (head teacher – contacted through the school office) will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person, known as the Attendance Lead, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared regularly with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body half termly. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. In Whatfield and Bildeston, the Attendance Lead is generally the Headteacher, supported by the Bursar or secretary.
- 2.3 Registration
 - i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers / form tutors are responsible for the completing the attendance registers to assist the school office who use the prescribed absence codes.

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
I	Present (AM)	Present
l	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

- ii) Both schools operate a rolling start at the start of the school day. Gates open at 8.40am and close at 8.50am. The register is called promptly by each teacher and a mark is made during the registration period in respect of each child.
- iii) The registers close at both schools ten minutes after the morning and afternoon session. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para. 4.5 on page 7).

2.4 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher.
- ii) Both schools recognise the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at both schools will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their children's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised.
- iv) Absences will be authorised in the following circumstances:
 - (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
 - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
 - (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand);
 - (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
 - (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's / student's parent belongs;
 - (f) the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
 - (g) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
 - (h) in other **exceptional circumstances** (e.g. a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.
- v Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

3. Collection and analysis of data

- 3.1 The Attendance Lead will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. (See para. above). The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target, presently at 96%. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection
- 3.2 Attendance is monitored and analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils / students with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance. In addition, where there has been an intervention to support attendance, the outcome is monitored and reported to governors.
- 3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

- 4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at both Bildeston and Whatfield Primary School and is regularly highlighted at assemblies. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.
- 4.2 First-day calling
Bildeston and Whatfield Primary School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils / students who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, other contacts would be telephoned or the school will contact the Education Welfare Officer and consider a home visit.
- 4.4 School Strategies to Tackle Absence
The Attendance Leader is responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that our schools intervene in non-attendance at an early stage.
- Initially a registration certificate detailing a child's attendance is given to the class teacher to have an informal discussion with parents about their child's attendance
 - If persistent absence continues, the school office/head teacher discuss the child and any further intervention with the education welfare officer

Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's absence the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

Persistent absence is if a child's attendance approaches 90% - parents will be notified. If it falls to 90%, parents will be invited in to school to discuss issues of non-attendance. At 85% the school will notify the EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) in line with our statutory obligations.

Severe absence is where a child misses 50% or more of their school attendance.

4.5 Referral to the Educational Welfare Officers

If there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specified time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. Regulations (Education Pupil Regulations 2006) require schools to inform the LA of every pupil who has been continuously absent without a good reason (i.e. the absence is unauthorised) for 10 school sessions or more. In effect this School will inform the LA if the child has been absent without good reason for 10 school sessions or more, even if they are not continuous, and must also inform the LA of every pupil who fails to attend regularly which is interpreted to mean those pupils who have patterns of unauthorised absence without amassing 10 continuous absences.

4.6 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school at their entry time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes (see para. 2.3.(iii) on page 4) will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other student with an emerging pattern of absence. (See para. 4.4). If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

4.7 Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes will be marked as late in the register.

4.8 For health and safety reasons it is important that the schools know who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the school office.

4.9 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day report to the office and sign in/out accordingly.

4.10 Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. Our schools take this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately. Procedures to follow for a child missing from school are found on the schools safeguarding notice boards.

5. **Term-time absence**

Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for a family holiday. Leave of absence can only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Bildeston and Whatfield Primary School will consider every application individually; its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence other than in the most exceptional circumstances. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended absence in line with county policy.

Our schools will only consider authorising absence for:

- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during school holiday times;

- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

Bildeston and Whatfield Primary School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

Bildeston and Whatfield Primary School will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests eg: SATS and year 1 phonics tests.

Bildeston and Whatfield Primary School use the Penalty Notice protocol. This means that 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence will trigger a penalty notice referral. This includes attendance failing to improve, despite interventions, and term time holidays.

It is the policy of our schools that requests for exceptional leave will only be considered once per academic year, and even then only if it fulfils the exceptional absence criteria.

