Bullers Wood School

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Quod Potes Tenta
Strive to your Utmost

Policy created by: Kevin Parsons	Date of Adoption: February 2016	Date to be Reviewed: September 2017	To be reviewed by Pupils, Parents & Community Committee

Introduction
This policy sets out the rationale, our aims and the strategies that will be used to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum attendance.

It is the duty of parents*/carers to ensure that their children attend school regularly (Education Act 1996 Section 7) with consideration of legal action against parents and carers who fail in this regard. It is the responsibility of the school to actively insist on pupil attendance and put in place robust processes to tackle unjustified absence and truancy. The Education Welfare Service will provide support and guidance to both students, parents/carers and schools in facilitating optimum pupil attendance and punctuality. Local authorities have legal powers to use parenting contracts, parenting orders, penalty notices and legal proceedings to tackle unjustified absence and truancy.
*Definition of a parent

A parent means:
- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

Rationale
We believe that high levels of attendance are paramount. Each student needs to be in school every day and on time to develop the broader skills, knowledge and understanding that they will need to make a success of their lives in the future world.

Research has shown that 'Students who attend school on a regular basis and are offered access to high-quality teaching and learning opportunities will usually leave school with qualifications and access to greater employment opportunities. The links between attendance and achievement are strong, and high levels of attendance at school should be the right of each student.' (*National Strategies 2009*)

Aims
Every student is expected to attend every lesson of each school day. The School encourages a climate where high attendance is the 'norm' and will expect our students to achieve a minimum of 96.5% attendance. Students must be made aware of the vital connection between attendance and achievement. All staff and particularly Form Tutors, Heads of Year and the Leadership Team have a crucial role to play in this process. Equally, parent/carers and carers make a critical contribution to the success of their child and therefore the School expects them to encourage good levels of attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.

Responsibilities
Bullers Wood School will ensure that:
- Students on roll are registered accurately an efficiently using and electronic registration system. Registers will be taken punctually at 8.30am and 3.00pm.
- A student arriving late to school after 8.30am will be recorded in the late book. If there is no legitimate reason for lateness, a late detention will be set. Students who arrive later than 8.50am must report to the Office where Admin Officer will record the lateness in the register and issue the appropriate sanction.
- If a student fails to register they will be marked as an unauthorised absentee.
- Attendance targets are set for the school, year groups and individual students. We expect our students to achieve over 96.5% attendance.
- Attendance and punctuality are monitored and sanctions imposed where appropriate.
- Attendance at lessons is recorded using lesson monitor through the electronic registration system.

- Parents/carers are contacted promptly when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised.

Students will be:

- Expected to attend school regularly and on time.
- Rewarded for excellent attendance through our rewards system.
- Expected to inform a teacher, form tutor or Head of Year if there is a reason which may lead to their absence from school.
- Required to bring written notification from their parent/carer in the Contact Book that explains any absence from school.
- Given a late mark and attend detention if they are late to school.

Parents/Carers will be asked to:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Parent/carers must telephone the School before 9am on each day of the student's absence. A telephone call can be regarded as a substitute for a note on the first day, but the Head of Year must be clearly satisfied that the caller is authentic. The student must provide a note written and signed by her parent/carer in the Contact Book on her return to the School. The School operates a First Day Calling System. In the event of a telephone call not being forthcoming from a parent/carer, the Head of Year will use the contact numbers on the relevant student's record in order to contact parent/carers to establish the reason and the anticipated length of absence and also to eliminate the possibility of truancy. If a student has been absent or subsequently returned but no explanation was received for the absence, a letter will be sent by the Head of Year asking for a reason to cover the date(s) concerned. Medical evidence should be provided if the absence is for 5 days or longer. Medical evidence may be requested if there are regular absences from school due to illness.
- Parent/carers to arrange routine medical appointments outside of School hours and the parent/carers must provide a note from the medical organisation to cover any appointment necessitating absence during the school day. Only in exceptional circumstances, can whole days be authorised for medical appointments. The student is expected to attend the School either side of the appointment in order to minimise absence from lessons.
- Inform the school in writing and discuss unavoidable absences well in advance of the event with the form tutor or Head of Year. The School **cannot** authorise any leave of absence in term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Only the Head teacher can authorise absence and determine the number of school days that a child can be away from school if granted. It is for the Head teacher to decide what constitutes an 'exceptional circumstance'. Leave of absence that is taken and not authorised by the Head teacher may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice (ie fine of £60) per parent/carer per student on the students' return to school.

