




Brilliance, through Bowsland Best

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Background

This policy reflects the requirements of section 444 of the Education Act 1996 regarding the duty of parents/carers to ensure their children attend regularly at school, as interpreted by the Supreme Court in April 2017. It also follows the South Gloucestershire Council Code of Conduct (Revised April 2017) regarding Penalty Notices for unauthorised or irregular attendance.

The importance of school attendance

Clear evidence links educational achievement with high levels of school attendance. Good and punctual attendance also helps pupils to feel part of the whole school team and assists them in developing work routines which will stand them in good stead later in life. This is why the school identifies and celebrates pupils who have 100% attendance records in their end of year annual report.

Conversely, the disruptive effect of unauthorised absence can be significant. Lessons missed have to be made up, which means extra work for teachers. Not only that, helping a pupil to catch up can divert attention from other pupils and interrupt their progress. Similarly, a pupil who arrives late or leaves early will be put at a disadvantage and may distract others in the class.

The school has published on its website an Attendance Fact Sheet for Families which stresses the importance of high attendance levels and punctuality and gives practical advice on how to achieve them.

Legal duty to ensure a child's regular attendance at school

A parent/carer has a legal duty to make sure their child receives a full-time education that suits their age, ability and aptitude, and any special needs they may have, by regular attendance at school.

If a pupil fails to attend regularly, their parent/carer is guilty of a criminal offence unless

- the pupil is sick
- there is any unavoidable cause
- leave has been granted in writing by the Head or Deputy Head Teacher
- the absence is on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/carer belongs



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If one of these four reasons properly applies, the absence is authorised and no offence is committed.

Meaning of “regular attendance”

The legal responsibility of a parent/carer to ensure their child’s regular attendance at school means that they must attend in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school. The rules prescribed by the governors of this school are –

- (i) unless absence is authorised, a pupil must attend both morning (8.55 to 12.00) and afternoon (13.00 to 15.30) sessions on all days the school is open each term, as shown on the published school calendar
- (ii) pupils must attend school punctually which means no later than 9.15 when registration closes for the morning session and 13.00 when registration for the afternoon session takes place
- (iii) pupils must not leave a morning or afternoon session early, that is before 12.00 or 15.30 respectively

Notifying the school about absence

Where a pupil is going to be absent from school, the parent/carer must let the school know by leaving a message on the pupil absence line, by email or letter, by not later than 9.30am on the day of absence.

In all cases where the school does not hear from a parent/carer to explain a pupil’s absence, the school will contact them to find out. This is to check that the absence is for an authorised reason and to fulfil the school’s safeguarding duty which, in this context, means being sure of the whereabouts of each of its pupils. Parents/carers are asked to avoid this time-consuming burden on the school by making early contact to explain their child’s absence. We have a dedicated absence line where a message can be left at any time.

Health and Attendance

Where illness is a clear reason for a pattern of absence with supporting information (for example repeat reference to medical aspects by young person, parent carer, prescription information, medical appointment cards, information from other health professionals) we will put in place an Individual Health Care Plan in line with the South Gloucestershire Council Medical Needs Policy.



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Where there are occasional absences such as for sickness and diarrhoea there is no requirement for medical supporting information. For repeat absences we will follow government guidance and agree to absences where there is appropriate medical supporting information.

Leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

The Head and Deputy Head Teacher have been authorised by the governing body to grant or decline applications from parents/carers for pupil leave of absence. The law states that leave of absence must not be granted unless an application has been made in advance and the Head or Deputy Head Teacher considers that leave should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to the application. This could include attending a special examination or approved offsite activity.

The school requires parents/carers to apply for exceptional leave in writing at least four weeks before the start of the proposed leave. Leave will not be granted retrospectively unless it is linked to a family bereavement.

