

Attendance Policy

Bonneygrove Primary School



Subject:	Attendance Policy
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Approved by:	Shen Hasekilerden (Chair of Governors)



BONNEYGROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Aim

- To maximise attendance and punctuality in order to ensure that all pupils have access to the full education offered by our school. For our pupils to achieve a good standard of academic and social success in school, they need to attend school on a regular basis.
- To ensure whole school attendance is 96% or better.

Statutory Framework

A pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. The school is, by law, to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone call from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. An absence will only be authorised if the school is satisfied with the validity of the explanation offered.

This policy is written in line with the local authority policy on school attendance. **(Education Act 1996, Section 444 as amended by Section 82 and 109 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006).**

Responsibilities

The Headteacher will have overall responsibility for attendance at Bonneygrove Primary School. However, improving attendance is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - parents/carers, pupils and all staff. Specific responsibilities are as follows:

Parents/Carers will:

- ensure that their child/ren arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of the Attendance Policy
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's Code of Conduct
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending Parents' Consultation evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify the school by 9.00am every day of absence, giving reasons if their child is absent (or late), by phone call (or answerphone on the absence line) or by email to the school office on admin@bonneygrove.herts.sch.uk
- ensure their child has had 48 hours without sickness and before they return to school
- avoid making medical, dental or other appointments within school hours
- not take days out of school for reasons not seen as exceptional
- not take holidays in term time.

School will:

- complete registers correctly and keep them up-to-date at all times
- inform the Headteacher if they notice any low attendance or deterioration in attendance
- inform parents/carers early if they notice any low or deterioration in attendance
- liaise with parents/carers and children directly in supporting attendance
- open and close registers at regular, set times and this information should be publicised to parents/carers (see below). Registers are legal documents and MUST be completed fully and kept up-to-date. They must be marked twice a day - at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions
- When calling the register the appropriate mark and/or symbol should be placed against each pupil's name - gaps should not be left so that entries can be made later. In marking registers, schools should use the national set of symbols as advised by the Department for Education
- When the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised absence (N) and any subsequent correction to the register made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence has been established
- include attendance information with each child's annual report giving information regarding absences that the pupil has accrued during that school year
- to discuss the impact of low attendance on learning with parents/carers at consultation meetings where appropriate.
- know that absence can affect attainment and well-being.
- ensure that all staff, pupils and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk.
- display weekly attendance on class doors
- call for explanations for absence if none have been provided
- maintain a register of children who have regular absences in order to aid monitoring by the Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
- contact parents on the first day of absence for any child with an unexplained absence and continue to contact with more than one call on the same day if there is no answer.
- prepare attendance reports termly for the Governing Body
- provide information to the Headteacher to identify poor attendance and prepare certificates for celebrating 100% attendance termly
- liaise with the Local Authority Attendance Officer in taking action for any child whose attendance is causing concern
- work with parents/carers and children directly in supporting attendance
- ensure that the school procedures follow local authority guidance and policies
- reward good attendance
- ensure that all personnel are trained on safeguarding, the Prevent strategy and other relevant training to comply with *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.

Pupils will:

- attend school regularly, punctually and ready to learn.

Punctuality

School staff will take steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness will be monitored and followed up. Persistent lateness does not constitute full school attendance (Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996).

The school day at Bonneygrove Primary School begins at 08.50am (doors open 08.40am). Pupils are required to be in school by then. The morning register is closed in classes at 08.50am.

When a pupil arrives after 08.50 a.m. and before 09.15am he/she should be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session.

A penalty notice for persistent lateness can be requested by the Headteacher.

Notifying the school of a child's absence

If there is no explanation:

1. The school will contact you by text and/or telephone.
2. If there is still no satisfactory explanation the school may discuss the case with the Education Welfare Officer and the child's absence will be unauthorised.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will:

- monitor the attendance of each child
- meet with the Headteacher to discuss any necessary action
- complete monitoring forms each term indicating actions to be taken
- liaise with the school if the child remains an open case to the EWO or where any legal action is being taken
- advise the school on strategies for improving attendance
- assist the school in identifying persistent absentees and ensuring plans of action are in place.

Child Missing From Education

Failure for parents/carers to contact the school where a child is missing from education will result in a referral to the Local Authority for further investigation.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absences

Only the Headteacher can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent/carer has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, in itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence should be treated as unauthorised and the parent informed.

All schools are required to notify the Local Authority of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason. This duty also extends to academies and independent schools.

