Attendance policy

Approved by:	Full Governing Board	**Date:** 1.3.22
Last reviewed on:	March 2022	
Next review due by:	March 2025	
Signed: **(Chair of Governors)**		
Signed: **(Headteacher)**		

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

> Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence

> Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled

> Acting early to address patterns of absence

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

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

> Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

> Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

> Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

> The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

> The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. The headteacher will provide regular updates to the governing board about overall levels of attendance and periodic updates regarding persistent absence.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

> Implementation of this policy at the school

> Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

> Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

> Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The Family Liaison Worker

The Family Liaison Worker:

> Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level

> Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher

> Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

> Attends local network meetings to ensure the school's procedures follow the local authority's policies

> Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

> Liaises with the safeguarding team to determine if a home visit is required for a child who has not arrived at school and for whom we do not have notification from parents or carers for the reasons for absence; if a home visit is advised, two members of staff will attend to safeguard themselves.

> Advises the headteacher when it may be required to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis using the school's management information system to record the registers using the correct codes.

3.5 School admin staff

School admin staff are responsible for:

> Taking calls and emails from parents about absence and recording it on the school system, using the correct codes to record the type of absence being reported.

> Monitoring the register codes being used by class teachers to ensure that the correct codes are used for all circumstances.

Sending first-day absence text messages and/or emails to parents and carers of children who have not arrived at school and the school has not received notification regarding reasons for the absence. If by 10am, the school has still not heard from a parent or carer of a particular child, the admin team then telephone all emergency contacts and inform the Family Liaison Worker that a child has not been accounted for. See Appendix 2

> Processing and recording requests for exceptional leave from parents and carers, liaising with the headteacher to ensure the correct codes are used to indicate if an absence is authorised or not.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present

- Attending an approved off-site educational activity

- Absent

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry

- The amended entry

- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made

- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by their allotted time on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken within 10 minutes of each class's allotted start time and will be kept open for 10 minutes after each class's allotted start time ends. The register for the second session will be taken within 10 minutes of that class's afternoon start time.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7) by emailing (merrywood.southvillep@bristol-schools.uk / myrtle.southvillep@bristol-schools.uk) or calling either school office (0117 353 4444 for Myrtle; 0117 377 2671 for Merrywood). Parents and carers can leave a voicemail message if their call is not answered.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment by emailing (merrywood.southvillep@bristol-schools.uk / myrtle.southvillep@bristol-schools.uk) or by calling either school office (0117 353 4444 for Myrtle; 0117 377 2671 for Merrywood). Parents and carers can leave a voicemail message if their call is not answered. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

> Within 15 minutes of the start time of the school day will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

> After 15 minutes of the start time of the school day will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

The Family Liaison Worker analyses punctuality alongside overall attendance, contacting parents and carers where concerns are raised to put measures in place to improve their children's punctuality.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will (see Appendix 2):

> Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, firstly by following the school's first day absence procedures and then by referring to the Family Liaison Worker for either a telephone call, meeting or home visit with the family

> Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary

> Identify whether the absence is approved or not

> Identify the correct attendance code to use

4.6 Reporting to parents

Parents and carers receive an annual school report, which includes reporting on attendance for that academic year. This includes each child's overall attendance percentage, the percentage of authorised absence and the percentage of unauthorised absence.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as those that cannot be predicted or planned for out of term-time. Visits to prospective secondary schools and for year 7 induction days will be authorised for year 6 pupils. Family holidays and birthdays will not be granted as exceptional circumstances.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

> Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

> Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm the date applicable.

> Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school.

> Examinations for extra-curricular activities that cannot be held during school holidays, e.g. music, dance.

