Attendance Policy and Procedure

November 2023 – November 2024

Reviewed by: Senior Leadership Team
Coordinator: Headteacher
Approved by: Full Governing Body
Date: November 2023
Review Date: November 2024

1. Aims

Bowmansgreen Primary School aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and punctuality, ensuring that all the stakeholders receive regular communication
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence and poor punctuality
- Fulfilling its safeguarding duty to investigate any unexplained absences
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Keeping accurate, up-to-date records and having a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance
- Identifying and addressing the causes of low attendance and/or punctuality
- Working with external agencies, in order to identify and overcome barriers to good attendance and punctuality

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance 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

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education

- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 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
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The Inclusion Manager, with support of the SENCO, is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents/carers to discuss attendance issues

3.4 The Attendance Improvement Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with the school and the local authority to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is can be contacted via: 01442 454778 and attendancedutywest@hertfordshire.gov.uk

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9am.

3.6 School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Make calls to families when pupils do not attend school and no reason has been provided, to find out the reason why a pupil is not at school
- Liaise between parents/carers and the Headteacher, Inclusion Manager or SENCO, in order to provide detailed support and information about attendance and punctuality.

3.7 Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school on time, every day
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.50am on the day of the absence (or as soon as possible after that time) and on each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

3.8 Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school on time, every day (whether they come to school with their parents and carers or as independent travellers)

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, after lunch. 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

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not (for pupils of compulsory school age)
- The nature of the activity, if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

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

Pupils can arrive from 8.30am each morning, when classrooms are open and staffed. Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.45pm (EYFS and KS1) and 12.50pm (KS2).

4.2 Definitions

Good attendance at Bowmansgreen is being consistently above 96%.

Attendance statistics

Descriptor	Threshold Attendance	Whole Days Absence	Learning Hours Lost
Excellent	100%	0	0
Very Good	98%	4	20
Good	96%	7.5	37.5
Satisfactory	95%	9.5	47.5
Cause for concern	90%	19	95
Unsatisfactory	86%	27	135

Bowmansgreen defines **'absence'** as either:

- Arrival at school after the register has been taken
- Not attending school for any reason

Persistent absence:

- When a pupil misses 10% or more sessions (90% or less attendance)
- When a pupil misses 38 or more sessions in a school year

Severe absence:

- When a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

Persistent lateness:

- When a pupil is regularly late for school, after the close of the register

One unauthorised session is a morning or afternoon absence. A day's absence counts as two unauthorised sessions.

4.3 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.50am (or as soon as practically possible) by calling the school office (see also section 7).

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

Where the absence is longer than three days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school may ask for 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 has concerns about the severity or nature of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

4.4 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.

Parents/carers can request leaves of absence by completing a 'leave of absence form,' available from the school office.

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 apply for any type of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. (See section 5 for which term-time absences the school can authorise)

4.5 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be **marked as absent**, using the appropriate code

The school will follow up any lateness, to ascertain the reason and to record the time of arrival.

As it is rarely a pupil's fault if they arrive to school late, it is essential that parents/carers arrive with their child at the office, to explain why their child is late to school.

If a pupil arrives late on their own, a phone call will be made to the parent/carer, to establish the reason for the lateness.

If a pupil reaches **10** late sessions, school will contact the parent/carer via letter to notify them of this threshold and ask that they work with school to prevent further lateness for their child.

If the poor punctuality persists, school will contact the parent/carer via letter and invite them in to school to discuss their child's lateness and ways that school and home can work together to improve their child's punctuality. School may also inform the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO).

4.6 Following up unexplained or irregular absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason; ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary; identify whether the absence is authorised or not; and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may carry out a welfare check or alert the duty Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify and use the correct attendance code, as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school may carry out a welfare check or alert the duty Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)

If a pupil reaches **10** absence sessions (5 whole days), school will contact the parent or carer via letter to notify them of this threshold and ask that they work with school to prevent further absence for their child.