7. Parents' / carers' responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Bildeston and Whatfield Primary School.

Our schools expect parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents will also be expected to:

- notify the school office on the first day of absence through a phone call, face to face message, or an email/dojo message by 10am
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing reading diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. Our schools will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.
- Notify schools by letter/email to the head teacher of any leave of absence requests

8. Pupils' / students' responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.

Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher a note from their parents to explain the absence unless an email has been sent. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

9. Governors' responsibilities

Section 175 (2)

The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school. They should monitor the attendance at school at least termly, through the details on the Headteacher's report.

Barriers to Attendance

The school is aware that there are barriers to attendance and our responsibility to consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. However, we are committed to ensuring all children are able to attend school.

10. Conclusion

Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring positive outcomes for all children. These include:

- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly
- Regular attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy
- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others
- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style.

Reviewing the policy

The school will review this policy each year, support is available from the local authority to undertake this if required.

The Hadleigh Pyramid

TERM TIME ABSENCE POLICY – 2023 - 2024

PRINCIPLE

It is a legal requirement for children to attend school. The school places great importance on attendance. High attendance leads to high achievement. From 1 September 2013 legislation prohibits any school from authorising leave of absence except in exceptional circumstances. Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

It is therefore illegal to take children out of school during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to any leave of absence during term time. Schools are in session for 38 weeks per year, so there are opportunities to take children on holiday during the remaining 14 weeks.

The school, Suffolk Local Authority and OFSTED scrutinise attendance levels in school. It is a national and local priority to improve school attendance in order to maximise students' achievement.

Absence taken without prior permission will be recorded as unauthorised absences.

95% attendance at school is equal to taking a day off every month.

90% attendance at school is equal to taking off half a day every week.

80% attendance at school over five years is equal to being absent for a whole school year.

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

This policy provides guidance on:

- a. what might be defined as exceptional circumstances;
- b. procedures for applying for leave of absence;
- c. The use of Fixed Penalty Fines for unauthorised absence.

CRITERIA FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCE

It is not possible to define exceptional circumstances, but examples of what might be considered as such are:

1. Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays. This must be supported by documentary evidence from the organisation. Each case would be considered individually.
2. Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.
September 2023
3. Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Evidence must be provided, from qualified professionals, such as a doctor.

Where there are other factors that the headteacher considers to be exceptional circumstances, this may be referred to the Local Authority for advice.

Parents should be aware that requests for a leave of absence will not be authorised except in exceptional circumstances.

Parents should be aware that when students arrive late, after the register has closed, this is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING

- a. Applications for leave of absence should always be made in advance in writing to the Headteacher.
- b. The exceptional circumstances to explain why the absence must be taken during term time should be clearly stated in the letter.
- c. The request should state whether there are siblings in another school in the Hadleigh pyramid because the local schools will liaise before making a decision about authorisation.
- d. The Headteacher will decide whether the leave of absence can be authorised and will contact the parent to inform them of the outcome. Parents should assume that absence is unauthorised unless there has been written confirmation from the Headteacher that the absence has been authorised.
- e. Even where there are exceptional circumstances, no requests will be granted during any period of external examinations (the month of May for Year 2 and Year 6 students, the month of June for Year 1 students and public examination periods for High School students).

CONSEQUENCES OF TAKING AN UNAUTHORISED HOLIDAY

Taking absence without authorisation will have an impact on a child's learning. Research shows that high attendance at school has a very positive impact on a child's education and future life chances. Parents who choose to take an unauthorised absence must accept that this will have an adverse effect on their child's educational achievement.

Unauthorised absences are likely to lead to a Fixed Penalty Fine. The school refers unauthorised absences to the Local Authority to issue a fixed penalty fine where an unauthorised holiday has been taken. When making referrals to the Local Authority, the school will take account of unauthorised absences from the start of the academic year. **Parents no longer receive warning letters regarding Fixed Penalty Fines. Fines will be issued immediately after a referral.** Details of fixed penalty fines are available from the school. The fixed penalty fine is collected and kept by the Local Authority, not the school.

Unless absence has been authorised in writing because of exceptional circumstances, a fixed penalty fine may be issued.