




THE BISHOP'S STORTFORD HIGH SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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		Approval:	



TBSHS: A truly all-round education



Principles

In order to make the most of their education at TBSHS students are expected to have a good record of attendance and punctuality. Poor attendance and punctuality result in a poor education and low attendance rates are associated with lower achievement. DFE research suggests that 17 missed school days a year is the equivalent of a GCSE grade drop in achievement.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The school will do this through its use of curriculum and learning materials and by recognising good attendance accordingly. Parents/carers and students should ensure that they are at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. A parent/carer is committing an offence if they fail to make sure that their child attends school regularly, even if they are missing school without the parent/carers knowledge.

Some children are reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, 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 does not matter and it may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by the parent/carer.

Parents/carers whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent/carer may refer the child to the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) from the Local Authority (LA). They will also try and resolve the situation with voluntary support which may be in the form of a parenting contract. This is a voluntary contract between the school and parents/carers that details the support required from all involved to address the issues with a child's attendance at school. If this, or other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance fail, the AIO or a Police Officer may decide to issue a Penalty Notice (a fine) in accordance with a published LA code. The penalties are set at £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days. Non-payment will normally lead to court prosecution. Parents/carers can also be imprisoned for 3 months for failing to ensure regular attendance of their child. Magistrates can also impose a Parenting Order which means that the parent/carer has to attend a parenting class.

Schools are required by law to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether a student is present or not. If a student of compulsory school age is absent, every half day absence has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only the school can authorise the absence, not the parents/carers.** This is why it is important that parents/carers provide information about every absence so that the school can make a reasonable decision as to whether it can be deemed authorised or not.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school very late (after 9.40am)
- Birthday outings
- Family holidays for which permission has not been sought in advance and no "leave of absence" granted.

The school's attendance policy must include procedural referral arrangements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of students. Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/carer/child or have general concerns about the absence to the AIO.

The school has an attendance target of 96.5% for 2021-22. The government's persistent absence threshold has been set at 90% (it was 80%). At this point the AIO will be notified and will become involved with the family.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality and for deciding how to deal with individual absences. They are intended to promote good practice in this area.

1. Registration

Registers are marked electronically by Form Tutors in form rooms. Registration normally takes place from 8.30a.m.to 8.40a.m.and from 3.00p.m.to 3.30p.m. There are exceptions on early closure days and during examination periods when the second registration is earlier.

Registers are kept open from morning registration until 8.40a.m because of the number of students who travel to school over a considerable distance. In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, the school may keep the register open for a longer period.

2. Lateness

Students who miss either morning or afternoon registration for whatever reason must sign in at reception. on the Vericool registration system.

The school actively discourages late arrival and lateness is monitored by Form Tutors in order to recognise patterns which could provide grounds for action by the school and which could lead to referral to the AIO in serious cases. Where a student is persistently late at morning registration the student will be monitored by the appropriate inclusion manager.

3. Categorising Absence

The following table lists the codes that are used in the register to categorise an individual's absence. It should be remembered that it is the school's discretion, not the parents/carers, as to what code to use.

/	Present a.m. reg	N	No reason yet provided for absence
\	Present p.m. reg	O	Unauthorised absence
B	Educated off site	P	Approved sporting activity
C	Other authorised circumstances	R	Religious observance
D	Dual Registration	S	Study leave
E	Excluded	T	Traveller Absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed)	U	Late (after reg closed)
H	Family holiday (agreed)	V	Educational visit
I	Ill	W	Work experience
J	Interview	X	School Closed to Student (Covid 19)
L	Late (before reg closed)	Y	Enforced school closure
M	Medical / Dental appointment	!	School closed to students
7	Illness Due to Covid 19	#	School closed to staff and students
8	Self-isolating due to Covid 19	-	All should attend/no mark recorded

4. Reporting and Explaining Absence

Parents/carers should contact the school's MIS Parent App and leave a detailed message including the name of the student, their form and the reason for the absence. Reasons such as 'ill' or 'sick' will be unauthorised. If parents/carers do not have access to the App, they should contact the schools' Absence Line as soon as possible, and preferably before 8 a.m., on **every day of absence**, again giving their child's name, form and the reason for absence or late arrival.

