

BISHOP'S HATFIELD GIRLS' SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date of last review: Summer Term 2018

Date of next review: Summer Term 2019

School Based Policy

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy has been written in accordance with guidance from the “Policy on School Attendance” by Children’s Services (CSF 0136) – September 2017

RATIONALE

Bishop’s Hatfield Girls’ School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each of its pupils to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure. All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually. The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents/carers who do not give high priority to attendance and punctuality. To meet these objectives, Bishop’s Hatfield Girls’ School will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents/carers and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/carers are responsible in law for ensuring that their daughter of compulsory school age receives an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents/carers fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents/carers whose daughters are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that they attend and stay at school.

Parents/carers should:-

- ensure that their daughter arrives at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of the school
- impress the need to observe the school’s code of conduct
- take an active interest in their daughter’s school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents’ evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify the school if their daughter is absent. This should be done as soon as possible - preferably on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence. This explanation should be confirmed - preferably in writing - when the pupil returns to school
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- not book holidays during term time

PUPILS

All pupils are expected to attend school and all their lessons regularly and punctually. Pupils who experience attendance difficulties will be offered support, initially from their Form Tutor and, if the need should arise, from their Head of Year. At the end of the academic year, a pupil (Years 7-11) whose attendance is either excellent or has improved will be presented with a certificate. All pupils who achieve 100% attendance in a calendar month will be entered into a prize draw for that month.

SCHOOL

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality. Pupil attendance is the responsibility of all staff. The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate concerns, liaising closely with parents/carers and our Attendance Improvement Officer as and when the need arises. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently. The senior member of staff responsible for attendance is Mr Dudley – Deputy Headteacher.

a) Registration

Registers will be taken promptly at 8.35 a.m. and at 1.20 p.m. (using Lesson Monitor at the start of Period 5). Once they have been taken any pupil arriving to registration will be marked absent and must sign in, with a valid reason, at the Office. The Attendance Officer will change the register to indicate that the pupil was late to school with the reason given.

If the reason given for lateness to school is not deemed to be a valid reason, a lunchtime detention will be set by Office staff.

If a pupil is persistently late, the Head of Year will inform the parents/carers via letter.

If a pupil arrives in school after the registers have closed at 9.15 a.m. then she will be marked as absent. If an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil will be recorded as “unauthorised absent” for the morning session.

Following registration and other attendance checks completed by our Attendance Officer, a text will be sent by InTouch to all parents/carers whose daughters are not in school informing them of their daughter’s absence. This facility can also be used by parents/carers to inform school of any pupil absence in advance.

All teachers will take registers at the start of each of their classes via Lesson Monitor and will alert Form Tutors and Heads of Year of any concerns related to patterns of absence. This also serves to identify truancy – both internal and external.

The Head of Year will check official registers on a regular basis in order to ensure that correct procedures are being followed and will check that absences/lates are being monitored by the Form Tutors in the first instance and by the Attendance Officer.

b) Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

Bishop’s Hatfield Girls’ School will decide how an absence is to be recorded according to the ‘Policy on School Attendance’ – CSF0136 (September 2017). This states that:

Absence should be authorised if:

- the pupil is absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the Governing Body or proprietor of the school').
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent/carer belongs.
- the school at which the pupil is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the pupil's home, and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following:
 1. the pupil's transport to and from school
 2. boarding the pupil to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to her home.
 3. enabling the pupil to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to her home.
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision
- there is a close family bereavement.
- the pupil is attending an interview in connection with an application for a place at an institute of further or higher education, a place at another school or with a prospective employer (Code J)
- the pupil is to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons' Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance licence where absence is required without the written permission of the Headteacher.
- the pupil is attending approved work experience (Code W)
- the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity, e.g. field trip, sporting activity, or is receiving special off-site tuition, e.g. link course (Code V or P)
- the pupil is attending an Education Support Centre (ESC) (Code B)
- a Year 11 pupil is granted study leave (this should not normally exceed 10 school days and only granted during public exams) (Code S)
- the pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion (e.g. if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling). This has to be authorised by the Headteacher.

Absence should be unauthorised if:

- no explanation is forthcoming.
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation.

- the pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances). Possible liaison and advice from and with outside agencies would be considered in these circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations came into effect on 1st September 2013 remove all references to family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

At the request from Headteachers the local authority has provided a standard letter to be handed to parents and carers to support the Governing Body and Headteachers in communicating their decision making regarding individual requests for leave of absence for holidays in term time.

