

Attendance Policy

Bowburn Primary School

Academic Year

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Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Natalie Maughan	Head Teacher	n.maughan@bowburnprimary.co.uk
Natalie Maughan	Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	n.maughan@bowburnprimary.co.uk
Karen Gates	Parent Support Adviser (PSA)	k.gates@bowburnprimary.co.uk

Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Claire Foster	Deputy Head teacher	c.noble@bowburnprimary.co.uk
Sally Glover	School Business Manager	s.glover@bowburprimary.co.uk
Judith Johnston	Secretary	j.johnston@bowburnprimary.co.uk
Debs Halliwell	Secretary	D.halliwell@bowburnprimary.co.uk

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

Bowburn Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The

school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

Here's what the data shows:

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding,
Anti- bullying
Positive Behaviour,
Special Educational Needs
Child Protection and Safeguarding
Young Carers

The school and all partners will work together 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.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

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 early help and other family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues. When a parent is present, pupils and parents can work together to resolve them.



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 a parenting 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 or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.
- Take action to inform pupils and parents about good attendance, having rewards, recognition and celebrating good attendance each week, term and end of the academic year.

2. Attendance data

The school will analyse attendance data weekly to identify individual pupils or classes/cohorts where attendance gives rise for concern (for example vulnerable children). Patterns or trends of poor attendance will also be looked for. School staff will have role to play in this for example they may notice a child is regularly off on a particular day (e.g., a day when the class goes swimming)

This will be carried out by the attendance lead, alongside the PSA and office staff. Where attendance falls below school targets, or gives other cause for concern, parents will be informed by letter or phone call. If sufficient concerns exist then a parent will be invited in to attend an attendance planning meeting, held by the

attendance lead and /or PSA. During this meeting the reasons for concern about attendance will be discussed and targets to improve attendance will be set. These will be monitored, and a follow up meeting will be held. If no improvement is seen in attendance after a further meeting has been held, further targets will be set. After a period of 4 weeks if no improvement is seen, then a referral to the AIT will be made.

School will 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.

3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

When a pattern is spotted, the school will arrange to discuss this with pupils and/or parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and make a plan / otherwise agree how all partners can work together to resolve them. This may be a formal planning meeting between parent / PSA/attendance lead and if appropriate the pupil themselves in the first instance. The school's attendance policy aims will be shared as well as the importance of good attendance and the links to attainment will be emphasised. If the parent raises any issues that the school can support them with, then this can be discussed and agreed at the same time, for example issues around learning, SEND, pastoral or safeguarding issues. In the case of the child this may be friendship issues, issues around learning, etc.

4. Facilitate support

School intends to 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 liaising with the class teacher or other staff to resolve school based issues, it might include an early help or whole family plan where there are wider issues affecting attendance.

In cases of persistent or severe absence, signposting or referrals to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and information will be shared on when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority.

5. Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will 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 a parenting contract or education supervision order.

6. Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

General / frequently asked questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Attendance and absence management

Promoting good attendance and punctuality.

We promote and celebrate good attendance by:

- Making everyone aware of which class has had the best attendance and punctuality each week in whole school Celebration Assembly.
- The classes with the best attendance each week (in KS1 and KS2) choose one of the attendance bears to keep in class for the week.
- Letters are sent out to parents from the head teacher where children have excellent attendance, or their attendance improves.
- Children can track their own (and their class's) attendance on the Attendance Board in the middle corridor, aiming to stay on the 'green cloud'. Classes with best attendance achieve awards e.g., extra golden time or playtime.
- At the end of each term and the end of the academic year, children with 100% attendance or above school target receive certificates, attendance medals and their own attendance bears to keep.
- Sharing information with parents on attendance rates in our newsletters and website/ Face Book
- Children collect stamps for each week in a term they have 100% attendance/punctuality. At the end of each term, they can spend their stamps in the Attendance Shop to get rewards.

Communication

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

On the first day of absence

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home, then school will send a text message out asking why the child is absent. If no reply is received promptly, school will phone home to inform

parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why. If there is still no response, then other contacts held for the child will be phoned. If there is still no response, then a home visit will be carried out by the PSA.

Doctors and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

Periods of extended absence

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days, then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received, the school will make a home visit to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.

If the school receives no reason for any absence, then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action, including referral to the Attendance Improvement Team, to consider enforcement action and a possible Fixed Penalty Notice.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Punctuality:

Registration time is at **9am** at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 15 minutes after this time, then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 15 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs). Parents should sign pupils in using the online entry system.

Stage 1: If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions

A letter will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing concern. An appointment with the head teacher and /or the PSA will be offered

to discuss ways that the school can support to find ways to improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to the pupil e.g. improving their punctuality over a two week period to earn a reward.

Stage 2: If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with HT and /or Parent Support Adviser for a planning meeting. This will aim to discuss and address any issues which may be behind the pattern of poor punctuality.

Reminders will be given about the effect lateness has on a child and their well-being, including the amount of lost learning. Targets will be set for improved punctuality. Parents will be informed that punctuality will be closely monitored.

Stage 3: If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality

Then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Pupils with specific needs

School will take account of the specific needs of pupils/pupil cohorts. All attendance procedures will be applied fairly and consistently and consider the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

In development and implementation of the policy, school will consider obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Please see key contact list and details at the start of this document.