> Family weddings will only be authorised if the child has a named role in the service and the persons getting married are close relatives. Evidence will be required to demonstrate this. If the date of the wedding is authorised, other dates around the service date may not be authorised.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

The Family Liaison Worker analyses attendance data for all children and identifies children with persistent absence (where a child misses more than 5% of sessions). The headteacher and the Family Liaison Worker discuss each case and determine next steps for each family. Depending on the severity of the absence, this may include warning letters and/or meetings with parents and carers, during which targets will be set for future attendance. See Appendix 3.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, in line with Bristol City Council's Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct specifies that a fixed penalty notice can be issued where a child misses 8 sessions of school within a 10-day period which were not authorised by the headteacher. One session is half a day, so 8 sessions is 4 full school days.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. The methods of payment and deadlines will be specified on the fixed penalty notice.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

> The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

> One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

> Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence regularly, including daily checks of the registers and termly analysis of absence trends.

Parents and carers of children with attendance concerns are contacted by the Family Liaison Worker by phone, email or letter, followed by meetings if the attendance of their children does not improve.

If a pupil's absence continue to rise after contacting and/or meeting with their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. In order to reduce the amount of children reaching the persistent absentee threshold, the trigger for initial contact is 5% absence. See Appendix 3.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

The school collects and stores attendance data on the management information system for internal purposes. This includes:

> Tracking the attendance of individual pupils

> Identifying whether there are particular groups of children who absence is a cause for concern

> Monitoring those families identified as being in need of intervention and support

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 3 years by the headteacher and governing board. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

8. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

> Child protection and safeguarding policy (including details of how the school reports and records Children Missing in Education)

> Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

	Unauthorised absence	
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	**Definition**	**Scenario**
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Daily Absence Response

Admin Team

First Aid absence text is sent to children who are marked absent when registers closed if we haven't had contact from home.

If no contact by 9.30, 1st listed contact is phoned. If there is no answer, a message is left and then repeat with 2nd and 3rd contact until the reason for the absence is established.

If no reason for the absence has been established at 10.00am, Family Liaison is informed.

Contact attempts continue.

When the reason for the absence is established, the register is updated with the appropriate code and notes added to pupil asset where appropriate.

Family Liaison

Family Liaison uses knowledge of the family and alternative contact points (social worker, school nurse, links to siblings' schools etc) to establish the child's safety.

If safety cannot be assured, Family Liaison to discuss with HT, or DHTs making a visit to home address.

If visit to home address is unable to establish a reason for the absence, or has raised safeguarding concerns, police are informed.

When a reason for the absence is established, this is reported to Admin team to update the register.

Appendix 3: Persistent Absentee Response

Admin Team

Family Liaison

Weekly

End of Week Check:

Ensure errors in the register (missing or inaccurate marks/code) are corrected.

End of Week Check:

1. Check attendance of safeguarding focus group.
2. Check children currently at <95%.

Ensure the codes for longer-term absences that have been authorised or Family Liaison has been made aware of are inputted into the register in advance.

Follow up ongoing concerns with a phone call to parent/carer as required and update the Admin team with outcome if appropriate.

Termly

At the end of each long term, remind every parent to check their child's attendance using the Pupil Asset parents' portal.

STAGE 1: Send Letter 1 to the parent/carer of every child whose attendance is <95%, unless they have previously received this letter. The letter sets out milestones for improvement.

Identify children whose attendance is <95%

Review the attendance for every child whose parents previously received Letter 1 and judge whether the milestones for improvement have been met.

STAGE 2: If the milestones haven't been met, **send Letter 2 to the identified parent/carer,** inviting them to an attendance review meeting.

If the milestones have been met, call the parent to celebrate progress.

Escalation

Hold **Attendance Review Meeting**. Discuss barriers and agree strategies. Reiterate milestones and agree review date.

If parent/carer fails to attend, send Letter 3 and continue to monitor.

STAGE 3: Hold **Attendance Review Meeting** with Headteacher and/or Official present. Agree percentage milestones and the review date. Headteacher to confirm agreement in writing immediately after the meeting.

STAGE 4: Consider forwarding case to BCC to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice