ATTENDANCE POLICY

REVIEWED: September 2026
REVIEW DATE: September 2027

Introduction

At Biddulph High School we are committed to ensuring all students get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. For this to happen, students need to be in school to access the valuable teaching and learning opportunities.

By working in partnership with students and their parents/carers collaboratively, we aim to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships by working together to put the right support in place.

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

Principles

Promoting excellent attendance is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture and the responsibility of the whole school community – parents/carers, teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners. The school will promote the importance of good attendance through the curriculum and by ensuring the school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent/carer to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents/carers decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

We will ensure that parents/carers are aware of their child's attendance and work with them to ensure good attendance and punctuality. To support and promote good attendance regular communication with students, parents and carers will be at the forefront of the schools strategy including informing parents and carers of their child's attendance percentage.

Students are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, their parents/carers, and the student. If a student 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/carer.

In line with Department for Education guidance Working together to improve school attendance, we will work together with all stakeholders (parents/carers, teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners) to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Registration

Students should be in school by 8.35am and the school day ends at 3.10pm.

Schools are required by law to take an attendance register twice a day (at the start of the morning session and the afternoon session) and this shows whether the student is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent etc.

Morning registration.

- The morning register is open at 8.40am and closes at 9.00am.
- Students arriving after the register has been taken but before 9.00am are recorded as late (L).
- Students arriving to school after registration closes, will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable reason for the lateness.

Afternoon registration

- The afternoon registration mark is taken at 12:25pm during period 4. Students arriving after the register has been taken but before XXXX are recorded as late (L). **Do we state P4 is PM reg mark??!?**
- Students arriving to school after registration closes, will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable reason for the lateness

When completing the register, the school follows the Department of Education school attendance guidance to determine which relevant code to use: Working together to improve school attendance: Chapter 8

Absence

If a student 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/carers. Therefore, information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as:

- An emergency (e.g bereavement)
- a medical appointment which can only be arranged during school time if an appointment cannot be made out of school hours (appointment confirmation received)
- a college interview
- transport issues- strike action
- authorised study leave
- religious holidays

Unauthorised absence is any absence that is not approved by your child's headteacher including:

- parents/carers keeping students off from school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absence for which a parent has not provided a reason
- absence where the reason provided has not been accepted as justifiable or genuine by the headteacher
- if your child arrives late after the close of register
- holidays taken during term time that have not been authorised by the Headteacher

These absences will be marked in the attendance register with an unauthorised absence code (O).

Regular Absence (Over a school year):
90% attendance = 19 days absent (half a day a week)
85% attendance = 29 days absent
80% attendance = 38 days absent (one day a week)
75% attendance = 47 days absent

Excellent Attendance	Good	Unsatisfactory- Improvement Required	Serious Concern- Persistently Absent
100%	99%-95%	94%-91%	90% or less

Reporting Absence

If a student is absent from school, we ask parents/carers to:

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

If parents/carers 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 by text and telephone call to find out the reason for absence. This ensures that the parent/carer is aware their child is not in school enabling the parent/carer, where necessary, to establish that their child is safe. The school may also ask the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to establish contact either by telephone, text message or a home visit may be completed. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised without a reason.

Our approach to managing absence is always to be understanding, and we encourage you to speak to your child's Form Tutor or Head of Year team or our Attendance Officer, where there are any concerns or changes. We

will always attempt to help you and your child to attend school. Alternatively, parents/carers may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

Punctuality and late procedures

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

If a student is late to school (arriving on the school site after 8.40am), they should sign in at reception. If there is no valid reason for their lateness, they will be recorded as late (L) and issued a 10-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-minute time penalty to be served on the same day.

Where lateness is a concern (L), your child's Form Tutor will contact you initially to offer support. Where this becomes persistent, the Head of Year Team or EWO will be involved and will formalise a plan to improve.

Where unauthorised lateness (U) is a cause for concern, the monitoring attendance procedures will be followed (see below).

Regular 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

Monitoring and managing absence

The school aims for every child to achieve at least 96% attendance each year – this is equivalent to 7.5 days absent from a possible 190 days. Students are classed by the Department for Education as "Persistently Absent" when their attendance reaches 90% or below (missing at least 19 days of school, equivalent to almost 1 month). Students are classed by the Department for Education as "Severely Absent" when their attendance reaches 50% or below (missing at least 95 days of school, equivalent to almost 5 months).

Our approach to managing absence is always to be understanding, and we encourage you to speak to your child's Form Tutor or Head of Year team, where there are any concerns or changes. We will always attempt to help you and your child to attend school.

The Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for attendance and safeguarding, the SENCO, the Pupil Premium Lead, the Head of Year teams and the EWO regularly monitor attendance of all students and use data to identify potential issues or patterns of absence. This includes looking at historical data and trends which could be across academic years. Form Tutors are provided with data every week and will have conversations weekly with students about their attendance, as well as contacting parents/carers where needed. During Form Tutor conversations students will be informed of their attendance percentage, how many days of learning has been lost but also

encourage, support students for good and improving attendance.

The attendance team will contact you by text and/or telephone call on the first day of absence, if you have not reported it.

In some cases, it may be that we contact you to see if an absent student could attend for part of the day if they are well enough or how we can support them coming back into school. Students 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.

Where a student is absent for 5 days or longer, the Attendance team will make a 'safe and well' home visit as part of our safeguarding procedures.

You can view your child's attendance percentage and absence rate at any time on the Arbor parent app.