The school implements a First Day Response system. The Administration Support office will attempt to contact the parents/carers of any child who has been marked absent at that morning's registration and for whom no explanation of absence has been received. Through this process, all unexplained absences should be resolved on the day but any outstanding ones will initially be chased by the Form Tutor.

In the first instance, Form Tutors will chase those students whose parents have failed to provide an explanation for absence. The Administration Support office inform the Inclusion Managers of any student who is absent for a third consecutive day with no explanation, so that they can contact parents/carers by telephone.

Absences that continue to go unexplained, or those about which there is any uncertainty or ambiguity, will initially be referred to the head of year. If further clarification is needed, it is up to the member of the senior leadership team with pastoral responsibility for attendance (SLT in charge of attendance) to decide which authorised or unauthorised category the absence falls within.

5. Rewarding good attendance and punctuality

Each term, students who have achieved 100% attendance will receive a congratulatory e-mail from the School Office.

At the end of the year, students who achieve 100% attendance will be presented with an attendance certificate.

6. Leave of Absence

As it can be very damaging to a child's educational progress, the school and the Local Authority actively discourage any time out of school except for wholly unavoidable or exceptional circumstances.

- Parents/carers **CANNOT** demand a leave of absence as an automatic right.
- The power to authorise/unauthorise a leave of absence belongs to the SLT in charge of attendance (student welfare)
- Parental/carers requests **MUST** be made in writing to the SLT in charge of attendance (student welfare) **IN ADVANCE**, as early as possible, and at least 10 days beforehand. Failure to do so will mean the holiday is automatically unauthorised and that it may be referred to the LA for consideration of a Penalty Notice.
- Schools cannot apply blanket policies to either approve or reject all applications but must consider each request on its own merits. For example, authorisation will be given for weddings and funerals, family graduation ceremonies, recognised awards ceremonies (ie, medals for long service, achievement and bravery); normally covering one or two days only (depending on the location of the event). In addition, parents/carers in the Armed Forces and the Police who have allocated leave entitlement will be granted authorisation on the proviso that a covering letter from their employer is forthcoming.
- Extended periods of absence will be granted **ONLY** in exceptional circumstances. (An extended period is any time greater than 10 school days).

Students will be marked **H** (authorised absence) for the agreed period of holiday leave and **G** (unauthorised absence) for holiday absence that has not been approved by the school or for any days taken in excess of the agreed period.

7. Illness, medical and dental appointments

Students are encouraged to make medical or dental appointments out of school hours but the school recognises that this is not always possible. Therefore, missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is authorised absence, but this will affect their overall attendance figure.

Form Tutors should be notified in writing prior to the appointment, initial the letter, and then students must show the letter to the school receptionist. They must register themselves in or out at reception. Confirmation of an appointment via sight of an appointment card is essential if a student is an irregular attendee.

A student receiving medical treatment on site should be marked present.

Where any member of staff has grounds to doubt the authenticity of an illness, they should discuss the matter with the relevant Head of Year or Inclusion Manager.

8. Leaving or Returning to the school site

The school keeps a record of students leaving or returning to the site so that it has an accurate record of who is on site. This is particularly important in the event of an emergency requiring evacuation of the building. Students must register themselves in or out at reception.

The school will not let students of compulsory school age off site during the school day without authorisation from parents. Medical appointments should be reported using the School MIS App at least two days prior to the appointment, along with relevant confirmation of the appointment. A letter or screenshot of the appointment should be attached to the message. Students must sign out at the school reception and sign back in on their return.

9. Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

Absence data is available on-line and is also regularly produced by the Inclusion manager to assist Form Tutors and Heads of Year in monitoring attendance and punctuality. The AIO also visits the school to monitor attendance.