Bonneygrove Primary School will adhere to the following criteria when deciding if an absence should be authorised or not:

Absence can be authorised if:

- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause and a written letter of explanation has been received or the parent/carer notified the school office by telephone. Evidence that your child has been to the GP will be asked for. This could be in the form of a letter/prescription or card with a doctor's signature (**medical evidence is required for 4 days or more**).
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.
- 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 an immediate family bereavement.
- The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special tuition.
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional occasion (e.g. a wedding/funeral of an immediate relative) (only 1 day will be authorised for a wedding if the child is part of the wedding group or it is the parent/carer's wedding).
- The school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home; and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following: the child's transport to and from school; boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school; enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home.
- Leave of absence should be granted to allow a pupil 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 license has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance license where absence is required without the written permission of the Headteacher.
- The pupil was absent with leave granted by the Headteacher.
- The pupil has been temporarily excluded from school.

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 look after siblings
- The pupil is shopping
- The pupil is away for unexceptional occasions (e.g. a birthday)
- The pupil is on a family holiday.

Low Attendance: A cause for concern

This is classed as any child that has attendance lower than **96%**.

You may have followed the procedures for notifying the school of a child's absence, however the school will;

1. Notify you by letter where attendance is lower than 96%.
2. Where no improvements are made, a second letter will be sent informing you that attendance will be unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided.
3. Should no improvement be made at this point, please refer to the section below regarding a Penalty Notice.
4. Where there is an ongoing medical problem, the school will liaise with the family to offer support as necessary and work in partnership with the family.

Holidays during term time

Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which come 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 the Headteacher 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.

If there are exceptional circumstances behind your request, write into the Headteacher explaining your exceptional request. If your child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed this will be classified as an unauthorised absence and you may be fined or legal action taken against you.

The Use of Legal Action

If a pupil, who is registered at Bonneygrove Primary School, fails to attend regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Local Authority Attendance 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/carers 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 Senior Manager, Statutory Attendance and Participation Team on behalf of the Lead for Access and Inclusion. If 'exceptional mitigating circumstances' are not deemed to exist, and absences are unauthorised then cases may be considered for legal action at any point throughout case work.

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

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

Penalty Notices

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added two new sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new 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/carer 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/carer has failed to engage in any supportive measures.

Should you receive a fine for persistent and/or unauthorised absence, details are below:

£60 per adult, per child

£120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice

If the penalty notice is not paid fully by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must prosecute for the offence under section 444 of the education act 1996 or withdraw the notice.

Strategies for Promoting Good Attendance

- Ensuring the implementation of the Safe, Kind, Brilliant ethos, so that pupils feel valued and welcome at Bonneygrove Primary School.
- Ensuring an interesting and flexible curriculum which meets pupils needs.
- Regular monitoring of attendance and analysis of data takes place to help identify actions for improvement.
- Weekly 'Bee on Time' whole school assembly with the Headteacher and reward tokens.
- Certificates for children with 100% attendance on a termly basis.
- Certificates for children with 100% attendance for the year.
- Parents/carers of pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern (less than 96%) will be notified by letter as a reminder. Where no improvement is made, a further letter requesting a meeting with a member of the Headship team will be sent.
- Parents are regularly reminded of the importance of good attendance via newsletters, parents evenings, induction meetings, etc.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for an extended period will have access to partner services to support during absence and be re-integrated into school upon their return
- The Headteacher holds termly meetings with the EWO in order to identify and support those with attendance difficulties.
- Discussions with secondary schools to support the transfer process.
- All members of staff are clear about their responsibilities.
- Where there has been long term absence, the Head teacher will work with the family and other services to integrate the child back into school.
- School attendance figures are published in newsletters.
- Poster promoting good attendance are displayed around the school (see Appendix I).
- Where a child's attendance is improved, this is celebrated with pupil and parents.

Appendix I **Good attendance means... Being in school for at least 96% of the time. This means a maximum of 8 days off a year.**

175 non-school days a year!

All this time for holidays and appointments!

		Outstanding	Good	Cause For Concern	Persistent Absenteeism		
365 days in the calendar year	190 days in a school year	0 days Absence	8 days Absence	19 days Absence	29 days Absence	38 days Absence	47 days Absence
		education a year	education a year	education a year	education a year	education a year	education a year
		100% Attendance	96% Attendance	90% Attendance	85% Attendance	80% Attendance	75% Attendance