Authorised Absence

Absence will be authorised for:

- Genuine sickness or illness
- Unavoidable medical / dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances
- Formal exclusion from school.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised for:

- Truancy
- Arrival (without justified reason) after registration has closed

- Shopping
- Looking after family members (except in exceptional circumstances)
- Minding the house
- Birthdays or other similar events
- Family holidays during term time

Register Procedures for Years 7 -11

- All students are expected to be in their form groups by 8.30am and 3.00pm where the tutor will record the attendance electronically
- Any student with permission to leave school during the day must sign out at reception and back in again on her return
- Unexplained absences are followed up by the HOY by telephone call or Truancy Call if the parent/carer cannot be reached

Register Procedures for Years 12 -13

- Students are expected to be in their form groups by 8.30am where the tutor will record the attendance electronically
- Students must sign out in the Office when leaving the site to work at home in the afternoon
- Students must complete the relevant permission slips and have them signed by their subject teachers if they are attending interviews/open days/taster courses etc

Punctuality

Punctuality is as important as good levels of attendance in that students who are persistently late miss out on the curriculum such as being part of a form group, taking part in PSHEE, Citizenship, collective worship, reflection and celebration. Lateness also means that students don't get the opportunity to bond with their peers and form friendships. Students miss important messages and information that are a key part of their day to day organisation and success in the School.

Persistent lateness after registration has closed constitutes the same offence for parent/carers as non-attendance and will therefore be dealt with in the same way by the Leadership Group, Heads of Year and Form Tutors.

Late Procedures for Years 7 to 13

- All students are expected to be in their form groups by 8.30am
- Late Gate Procedure (needs explaining)
- The names of students arriving after 8.30am will be recorded in the Late book.
- A sticker will be placed in the student's contact book giving the time and room for the late detention to be held after school the same day that the student is late.
- Non-attendance will result in a longer after school detention.
- Non-attendance at the above detention will result in a Leadership Group Detention
- Students who arrive later than 8.50am must report to the Office where an Admin Officer will record the lateness in the register and issue the appropriate sanction.

Attendance Procedures

Members of school staff have specific duties relating to attendance. Please see the attached appendix 1 for further details.

The role of the Head of Year is crucial in ensuring good levels of attendance and punctuality and in establishing partnerships with parent/carers so that they can work together in resolving issues related to non-attendance and poor punctuality. Apart from following the procedures outlined below, this also involves ensuring that a rolling Attendance Power Point is displayed in the Main Hall and Dining Hall and that attendance is displayed on all tables. It is important that all staff fulfil their duties with regard to attendance and punctuality in order to support them in their roles.

Heads of Year will be responsible for:

- Addressing day to day non-attendance and lateness
- Initiating same day response phone calls for unauthorised absences, in particular for those students with a known history of truancy or about whom the School is concerned. This makes it clear to parent/carers and students that unauthorised absence is taken seriously and will be challenged
- Identifying patterns of absence – same day each week/truancy from specific lessons and will work with the student, parent/carers, staff to resolve such issues
- Contacting parent/carers to express concern when a student's attendance falls below **96.5%** (this action is not required in cases of genuine/long term illness where the school has been kept informed by the parent/carer)
- Identifying persistent absentees (students who have accumulated **10%** or more absence) or are at risk thereof, ie 92%
- Assessing the causes of the absence with regard to the persistently absent and segment further the group of students accumulating **10%** or more absence – for example those with serious/chronic illness or injury which necessitates prolonged or frequent absences from school; those persistently truanting; or those whose combination or patterns of absence raises concerns
- Meeting with the parent/carer and student to discuss issues relating to attendance and punctuality and setting targets for improved attendance
- Providing support for tutors in the completion of Individual Action Plans for improving a student's attendance and providing guidance on how they can support the student in reaching her attendance target
- Liaising with the Family Liaison Worker about Home Visits
- Conducting scheduled/unscheduled attendance checks
- Ensuring consistency amongst form tutors for the recording of absences and lateness

If a pupil is consistently absent (below 96.5% attendance) and the school's efforts to affect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the student's attendance will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer, by the Head of Year.

