

Attendance Policy

BEDWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Bedwell Crescent,
Stevenage, Herts, SG1 1NJ**

Reviewed February 2023

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1. AIMS

At Bedwell School, we believe that if children attend school regularly, they will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and get the best start possible in life.

Our school aims to achieve this by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to ensure their children attend regularly (at least 96% and as close to 100% as possible), and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance 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:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. SCHOOL PROCEDURES

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

See appendix D for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Under normal circumstances, pupils should arrive in school by 8.45 on each school day. As a result of Covid-19, we are currently running staggered start times, and children should arrive at their class' allocated time.

The register for the first session will be taken when children arrive in class, and will be kept open for thirty minutes. The register for the second session will be taken when the class return after their lunch break.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on each day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.00 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

This should be done by:

- telephone (01438 351198)
- text (01438 300023)
- email (admin@bedwell.herts.sch.uk)

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide 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 is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Once a pupil's attendance drops below 93%, the School will record absence as unauthorised unless medical evidence (doctor's note, copies of prescriptions, evidence of prescribed medicines, letters from hospitals) is provided.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents 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.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L).

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U).

The school will regularly monitor lateness and will contact parents to tackle any ongoing issues.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow a First Day Response Procedure to ascertain the reason for any absence, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.6 Reporting to parents

The school will share attendance reports with parents at the end of each term, detailing their child's attendance and absence for that term. This will also be discussed at parent consultations in the Autumn and Spring Terms. Attendance reports for the academic year will be issued alongside each child's annual report at the end of the Summer Term.

4. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The School considers each application for term-time absence 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.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments - as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance - where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes - this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Term-time holidays will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

4.2 Legal sanctions

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added two sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures

Further information on penalty notices is available via the Hertfordshire Penalty Notices Code of Conduct (see Appendix A) and at

<https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance>

5. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

The School rewards and celebrates good attendance by:

- Weekly updating of attendance board in whole-school assembly, with an additional playtime and attendance cup given to the class with the highest attendance for the previous week. The name of winning class is displayed in the entrance and on their exterior classroom door.
- Non-uniform day for the class with the highest attendance percentage each half-term
- Children with 100% attendance for the previous half-term are invited to take part in an additional reward activity (eg. inflatables session, trampolining, bowling etc)

6. ATTENDANCE MONITORING

The Headteacher monitors pupil absence on a fortnightly basis.

Parents are expected to call the School in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Once a pupil's attendance falls below 96% we will follow a letter monitoring system using the Attendance Flowchart (see Appendix B).

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. Unless there are exceptional extenuating circumstances, persistently absent pupils will have an action plan in place to improve their attendance, agreed in consultation with their parents (see model in Appendix C).

Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

The attendance of vulnerable groups (Free School Meals, Pupil Premium, SEN etc) is monitored on a half-termly basis to identify groups which have a gap in attendance.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. One member of the Governing Body is designated as the link governor for attendance, and will meet regularly with the Headteacher to discuss whole-school attendance, persistent absentees, attendance levels of vulnerable groups and actions being taken by the school to improve attendance.

7.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The school administrative team

The school administrative team:

- Ensure that attendance data is recorded using the school management information system (using codes listed in Appendix D)
- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Records reasons for absence and lateness
- Follow-up on unexplained absences and ensure that First Day Response procedures are followed
- Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with Attendance Improvement Officer to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

7.4 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
- promoting the value of regular attendance and punctuality

8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Governing Body.

9. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy is linked to our Child Protection Policy

Hertfordshire County Council

Penalty Notices

Unauthorised Absence (Truancy)

Hertfordshire Code of Conduct

April 2019

Local Code of Conduct – Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence (Truancy)

Introduction

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers the police, designated Local Authority Officers and Headteachers and Deputy and Assistant Headteachers authorised by them to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absence (truancy) of pupils of statutory school age.

The government requires Local Authorities to issue a Code of Conduct to which all parties involved must adhere. Penalty notices may be issued only in accordance with the terms of the Code of Conduct.

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that:

- the powers are applied consistently and fairly
- duplicate notices are not issued
- issuing a notice does not conflict with proceedings proposed or being taken by the Local Authority under section 444 of the Education Act 1996
- suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of the penalty notice scheme.

The Law

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added sections 444A and 444B to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for

that offence by paying a penalty. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 set out the framework for the operation of the scheme.

All those defined as a parent under section 576 of the Education Act 1996 are considered to be parents for the purpose of these provisions.

