



ATTENDANCE POLICY

MRS E MOSS
 REVIEWED: September 2023
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Introduction

At Biddulph High School we are committed to working together to ensure all pupils receive the best education possible and to enable them to make progress and do as well as they can. For this to happen, pupils need to be in school to access the valuable teaching and learning opportunities.

This policy aims to make clear what is expected of parents and pupils and to assure parents of our willingness to work positively with them if problems arise.

Principles

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The school will promote the importance of good attendance through the curriculum and personal/social opportunities.

Good attendance by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All pupils should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

We will ensure that parents are aware of attendance matters and work with them to ensure good attendance and punctuality. To support the school in our commitment to improve school attendance and punctuality, we have employed an independent Education Welfare Service – VIP Education who will provide advice and guidance to the school, parents, and pupils.

Pupils are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents, and the pupil. If a pupil 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 and education does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Registration

Pupils should be in school by 8.40am and the school day ends at 3.15pm.
 On a Monday the school day starts at 8.40am and ends at 2.25pm.

Schools are required by law to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil is absent, every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. Therefore, information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason e.g., illness, medical appointments, or other unavoidable cause.

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

- parents keeping pupils off from school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- pupils who arrive to school after the close of the register
- school refusal
- holidays taken during term time that have not been authorised by the Headteacher

When completing the register, school follow the DFE school attendance guidance to determine which relevant code to use; [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

The register will be taken twice a day, at the start of the morning and the afternoon.

Morning registration.

The morning register is open at 8.45am. Pupils arriving after the register has been taken but before 9.00am are recorded as late (L).

This remains the same on a Monday.

Registration closes at 9.00am. Pupils arriving to school after this time are late - after registration closes, and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable reason for the lateness.

Afternoon registration

The afternoon register is taken at 1.15pm. Pupils arriving after the register has been taken but before 1.30pm are recorded as late (L).

Registration closes at 1.30pm. Pupils arriving to school after this time are late - after registration closes, and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable reason for the lateness.

On a Monday due to the changes to the timings of the school day, the register is taken at 12.35pm. Pupils arriving after the register has been taken, but before 12.50 are recorded as late (L)

Registration closes at 12.50pm. Pupils arriving after this time are late after registration closes, and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable reason for the lateness.

Late procedures

Parents are requested to contact the school absence line if their child is going to be late and provide a reason for lateness.

If a pupil is late to school, they should sign in at reception. If there is no valid reason for their lateness, they will be given a 20-minute time penalty to be served on the same day. (Please see the school's Behaviour Policy)

If a student is late to registration but has been on the school site, their form tutor or class teacher, will mark them as late (L) and issue a 20-min time penalty to be served on the same day.

If lateness is a cause for concern, the following procedures will be followed.

1. Parents will receive a letter informing of the concern.
2. If no improvement, the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from VIP Education, or the Head of Year will contact parents to further discuss and offer support and advice to improve punctuality.
3. If there is still no improvement, parents and pupils will be invited to a meeting with the EWO and/ or the Head of Year to discuss the reasons for lateness and to offer support. Referrals to wider support services may be offered if needed. The discussion held will be documented by the EWO and an action plan to improve school attendance will be devised with parents and the pupil during the meeting and a review date set if needed.
4. If no improvement is seen after the meeting has taken place, the school may follow Staffordshire County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for persistent lateness.

Reporting Absence

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the relevant Head of Year at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from VIP Education themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office.

If a pupil is absent from school, we ask parents to:

- Contact the school office by 8.30am on the first morning of absence.
- Reply promptly to any request or enquiry concerning an absence.

If parents do not contact the school on the morning of the first day of absence, a member of the administration staff will try to contact them to find out the reason for absence. This ensures that the parent is aware their child is not in school enabling the parent, where necessary, to establish that their child is safe. The school may also ask the EWO from VIP Education to establish contact either by telephone, text message or a home visit may be completed. If a reason is still not known after 5 school days, the absence will be unauthorised.

Children Missing in Education

Schools have a duty by law to refer any absence of 20 days or more to Staffordshire County Council, or the appropriate education authority where the child lives outside of Staffordshire, Children Missing in Education department where they have been unable to establish contact with the parent/pupil or have general concerns about the absence.

To avoid any referrals, parents are requested to inform the school if they are moving house/area or country and to provide a forwarding address, contact number and the name of the new school if known.

Medical Absence

Schools have the responsibility to decide whether an absence can be authorised on medical grounds. If the school has concerns about the level of medical absence that a pupil has incurred, they will contact the parents to discuss it further and to find out whether their GP or other health professional has been contacted.

Parents may be asked to provide evidence that their child is too unwell to attend school by providing a note from a medical professional or a copy of any prescribed medication. If the school do not receive medical evidence, the absences may be unauthorised.

Guidance regarding which absences will be authorised is regularly communicated to parents and pupils through letters home, social media and the school website.