The Education Welfare Officer visits the school regularly and provides strategic support for all attendance issues. The Education Welfare Officer will following the school's policy, request the issue of Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences, holidays and lateness after the close of the register. The Education Welfare Officer will meet with parents/carers to discuss attendance issues and initiate and manage a voluntary Attendance Improvement Plan as part of the parent/carer's commitment to improve their child's attendance. Should attendance not improve, the Education Welfare Officer will discuss the concern with the school and then give consideration to the issue of a Penalty Notice or make an application for legal proceedings.

PENALTY NOTICES

What is a Penalty Notice?

The law says that parent (s)/carer (s)/guardian(s) whose children of compulsory school age are absent from school without good reason are committing an offence, and those parent/carers may be prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced additional powers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 authorising Local Authorities & Schools to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 (introduced by section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003) introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under section 444(1). Parent/carers may discharge potential liability for conviction for an offence under section

444(1) by paying a penalty. There is no legal requirement for there first to have been a penalty notice before proceeding to prosecution.

When will a Penalty Notice be issued?
The School considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps)
- Inappropriate parentally-condoned absence
- Holidays in term time or excessive delayed return from an extended holiday without prior school permission
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed)

The School never takes such action lightly and would prefer to work with parents/carers to reduce unjustified absence without having to resort to any enforcement actions. School attendance is of such importance to all of us, however, that the School **will** use the powers if this is the only way of securing a child's schooling.

There is no set number of times a formal warning of possible Penalty Notice issue may be made in any particular case.
A parent/carer will be issued with a formal written warning that their child has unauthorised absences and that they have become liable for the issue of a Penalty Notice.

There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. The penalty must be paid in full. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority will prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies. The prosecution relates to irregular school attendance under the Education Act 1996 Section 444. Where a prosecution is an appropriate course of action a caution may be offered by the local authority as an alternative method of disposal.

THE OFFENCE OF FAILING TO ENSURE REGULAR ATTENDANCE

1. There are two offences relating to parent (s)/carer (s)/guardian(s) responsibility for ensuring regular attendance at the School: if a registered student is absent without authorisation from the School or alternative provision then the parent/carer is guilty of an offence under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996; if the parent/carer knows that the child is failing to attend regularly at the School and fails to cause her to do so, he/she is guilty of an offence under section 444 (1A) of the Education Act 1996.

2. No offence is committed if the parent (s)/carer (s)/guardian(s) proves any of the following statutory grounds:
    - The student was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause;
    - The student's absence was authorised by the School or, in the case of alternative provision, by a person authorised to grant leave by the School;
    - The absence was on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent (s)/carer (s)/guardian(s) belongs;
    - The local authority is under a duty to provide transport to the school and has failed to do so, or in certain circumstances, that the School is not within walking distance of the student's home and the local authority has made no suitable arrangements for the student's transport to and from the School;

- If the student has been excluded under section 52 of the Education Act 2002 (as they do not have to attend the School they are excluded from) providing that the student attends alternative provision as directed;
- If the student is receiving education otherwise than by regular attendance at the School (for example, by home education); Sue asks if the student would be on roll if home educated? or
- If the student has no fixed abode and the parent(s)/carer(s)/guardian(s) can show that their trade or business requires them to travel, and the student has attended the School as regularly as the nature of the trade or business permits, and the student has attended the School for at least 200 sessions during the preceding twelve months from the date on which the proceedings were instituted.