As with prosecutions under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 a penalty notice may be issued to each parent liable for the offence in respect of each child.

Penalty notices apply to parents of children of compulsory school age who are registered pupils at maintained schools, academies, Pupil Referral Units (Education Support Centres), City Technology Colleges, Studio Schools, UTCs and any other alternative education provision arranged under section 19 of The Education Act 1996.

Parents cannot be prosecuted for the offence for which the penalty notice was issued until after the final deadline for payment has passed and the penalty remains unpaid. Parents cannot be convicted of that offence if the penalty is paid in accordance with the notice.

The Local Authority will retain any revenue from penalty notices to cover the administration of the scheme and any legal actions arising from it.

Rationale

Regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for pupils registered at schools, academies or other maintained or alternative provision.

A penalty notice may be a suitable intervention in circumstances of unauthorized absence where the school considers a parent is capable of securing their child's regular attendance. It may be particularly effective at an early stage before attendance problems become entrenched.

Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued

- Penalty notices may only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence
- The pupil must have at least **15 sessions** (half days) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term
- The school must have sent a formal warning letter to each parent separately, addressed and on school headed paper. This must be sent by first class post.
- The purpose of the warning letter is to give a parent the opportunity to prevent further unauthorised absence, so should be sent as soon as unauthorised absence occurs.
- The formal warning letter must have been sent in the same term that the application for Penalty Notice is made.
- The school/academy/police or Local Authority Attendance Officer considers that issuing a penalty notice could avoid further absence

- Issuing a penalty notice does not conflict with any other legal action being taken
- Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.
- A maximum of **two** separate penalty notices will be issued to a parent within any twelve month period
- Penalty notices will be issued for pupils of compulsory school age, up to the end of the autumn term of year 11 - this is in order to ensure sufficient time to prosecute unpaid Notices
- A penalty notice will not be issued in respect of a pupil who is looked after by the Local Authority without the prior agreement of the Attendance Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Attendance
- Government guidance is clear that a Penalty Notice should not be issued unless the Local Authority is prepared to prosecute if it remains unpaid. The information contained in the application will form part of the evidence in any subsequent prosecution and therefore must be fully completed. If it is not, the Local Authority may decide not to issue the Notice.

Responsibilities of the Local Authority for issuing penalty notices

Primary responsibility for issuing penalty notices rests with the Local Authority and may not be delegated. Schools, academies and the police may issue penalty notices if they wish to do so but any notices issued by them must comply with the Local Authority Code of Conduct and a copy of any penalty notice issued must be provided to the Local Authority.

In Hertfordshire all parties agree that the Integrated Service for Learning Attendance Teams administer the scheme and issue penalty notices on behalf of police, schools, academies and other settings to ensure fairness and consistency and in the event that subsequent legal action may need to be taken.

The Local Authority receives applications to issue penalty notices from schools, academies and the police. Penalty notices will be issued provided that:

- the circumstances of the absence meet the requirements of the Code of Conduct
- the information is provided in the specified manner
- the request is received not more than 10 school days after the final absence cited

The Local Authority retains revenue from the scheme to cover the costs of issuing and enforcing notices and prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Appealing against the issue of penalty notices

There is no statutory right of appeal once a penalty notice has been issued. The Local Authority may withdraw a notice if it has been issued incorrectly. If the penalty notice has been issued in accordance with Hertfordshire's Code of Conduct there is no facility to overturn the decision to issue the notice.

Effect of issuing penalty notices

If the penalty is not paid in full before the expiry of the period for paying it the Local Authority named in the notice shall either institute proceedings against the recipient for the offence or shall withdraw the notice. The School/Academy will be required to provide a witness statement and must be prepared to attend court if required.

Payment of penalty notices

The amount payable is £60 (per parent) if paid within 21 days or £120 (per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice.

Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.

Penalty notices are sent by first class post and are deemed to have been received on the second day after posting.

Arrangements for payment are detailed on the penalty notice and payment by cheque, postal order and by debit/credit card is accepted.