If a pupil reaches **15** absence sessions (7.5 whole days), school will contact the parent or carer via letter and invite them into school to discuss their child's absence and ways that school and home can work together to improve their child's attendance. This may involve setting targets and clarifying expectations to avoid a serious attendance problem from developing.

If a pupil reaches **20** or more absence sessions, school will inform the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) and the parent or carer will be invited to a meeting to look at ways of immediately improving their child's attendance. The AIO may attend this meeting or carry out a home visit. A letter will also be sent to the parent explaining the implications of meeting this threshold. School may decide not to authorise any future absence until the % attendance significantly improves.

Once a pupil reaches **38** absence sessions in a school year, their absence is defined as persistent absence and this will remain the case for the rest of the year, even if their % attendance improves. At this point, school may not be able to authorise any further incidences of absence. Parents of persistently absent pupils may be issued with a Penalty Notice.

Parents will receive a letter from the school warning them that they are at risk of being in breach of regulations if poor patterns of attendance do not improve. This

letter is normally sent when a child has been absent for between **8 -10 sessions without authorisation.**

If absence is unauthorised and the cumulative attendance **exceeds 15 sessions** across the current and/or previous term, a Penalty Notice may be issued and a fine of £60 per child, per parent may be imposed.

Once a pupil reaches **50%** absence, their absence is defined as severe absence. School will not authorise any further absence unless in exceptional circumstances. Parents of severely absent pupils are likely to be issued with a Penalty Notice.

4.7 Reporting to parents/carers

Parents/carers will be informed of their child's attendance during the twice-yearly family consultation meetings. A copy of the attendance record is made available including their child's current percentage attendance and absence, including unauthorised absences.

If a pupil's attendance becomes of concern at any point throughout the year (due to patterns of absence, the number of sessions missed or the falling overall percentage attendance), the class teacher or another member of staff will contact a parent to make them aware of the concerns, share with them a copy of their child's attendance record and discuss ways of improving their child's attendance with them.

Parents/carers will also receive up to date attendance information with their child's end of year school report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1. Granting approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant any leave of absence during term time, for reasons other than illness or medical appointments, if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances,' for example:

- death of parent/carer or immediate family member of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school in advance.

Each application for term-time absence is considered individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Requests for exceptional circumstances, must be made in writing, in advance by completing the required form, which is available from the school office. The

Headteacher will then make a decision, on whether or not the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

Illness and medical appointments are also valid reasons for authorised, term-time absence. Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence for these. If evidence cannot be provided, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

6. Legal sanctions

School or the local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must each pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This 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 the parent or withdraw the notice.

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

At Bowmansgreen, we constantly encourage and promote good attendance and it maintains a consistently high profile across the school.

Weekly celebration assemblies

Every Friday, the classes with the highest attendance in KS1 and KS2 are named in the celebration assembly and presented with the attendance cups and certificates.

School blog

The blog is used to remind parents about the importance of good attendance. It regularly features information and prompts about threshold attendance, why good attendance matters and the school's current % attendance.

Staff promoting and reinforcing good attendance

Staff are the ambassadors for modelling and promoting good attendance with their classes. Excellent teaching and learning supports excellent attendance and this is acknowledged and celebrated.

Attendance rewards
Pupils who achieve 100% attendance for the school year, receive a personalised certificate and a special reward.

Attendance display and information
A prominent display informs the school community about attendance targets and current percentages and where individual classes and pupils with noteworthy attendance are recognised and acknowledged.

8. Monitoring and analysing attendance

The school regularly monitors and analyses punctuality, attendance and absence across the school, at a group and individual pupil level, to identify individuals and particular groups whose punctuality and/or attendance may be cause for concern.

The analysis of punctuality and absence information is used to provide targeted support to specific pupils and their families

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 underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

Historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence are analysed, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.1 Reducing persistent and severe absence

The school will:

- Issue letters to families of persistent and severely absent pupils (see 4.6)
- Inform the local authority AIO of pupils with persistent and severe absence
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually or as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated.

At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to the following policies:

- Child Protection policy
- Behaviour policy
- Safe to Learn policy