

# **Bullers Wood School**

## **Attendance & Punctuality Policy**



*Quod Fides Tenta*  
Strive to your Utmost

<b>Policy created by: Sarah Seall</b>	<b>Date of Adoption: July 2023</b>	<b>Date to be Reviewed: July 2024</b>	<b>To be reviewed by Governing Board</b>
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## 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.

## Categories of School Attendance:

Attendance	Absent for	Category:
98 - 100%	0-4 days <i>0-24 lessons</i>	Excellent attendance - best chance of academic success
96 - 97.9%	5-7 days <i>30-42 lessons</i>	No concern - likely to achieve well
94 - 95.9%	8-11 days <i>48-66 lessons</i>	Concerned - At risk of underachieving
92 - 93.9%	12-15 days <i>72-90 lessons</i>	Significant concern - At serious risk of underachieving

90.1 - 91.9%	16-18 days <i>96-108 lessons</i>	Serious Concern - At severe risk of underachieving
90% or less	19 + days <i>114+ lessons</i>	Persistently Absent - At extreme risk of underachieving
There are 183 school days a year. That's plenty of time for other activities.		

## Responsibilities

### **Bullers Wood School will ensure that:**

- Students on roll are registered accurately and efficiently using an electronic registration system. Lesson registers will be taken punctually at 8.30am.
- A student arriving late to school after 8.30am will be marked late and a late detention will be set for the following day. Students who arrive later than 8.30am must report to the School Office (unless they have been registered by staff on the late gate duty) where an 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 rewards given (termly prize draw, termly form group award) or sanctions imposed where appropriate.
- Attendance at lessons is recorded using lesson monitor through the SIMS 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 provide written notification from their parent/carer that explains any absence from school.
- Given a late mark and attend a 30 minute detention the following day if they are late to school.

### **Parents/Carers will be asked to:**

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Contact the School before 8.30am on each day of the student's absence using the Gateway App. The School operates an everyday contact system. In the event of contact not being forthcoming from a parent/carer, the School will use the telephone 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, school staff will contact the parent/carer asking for a reason to cover the date(s) concerned.
- Provide medical evidence if the absence is for 5 days or longer. Medical evidence may be requested if there are regular absences from school due to illness.
- Arrange routine medical appointments outside of School hours. Where this is not possible, evidence of the appointment must be provided for example the confirmation text/letter or appointment card. Only in exceptional circumstances, can whole days be authorised for medical appointments. The student is expected to attend 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 Head of Year. The School **cannot** authorise any leave of absence in term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Only the Headteacher can authorise absence and determine the number of school days that a child can be away from school if granted. It is for the Headteacher to decide what constitutes an 'exceptional circumstance'. Unauthorised periods of absence may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice (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 during lesson 1 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 the room for their first lesson before 8.30am where the teacher will record the attendance electronically.
- Students will be registered for every lesson in the school day.
- Any student with permission to leave school during the day must sign out at Reception and back in again on their return.
- Unexplained absences are followed up by the School via a telephone call or Truancy Call if the parent/carer cannot be reached.

### **Register Procedures for Years 12 -13**

- All students are expected to be in the room for their first lesson or study period before 8.30am where the teacher will record the attendance electronically.
- Students must tap out using their KS5 lanyard 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 Character Development sessions (CD), 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 Form Tutors, Head of Year and Leadership.

### **Late Procedures for Years 7 to 13**

- All students are expected to be in the room for their first lesson before 8.30am.
- The student will receive a late detention to be held after school the following day. This detention will happen within the relevant year group.
- 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.
- Students who arrive before the end of period 1 (9:20am) will be marked as late on the register.
- Students who arrive after the end of period 1 (9:20am) will be marked late after the close of register and registered as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

### **Attendance Procedures**

Members of school staff have specific duties relating to attendance and must record student accurately at each lesson on SIMS.

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 at Parents' Evenings 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.
- 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.
- Identifying persistent absentees (students who have accumulated **10%** or more absence) or are at risk thereof, i.e. 90%.
- Meeting with the parent/carer and student to discuss issues relating to attendance and punctuality and setting targets for improved attendance. The Head of Year may discuss with the parent/carer, access to wider support services with the aim of reducing barriers to improved attendance.
- **Liaising with external agencies to support students' attendance e.g. Borough Early Help Team.**
- 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 their attendance target.
- Liaising with the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) about Home Visits
- Conducting scheduled/unscheduled attendance checks.
- Ensuring consistency amongst form tutors for the recording of absences and lateness

### **Procedures for addressing poor attendance:**

If a student's attendance falls below the School's 96.5% expectation, the following process will be initiated:

- Form Tutor to speak with the student and telephone the parent/carer to identify any issues or concerns and offer support.
- HOY to speak with the student and parent/carer.
- Attendance Letter sent reminding students and parents/carers of the School expectations and their legal obligation to ensure young people are attending school regularly. This will be sent by the Assistant Headteacher for Attendance in agreement with the Educational Welfare Officer.
- Medical Evidence Letter sent to request all absences due to illness are supported by medical evidence.
- Referral to the Educational Welfare Officer who will contact the family either by telephone or offer a meeting to discuss concerns and offer support, implement 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 consider the issue of a Penalty Notice or make an application for legal proceedings.

The Education Welfare Officer visits the school and meets with the Heads of Year and Assistant Headteacher staff regularly and provides strategic support for all attendance issues. The Education Welfare Officer will support the school's safeguarding procedures. The Education Welfare Officer, after consultation with the School, will request the issue of Penalty Notices from the Local Authority for unauthorised absences, holidays and lateness after the close of the register.

### **Students with special educational needs and disabilities or medical conditions**

Whilst every student has a right to a full-time education and we maintain high attendance expectations for all students, the School acknowledges that for some families, additional needs and extenuating circumstances can lead to specific barriers to attendance. Heads of Year and the Educational Welfare Officer in collaboration with the SEND-CO will use their discretion to make reasonable adjustments in the implementation of the attendance procedures to best support the student and their individual needs. This is in line with the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **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)
- 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.