Where absence becomes a concern, the following procedures are applied:

Stage 1: If your child's attendance falls below 96%, you will receive a Stage 1 letter to inform you, and we will then monitor their attendance closely. *Please note that 1 day of absence within the first 5 weeks of term, will trigger this letter.*

Stage 2: If there is no improvement to their attendance, due to further absences, we will send you a Stage 2 letter and arrange a meeting with the Attendance Officer, Assistant Head of Year or Head of Year. During this meeting we will discuss the concerns and to offer support with any possible barriers at home or at school which may be contributing to low attendance. Referrals to wider support services may be offered where appropriate. The discussion will be documented. Normally, further absences will be unauthorised without medical evidence. During this time a monitoring period will be implemented and absences will be unauthorised, without medical evidence.

Stage 3: Where there is still no improvement in your child's attendance, we will send you a Stage 3 letter and you will be referred to the Local Authority's attendance team. The Local Authority team has a statutory duty to investigate matters of ongoing poor school attendance and to consider formal statutory action, including issuing a Penalty Notice fine (see section below Penalty Notices).

During any monitoring period for attendance concerns the school may escalate through the stages and each case will be treated individually. Pupils with 10 sessions of unauthorised absences can be referred to the Local Authority without receiving all 3 stage letters.

Leave of Absence for Medical and Dental Appointments

We expect parents/carers 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, in order to grant leave, parents must inform the school in advance of the appointment and the school must be satisfied that, based on the individual facts of the case, there are exceptional circumstances which justify the leave.

Therefore, confirmation of the appointment will be required prior to authorising the absence and then an M code used on the register to record when the child has attended the appointment. This type of absence is authorised but will affect the students' attendance.

If a pupil is present at registration but then leaves the school to attend a medical or dental appointment during the session in question, no absence needs be recorded for that session.

Students should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment: students are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents/carers are expected to return their children to school following the appointment.

Rewarding good school attendance

Students who achieve good attendance are rewarded, for example:

- CARE Raffle tickets each week from Form Tutor for 100% or improved attendance
- Weekly year group prizes for attendance: 100% for the week and 100% for the year to date.
- Rewards assemblies
- Attendance to half termly 100% attendance rewards events
- Eligibility for external visits

Leaves of absence

Requests for leave of absence

If a parent/carer 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/carers, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer making the request to inform the other parent/carer.

The school will send a letter to the parent/carer making the request informing them if the absence will be authorised or unauthorised.

Granting leaves of absence

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority must do so.

These circumstances are:
• Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad: in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA).

• Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.

• Study leave: for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with. Please note this does not include any internal examinations such as mocks as study leave should not be granted in such cases.

• A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when

the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable.

• Exceptional circumstances: All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. In the case of schools maintained by local authorities and special schools not maintained by local authorities, it must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

If a request for leave of absence has not been received and we have reason to believe a student is on holiday, a letter will be sent to parents/carers 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.

Penalty Notices

National threshold when it is appropriate to issue a penalty notice

Parents/carers have the legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

Parents/carers 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/carers carry out their duty to secure suitable education for their children.

In February 2024, the Department for Education published Working Together to Improve School Attendance. Within this document, in Chapter 6, it lays out the changes to issuing penalty notices. The changes to the law are introduced through the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 and will come into effect from 19 August 2024.

The threshold is 10 sessions* of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

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

- There is a period of absence not authorised by the Headteacher (e.g. a holiday) or is in excess of the period authorised by the Headteacher.
- Persistent unauthorised absence.
- Persistent late arrival to school, i.e. after the register has closed and an unauthorised absence is recorded on the register.
- 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 Local Authority with whom other interventions will be used.

*A session is equivalent to half a day in school.

Notices to improve

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

Two penalty notice limit and escalation in cases of repeat offences

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

• The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
• A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
• A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Elective Home Education

If school receives written notification from parents/carers that they wish to electively home educate their child, school will contact the parent/carers and discuss their reasons in more detail, offering support to deal with any issues raised. We may arrange a meeting with you and other professionals, where appropriate. If after this time the parent/carer still wishes to electively 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/carers from choosing to electively 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 electively home educate, parents/carers are advised to contact Staffordshire County Council (or the relevant local authority of where the child resides) Elective Home Education department on 0300 111 8000 or email:

electivehomeeducation@staffordshire.gov.uk . Further information can be found on the Staffordshire County Council website.

Children Missing Education

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

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

To avoid any referrals, parents/carers 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.

Contact Details for the attendance team

General enquiries

- To report an absence or lateness call 01782 523977 and select "report an absence"
- For general enquiries email attendance@bhs.potteries.ac.uk

Senior Leader with responsibility for Attendance

- Miss Sophie Tracey, Assistant Headteacher shall@bhs.potteries.ac.uk

Attendance Lead

- Mrs J Jackson, Attendance Officer jjackson@bhs.potteries.ac.uk

Head of Year teams

Year 9:

- Mr M Bailey-Rigby, Head of Year mbailey-rigby@bhs.potteries.ac.uk

Year 10

- Miss C Rushton, Head of Year crushton@bhs.potteries.ac.uk

Year 11:

- Mrs N Biddle, Head of Year nbiddle@bhs.potteries.ac.uk

Sixth Form

- Mr M Scarratt, Head of Sixth Form mscarratt@bhs.potteries.ac.uk
- Miss P Stasiowska, Assistant Head of Sixth For pstasiowska@bhs.potteries.ac.uk

Form Tutors

- Please emailoffice@bhs.potteries.ac.uk and add “FAO: Form Tutor’s name” to the subject line.

Safeguarding

- Ms L Burgess, Assistant Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead lburgess@bhs.potteries.ac.uk

SEND Department

- Mrs G Jones, SENDCO gjones@bhs.potteries.ac.uk
- Mrs W Thompson, Assistant SENDCO **wthompson@bhs.potteries.ac.uk**
- Mrs J Williamson, Assistant SENDCO jwilliamson@bhs.potteries.ac.uk