Where a child is absent from school without authorisation, the Admissions support staff and Inclusion Managers make contact with the parent/carer to discuss the issue in the first instance. Where this is unsuccessful in ending any persistent absence, the student is referred to the Head of Year.

Where a child has had a pattern of truancy or parentally-condoned absence, the Form Tutor and Head of Year will monitor the attendance more closely and the Attendance Officer will be notified. The parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible, by phone, or by letter and the Form Tutor will be kept aware of the situation. In the case of persistent truancy or absence, careful investigation of the matter must be undertaken in order to ascertain the causes. The key is to enable the student to return to a pattern of regular attendance. Assurance and advice within the school should first be sought from the SLT in charge of attendance, and the Learning Support department. In persistent cases or when an individual student's attendance level falls below 90% in any one term without good reason, a referral to the AIO may be made by the school. Following investigation and depending upon the causes and extent of the truancy or absence, a variety of actions will be taken to reintegrate the student into the school as described in "Principles" above. These could include a parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations, 2007.

10. Other non-routine attendance matters

10.1 Days of religious observance

This is absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong, including religious festivals.

The school is sensitive to such requests and asks that parents/carers give advance notice.

10.2 Interviews with prospective employers or for a place at another school (including entrance examinations)

Form Tutors should normally ask for advance notice and proof of the appointment, for example a letter of invitation. If the interview takes place during Year 11 and the Form Tutor is satisfied that it is linked to future education or employment prospects, absence can be recorded as "J – interview" which counts as "approved education activity".

10.3 Study Leave

Other than in exceptional circumstances (for example as part of a strategy to prevent permanent exclusion) study leave will be granted sparingly, not exceeding 15 school days for Year 11, during the actual examination period itself.

If possible the period of study leave should be less than the examination period. Regard should also be paid to the individual student's ability to manage study leave and benefit from it.

Study leave cannot be counted as "approved education activity" as it is unsupervised.

10.4 Exclusions

A student excluded for a fixed period remains on roll and the absence should be treated as authorised as it results from a decision taken by the school. Similarly, the absence of a permanently excluded student is treated as authorised while any review or appeal is in progress.

In the case of a permanent exclusion the student's name should be removed from the school roll on the first school days after the day on which:

- i. The independent appeal panel upholds the permanent exclusion;
- ii. The independent appeal panel does not uphold the permanent exclusion, but does not direct the student's reinstatement;
- iii. The prescribed period for lodging an appeal has expired and the parent has not lodged an appeal;
- iv. The parent has, before the expiry of the prescribed period, advised the LA in writing that he does not intend to appeal.

In the meantime the absence is to be recorded as authorised using code "E". The school is responsible for setting work for an excluded student who remains on the school roll.

10.5 Family bereavements

The school will respond sensitively to requests to attend funerals or associated events and will authorise such absences.

10.6 Child caring for a sick or disabled family member (young carers)

In a genuine crisis, the school will approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made. The school will set a time limit for the absence and set some schoolwork so the student does not fall far behind while at home. Referral to outside agencies will be done sensitively, recognising that a child may fear being "put into care" if the parents/carers are seen as unable to cope. In the final analysis it is important to remember that in accordance with the Children's Act 1989, the interests of the child are paramount and that advice should be sought from Social Services. In these circumstances Form Tutors and Heads of Year should seek the advice of the school's Designated Senior Person (DSP), or deputy DSP's.

10.7 Family prison visits

The school will authorise requests for absence, which will enable a child to visit his or her parent in prison.

10.8 Birth of a child

Support is directed to keeping the student in school wherever possible and to her return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A student who becomes pregnant will be allowed no more than 18 weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

10.9 Special occasions

The school will consider each request individually. Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence. For example, attending the wedding of a family member would be acceptable but a day out of school for the student's birthday or for a shopping trip would not. Requesting leave of absence for a 'special birthday' involving a family gathering would not be granted. The school will always take into account the nature of the event; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the student's overall pattern of attendance. Absence towards the end of each half term and term will always be recorded as unauthorised, unless prior permission has been sought and agreed.