A full list of attendance codes, descriptions and meanings can be found in Appendix 1 of this policy.

c) Procedures for Following Up Absence

- On each day of absence, parents/carers will be contacted by text informing them of their daughter's absence from school. This allows parents/carers to respond with a valid reason for absence.
- If a pupil is absent for more than three consecutive days (without an explanation being forthcoming), the Form Tutor should inform the Head of Year and enquiries will be made where relevant. If the absentee is a pupil about whom there are already concerns, the Head of Year will make every effort to contact the parents/carers immediately or refer concerns to the Deputy Headteacher.
- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Head of Year will contact the parents/carers and invite them to attend a meeting at school to discuss any support strategies to reintegrate the pupil back into mainstream school.
- If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence and fails to provide any satisfactory explanation, the school will contact the parents/carers to clarify the reason for absence.
- If a pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer and follow up procedures agreed with the Deputy Headteacher/Head of Year.
- The school will notify the Local Authority of any pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly, have irregular attendance, or have 10 or more consecutive school days absence without the school's permission. Schools are also under a safeguarding duty, under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to investigate any unexplained absences.

d) Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School offers an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos demonstrates that pupils feel their presence in school is

important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.

- A varied and flexible curriculum is offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupils' needs.
- Attendance data is collected regularly and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice. Heads of Year will share good practice amongst colleagues when appropriate.
- Attendance certificates, merits, excellents and awards are presented each month and term in Years 7-11.
- Form and Year group attendance figures are published on a weekly and monthly basis for Years 7-11.
- Parents/carers are regularly reminded via newsletters, the school prospectus, Parents' Evenings and school notice boards of the importance of good attendance and how it is linked to attainment and academic progress/success.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness or exclusion for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be re-integrated back into school upon their return. The school will inform and involve all staff in this process and involve parents/carers as far as possible. Referrals to outside agencies, e.g. ESTMA (Education Support Team for Medical Absence) may be made in these circumstances.
- Pupils who have been absent for whatever reason for an extended period of time will (when appropriate) have individually tailored reintegration programmes prepared for them.
- The Deputy Headteacher will, when appropriate, liaise with other agencies – Education Psychology, Safeguarding and Specialist Services, Youth Connexions, etc, when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The Deputy Headteacher will liaise with the Attendance Improvement Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. Realistic attendance targets will be set for individual pupils with possible use of the Pupil Support Centre if needed to improve attendance.
- Visits are made to feeder primary schools by the Head of Year 7 and other senior staff in order to ensure the smoothest possible secondary transfer. Discussions with primary school teachers will seek to identify those pupils who may require extra support during this process.
- For any pupil who is 'in care' (CLA), the school will inform the Virtual School on a weekly basis regarding their attendance at school via SIMS and Welfare Call.
- Reports regarding attendance may be discussed at Governors' meetings under Safeguarding.

The Use of Legal Action

If a pupil, who is registered at the school, fails to attend regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council may take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the Local Authority. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' might include the death of a close relative, certain medically recognised conditions, awaiting SEN placement, specific child protection concerns, change of provision. Legal proceedings can be considered at any stage if no progress has been made and no exceptional circumstances are deemed to exist.

Any form of legal action will initially be agreed between the school and the Local Authority.

If, after legal action has been taken, the pupil still fails to attend school regularly the Attendance Improvement Officer will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.

In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the Attendance Team will begin legal proceedings promptly on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the Local Authority will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced.

The Attendance Teams will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance. Education Supervision Orders will not usually be applied for in relation to pupils in Years 10 or 11.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored
- the attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted
- the Local Authority will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school

Education Related Penalty Notices for Parents

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added two sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures.

Further information on penalty notices from the local Attendance Team Manager or directly from Mr Dudley (Deputy Headteacher).

APPENDIX ONE

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Present at off site educational activity	Approved Education Activity
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Authorised absence
D	Dual registered at another educational establishment	Not expected to attend this session
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Holiday authorised by the school	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	Other unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence
P	Supervised sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational reasons	Authorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Not required to be in school (non-compulsory school age pupils)	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to all pupils (Planned)	Not counted in possible attendances

Detailed advice on the use of these registration codes can be found at www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance