



# **Bishop Wood Junior School Attendance Policy**

## **Policy Review**

<b>Status:</b>	Non statutory
<b>Approved by:</b>	FGB
<b>Date Approved:</b>	October 2021
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	October 2024

At Bishop Wood Junior School, we want the whole school community – governors, staff, parents and pupils to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Good attendance helps the children in this school community to maximise their learning. This policy will support us all to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

Bishop Wood Junior School aims to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to ensure all pupils take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

It is the legal responsibility of parents to ensure their child is at school.

### **Aims**

At Bishop Wood Junior School we aim for our pupils to attain the highest levels of achievement and to foster their development so that they benefit fully from the opportunities and responsibilities presented to them. As part of this, we consider excellent attendance at school to be vital. Schools are open for 190 days each year and all of our pupils have the right to those 190 days of learning and school experience.

It follows, therefore, that all children should be at school, on time, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

### **Monitoring**

Although the school is no longer required to set targets for overall attendance and persistent absence, we believe that unnecessary absence or lateness is a barrier to learning and progress. As a result, the school will continue to set internal targets for attendance and punctuality and monitor, on a regular basis, the attendance and punctuality of pupils in order to take action where there are concerns.

### **Expectations**

The responsibility for good attendance is shared between the school, parents/carers and pupils. All these groups need to understand the expectations which this policy makes of them.

### **The Role of the School**

The school will provide a safe learning environment in which all pupils can thrive and succeed. In order to ensure pupils make the progress of which they are capable, we will:

- Ensure that pupils are able to attend school for 380 sessions (190 days) each year;
- Ensure that accurate records of attendance and punctuality are maintained according to Government legislation and guidance on a daily basis;
- Clearly distinguish between absences which are authorised and those which are unauthorised (it is the decision of the Headteacher as to whether or not an absence will be authorised);
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality and ensure that school staff set good examples in this regard;
- Investigate all unexplained or unjustified absences and follow up poor attendance and punctuality;
- Keep parents informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record and work with parents should either give cause for concern;
- Monitor attendance and punctuality levels monthly and report to Governors;

- Liaise regularly with the Local Authority appointed Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) over attendance and punctuality issues and relating to individual pupils.

### **The Role of Parents/Carers**

Parents have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 for ensuring their child's attendance and punctuality at school. They are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered. Consequently, they should:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and on time;
- Ensure their child is properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn;
- Avoid arranging family holidays in term time;
- Avoid arranging non-urgent medical appointments during school hours/term time;
- Inform the school by 8:30am on the first day of absence and communicate the reason for their child's absence by telephone;
- Maintain regular communication with school staff about any concerns/issues;
- Ensure the school office is notified immediately of any change to contact details;
- Sign pupils in and/or out at the school office when they arrive late/leave early;
- Take an active interest in their child's school life and work.

It is accepted that young pupils are accountable to their parents and do not usually truant from school. However, all children are occasionally reluctant to attend school and disaffected pupils may exhibit symptoms of illness, whether real or imagined, and be allowed to remain at home. Pupils who experience difficulties need support and understanding. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and makes things worse.

### **The Role of Pupils**

All pupils are expected to:

- Attend school daily and punctually
- Are expected to be ready to learn
- Be signed in and/or out at the school office when they arrive late/leave early

### **The Role of the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)**

The AIO regularly visits school to meet with a member of the Admin Team and/or the Headteacher. The purpose of the visits is to identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties and agree on focused, time-limited action which needs to be taken by the school and/or AIO.

### **Gates/Doors Open**

The access gates on Frogmore Street and Christchurch Road will be open from 8:30am. Children should proceed straight to their classroom where a member of staff will greet them.

### **Registration**

Registration will take place at the start of each morning and afternoon session.

Morning registration opens at 8:40

Registers are taken at 8:45

Morning registration closes at 8:50

Afternoon registration opens at 13:20  
Registers are taken at 13:25  
Afternoon registration closes at 13.30

A pupil will be recorded as late, with a code of 'L' if they arrive after the teacher has taken the register but before the registration window has officially closed.

A pupil arriving in school after the registration window has closed and without a valid reason will be recorded as a code 'U'. This is an unauthorised absence.

### **Following Up Lateness**

Parents whose children are regularly late for school will be contacted by a member of staff who will work with the parent(s) to bring about improvement in punctuality.

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Every half-day absence (session) from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either Authorised or Unauthorised. This is why information about the reason for each absence is required.

An absence from school is an authorised one if:

- The pupil was absent with permission from the Headteacher
- The pupil was unwell
- They were attending an unavoidable medical appointment
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child and/or child's parents belong
- They were attending the wedding of an immediate family member
- There was a family bereavement
- The pupil is taking part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 for which a child performance licence has been issued

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This includes:

- No explanation for absence has been forthcoming
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The pupil stays at home to help look after parents or younger siblings (other than in exceptional circumstances)
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday/day trip without authorisation from the school
- Any pupil arriving too late to be entered into the register
- Birthdays

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee' when their attendance rate falls below 90% at any time of the school year, for whatever reason. Absenteeism of this level will considerably damage a pupil's educational prospects and the parents'/carers' fullest support and cooperation will be needed to tackle this.

All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA level or is at risk of moving towards that level is given priority and the parents/carers of those pupils will be informed of this promptly.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the school's Attendance Officer and Headteacher. Parents/carers may need to come into school and meet with the Headteacher (and possibly the LA AIO) to discuss their child's attendance and the progress being made.

All attendance actions, reviews and comments for pupils deemed as a 'persistent absentee' will be documented using the Child Protection Online Management system (CPOMS).

### **Penalty Notices**

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and work with staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way the school may refer the child to the AIO. The AIO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but parents/carers who fail to respond to requests by the school to send their children to school or who take unauthorised holidays during term time may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice by the Local Authority.

The Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued at the discretion of the Headteacher and will be applied to parents/carers whose child has at least 15 sessions of unauthorised absence in the previous and/or current term. The fines will apply to cases where the parent/carer is able but unwilling to ensure the attendance of the pupil. The penalty is £60 per parent/carer if paid within 21 days of receipt of notice, and rises to £120 which must be paid within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid, the Local Authority may subsequently prosecute the parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance. Fixed Penalty Notices will operate following the Hertfordshire County Council Code of Conduct and Guidance for Schools, dated February 2016.

Parents, carers or children may wish to contact the AIO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. The telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

The school puts a lot of effort into re-integrating pupils who have had extended absence, for whatever reason, and will work closely with the parents/carers to provide support.

Parents whose first language is not English, or who have literacy difficulties, will be offered appropriate support in matters of school communication.

### **Family Holidays and Other Absences**

Absences in order to take family holidays and outings will not be authorised except in very exceptional circumstances. The following may, in some cases, be viewed as 'exceptional circumstances':

- Family/carer funeral or trauma
- Weddings (immediate family only – 1 day maximum)
- Religious festivals
- Visiting new schools prior to relocation

A request must be made at least 3 weeks before departure (except in the case of funerals when this constraint does not apply) by completion of a 'Leave of Absence' form obtainable from the school office. Parents/carers may be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the request.

All other absences will be recorded as unauthorised unless special permission has been granted by the Headteacher. Should the child remain absent beyond the time granted, these absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

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.