10.10 Public performances, including film or TV work

The Local Authority must licence a student to take part in a public performance.

Agreed participation should be treated as authorised absence, but as student's progress through the school towards GCSE and A-Levels, permission will be less forthcoming. If granted, students must always ensure they catch up with all missed work as quickly as possible.

10.11 Traveller children when the family is travelling

To help ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. This means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling.

While the traveller is away, the base school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised.

Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

10.12 Deleting students from the school roll

Students can only be deleted from the school roll by the Head teacher. In so doing they strictly follow the current DFE regulations regarding such deletions. These are outlined in Regulation 9 of the Education (Student Registration) Regulations, 2006.

Students who have been permanently excluded are to be removed from the roll.

When the school has made the decision to remove a student from their roll, the Administration Support office notifies the LA.

If a student is to be taken off roll because the child is moving to another area or school, the administrative staff should first find out the name and address of the new school and when the student will start, confirming this information with the receiving school.

10.13 Precautionary measures to protect children

Where a student is said to be moving to a new school all school staff should be concerned:

- If the parents/carers do not name the new school;
- If a student has “disappeared” from the area without explanation;
- If a student has not returned to school within ten school days of the agreed return date for a holiday taken in term time.

If these concerns arise, staff should speak to the DSP who will alert Children’s Services without delay. If, however, staff have good reason to believe that a crime may have been committed, they should contact the police directly. In all of the above cases a member of the school’s Senior Leadership Team (SLT) must be informed.

Responsibilities for Attendance Matters

Students

Students should attend school punctually every day. If this is not possible for any reason, they must follow the procedures as described above for signing in and out and for reporting absence. They should raise any particular reasons for non-attendance as soon as possible with their parents/carers or a member of staff so that any difficulties can be resolved.

Parents/Carers

Parents/carers should ensure that their child attends punctually every day, avoiding taking them out of school except for exceptional circumstances. Where possible, any planned absence should be raised with the school well in advance and any absence or late arrival reported by contacting the school as delineated above. They should be alert for any particular reasons for non-attendance and contact the school or the AIO as soon as possible to work together to resolve any difficulties.

Form Tutors

Form Tutors are the first point of contact for routine attendance matters. Absences reported by the School MIS App or telephone will automatically be updated on the school system.

Form Tutors are responsible for marking the register at morning and afternoon registration using the appropriate attendance codes and for first level monitoring of an individual's attendance and punctuality, including robustly chasing students for adequate explanations for absence.

Heads of Year/Inclusion Managers

Heads of Year/Inclusion Managers provide a second level of monitoring of attendance and punctuality, looking at trends across individuals, forms and year groups.

Heads of Year/Inclusion Managers are consulted by Form Tutors about particular attendance concerns and work with them, other staff, students, parents/carers and the AIO, if necessary, to resolve any issues that are preventing regular attendance. They meet occasionally with the AIO to review attendance.

Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer is the SLT in charge of attendance who oversees all attendance matters on behalf of the school and is assisted by the Inclusion Managers. They are responsible for the Attendance Policy and its implementation and will be consulted by Heads of Year as required.

Head teacher

The SLT in charge of attendance is responsible for authorising any leave of absence.

Attendance Matters

The SLT in charge of attendance has strategic responsibility for all attendance matters. Day-to-day responsibility for administering the attendance is overseen by the Heads of Year and the Inclusion Managers. The Schools Admissions Office produce daily registers for emergency evacuation purposes and contact any parents/carers whose child is absent from school that day for whom no explanation has been received. They update registers with reasons for absence in the light of the calls they receive and make. They produce weekly registers for Form Tutors to monitor attendance.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents/carers as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

This policy was updated and adopted by Student Welfare Committee November 2021