The letter must give details of the exceptional circumstances and the dates of the leave applied for. The Head or Deputy Head Teacher will consider the exceptional circumstances put forward in each application, together with all other relevant factors, before deciding whether to grant or decline leave of absence. Examples of other relevant factors include –

- how much education the pupil has already missed through previous absence (including sickness absence), arriving late or leaving early
- what learning the pupil would miss if leave were granted
- the pupil's level of achievement
- If the leave could be taken at an alternative time, eg Private medical appointments

If leave of absence is declined and the pupil is subsequently absent from school during the application period, the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

If leave is granted but the pupil's absence continues beyond the application period, the continued absence will be treated as unauthorised.

Management action following unauthorised absence or lack of punctuality

The school will contact the parent/carer in every case where they have not notified the school of their child's absence to find out whether it is for an authorised reason.



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All late arrivals will be noted on the register and parents/carers may be asked to give reasons for being late which will then be recorded by the school. If a pupil arrives after 9.15, when registration closes, or leaves before 12.00 or 15.30, they and their parent/carer

must report to the school office where it will be noted on the register together with the reason.

The Head Teacher will monitor all instances of unauthorised absence, late arrival or early departure on a weekly basis and the reasons given by parents/carers. An in-depth attendance check is carried out three times a year, when the Head will meet with the Educational Welfare Officer and will consider what management action, if any, should be taken in each case to achieve regular attendance, including –

- sending a letter to inform parents of concerns where there are more than 4 incidents of lateness or 4 broken weeks within a term
- sending the parent/carer a letter explaining the effect of Penalty Notices and warning them that their child's continued unauthorised absence could result in the school requesting South Gloucestershire Council to issue them with a Notice
- where attendance falls below 90%, asking the parent/carer to attend a SAM (School Attendance Meeting) at the school to: discuss the pupil's absence or lack of punctuality; ensure that the family is receiving any necessary support and agree an action plan for achieving regular attendance
- seeking the involvement of the Education Welfare Service
- making a referral to the South Gloucestershire Family Intervention Support Service

Legal enforcement following unsuccessful management action

Where appropriate management action has been taken, including a warning letter about Penalty Notices, but the pupil's unauthorised absence continues, the Head Teacher may request South Gloucestershire Council to issue a Penalty Notice to the parent/carer if either

- (i) there have been more than 10 sessions of unauthorised absence; or
- (ii) there have been more than 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in 7 weeks due to the pupil going on holiday and the request to the Council is made within 15 school days of the pupil's return

If (i) is the basis of a request, the Council may issue a warning letter to the parent/carer advising that a Penalty Notice will be issued if there are any unauthorised absences in the next 15 school days.



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Where a request is made under (ii), the Council may proceed directly to issue a Penalty Notice to the parent/carer who may subsequently be prosecuted if they fail to pay the penalty by the date specified in the Notice.

Removal from Roll

There are strict grounds as to when schools may remove pupils from their admissions register. These are outlined in Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006. Regulation 12(6) states that when a school has decided to delete a pupil's name from their admission roll they must notify their Local Authority as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

- If the pupil has left the school without explanation and there are concerns about the pupil's welfare we will contact the local Access and Response Team immediately.
- If there are concerns that a pupil may be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or radicalisation we will contact the Access and Response Team immediately.
- If the school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure will establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Once the school has confirmation that the child has started at the new school they will update SIMs. Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed.

If the school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has "disappeared" the matter will be drawn without delay to the attention of the Access and Response Team.

Part-time time-tables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs; this decision is made by the Head Teacher in consultation with external agencies. A part time timetable is time limited, must not be treated as a long-term solution and can only be made with parental agreement. This will be reviewed every two weeks within the time limited period. The school will mark the sessions where the pupil is not expected to attend as authorised absence. (Code C).



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Conclusion

During the school year we wish to encourage the highest possible individual attendance rate and we view this procedure as a necessary and important objective. Regular attendance and good punctuality is proven to improve attainment and establish good routines for life. An important part of our schools' vision is that our children feel safe, happy, enthusiastic and ready to learn together.

This policy has been agreed and adopted by the Governing body of Bowsland Green Primary School and will reviewed every 2 years.