For pupils with ongoing medical conditions, you should also use this policy in conjunction with the policy *Supporting students with medical conditions* (see school website)

Medical and Dental Appointments

We expect parents to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the school holidays whenever possible. If this is not possible, confirmation of the appointment will be required prior to authorising the absence and an M code used on the register to record when the child has attended the appointment. This type of absence will affect the pupils' attendance.

Children are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents are expected to return their children to school following the appointment.

Monitoring attendance procedures

The school aims for every child to achieve at least 96% attendance each year. To help with this, we monitor attendance regularly. This includes tutors speaking to students about their attendance each week, rewarding those with 100% attendance and those with improved attendance and punctuality. In some cases, it may be that we contact you to see if an absent pupil could attend for part of the day if they are well enough or how we can support them coming back into school. Pupils with SEND

may be contacted by a member of the SEND team to ask if any additional support can be offered to support a return to school, especially if the absence is connected to their learning need.

The leader with specific responsibility for attendance is Emma Moss, Assistant Headteacher.

Our Independent Education Welfare Officer from VIP Education and Heads of Year regularly monitor every pupil's attendance. Where there appears to be a particular problem with attendance, the following procedures are applied.

- A letter is sent to parents informing them of a decline in school attendance and the need for this to improve due to the impact on their child's education.
 - If school attendance continues to decline, a further concern letter is sent to parents.
 - If no improvement seen, parents and pupils where appropriate will be invited into a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss the concerns and to offer support around any possible barriers or problems at home or at school which may be contributing to low attendance. Referrals to wider support services may be offered where appropriate. The discussion held will be documented by the EWO and an action plan to improve school attendance will be devised during the meeting and a review date set if needed.
 - If school attendance does not improve, the school may follow the Staffordshire County Councils Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for pupils with persistent absence.
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Rewarding good school attendance

Pupils who achieve good attendance (school target or higher) are rewarded with house points each week. Tutors also reward those with improved attendance or 100% attendance in a week. There are also ad hoc rewards such as vouchers or movie afternoons to incentivise good attendance. Pupils who have good attendance will have a letter home each half term informing parents of this and praising them for their efforts and contribution to the whole school target.

Requests for leave of absence

Amendments to the Education Regulations 2006 make it clear that head teachers should only grant a leave of absence during term time if there are exceptional circumstances to justify this.

If a parent wishes to request leave for their child for any reason, they must apply in advance and in writing using the leave of absence request form which can be requested from the school office.

Where a child does not reside with both parents, it is the responsibility of the parent making the request to inform the other parent. The school will send a letter to the parent making the request informing them if the absence will be authorised or unauthorised.

If a request for leave has not been received and we have reason to believe a pupil is on holiday, a letter will be sent to parents requesting medical evidence. If no medical evidence can be provided, the absence may be recoded as unauthorised, and a penalty notice request sent to the Local Authority.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued

Parents/carers have the legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time, properly dressed, with the correct equipment and ready to learn.

Parents may be prosecuted if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually. This is in accordance with the 1996 Education Act, Section 444 or 444 (1A). It aims to ensure that parents carry out their duty to secure suitable education for their children.

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if one of the following criteria is met:

- There is unauthorised persistent absence. “Persistent” means at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of twelve school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
- There is a period of absence not authorised by the head teacher or in excess of the period authorised by the head teacher. (e.g. family holiday)
- Persistent late arrival to school, i.e., after the register has closed. “Persistent” means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child’s first five days of exclusion. An “excluded child” is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in the care of the LA with whom other interventions will be used.

A session is equivalent to half a day in school.

Elective Home Education

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child, school will contact the parent and discuss their reasons in more detail, offering support to deal with any issues raised. If after this time the parent still wishes to home educate their child, the school will inform the Local Authority of the decision to remove the child’s name from the admissions register.

Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record. Prior to deciding to home educate, parents are advised to contact Staffordshire County Council (or the relevant local authority of where the child resides) Elective Home Education department.

Summary

It is vital to a child's progress that they attend school as often as possible and that they are on time.

There are strong and proven links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. Just 17 days absent from school in a year could mean a drop in a GCSE grade within all subjects.

Impact of absence:

Missed number of days	Missed number of sessions	Missed number of weeks	Missed number of lessons
1	2	0	5
3	6	0.5	15
5	10	1	25
7.5	15	1.5	35
10	20	2	50
12.5	25	2.5	65
15	30	3	75
17.5	35	3.5	90

Impact of lateness:

Over a school year –

5 minutes late every day = 3 days absent

15 minutes late every day = 10 days absent

30 minutes late every day = 19 days absent

If parents have any concerns relating to attendance or lateness that they wish to discuss, they should contact the Head of Year in the first instance.

School staff are committed to working with parents to ensure any problems are dealt with straight away in order for pupils to feel happy and safe at Biddulph High School and achieve to the best of their ability. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school and are on time.