Withdrawal of penalty notices

The Local Authority may withdraw penalty notices in circumstances where it determines that the notice:

- has not been issued in accordance with the Code of Conduct
- ought not to have been issued
- ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient
- has not been paid but it is not appropriate to prosecute the recipient for the offence

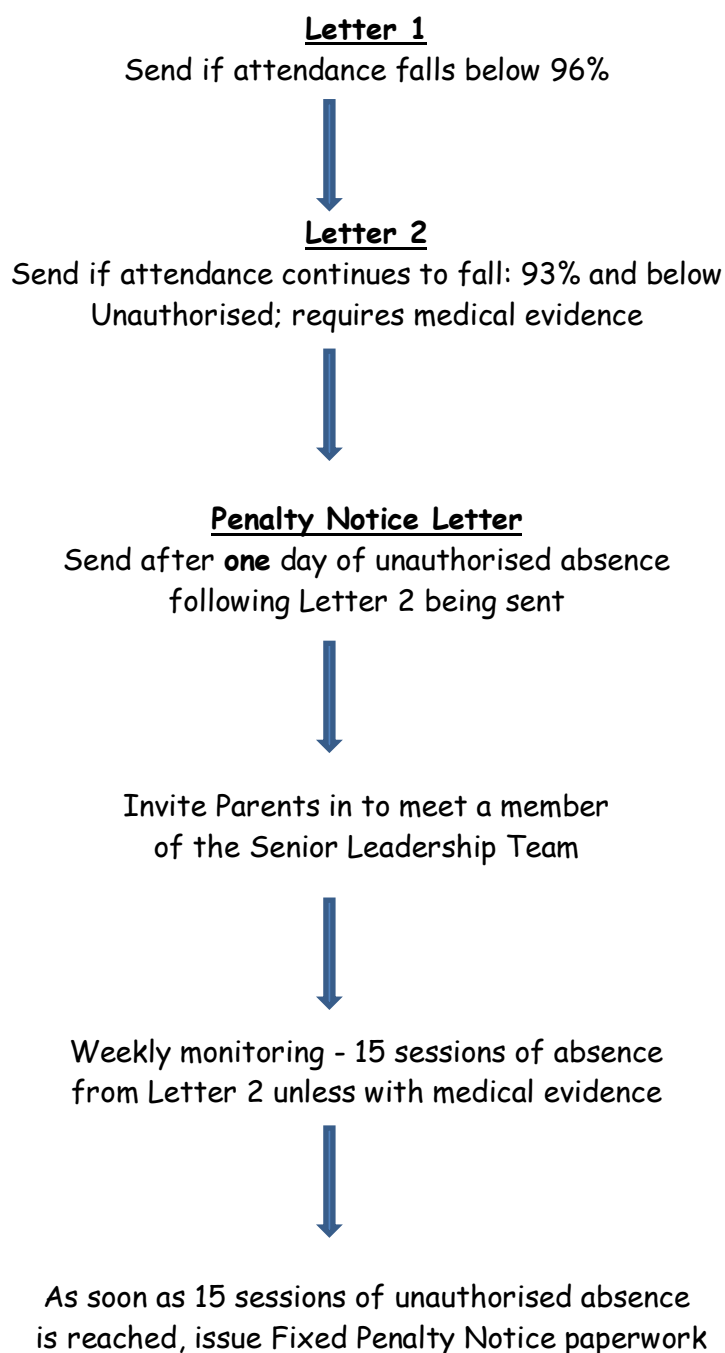
Prosecution of unpaid penalty notices

If the notice remains unpaid after the expiry of the payment period and the Local Authority has not withdrawn the notice, the Local Authority will prosecute for the offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

All decisions to prosecute (or not) rest with the Local Authority.

APPENDIX B – LETTER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FLOWCHART

ATTENDANCE – FLOW CHART FOR PROCESS



PUNCTUALITY

Students who arrive after 9.20 should be unauthorised for that session.

After 2 sessions a Penalty Notice Letter can be sent out; no need to follow above system.

APPENDIX C – PERSISTENT ABSENCE ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Date of Action Planning Meeting:

Present:

Name of Pupil:	Form Tutor:
Name of Parent(s):	Contact no. of parent(s):
Year Group:	Current Attendance:

Reasons for Absence:	Illness
	Friends/Peers
	Teachers
	Lessons
	Getting to school
	Family
	Other

Strategies to improve attendance				
Target Attendance for period ending:				
Target Attendance for period ending:				
Target Attendance for period ending:				
Target Attendance for period ending:				
Review: dates:				

Signature:

Parent.....Student.....School.....

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Comments on strategy</i>	<i>Dates (from/to)</i>
	Parents		
1	Alarm clock/get up earlier		
2	Change in bedtime routine		
3	Do not book holidays in term time		
4	Provide rewards/privileges for good attendance		
5	Young person to visit GP		
6	Make more time to talk to young person		
7	Provide assistance with getting to school		
8	Bring into school and ensure meets member of staff		
9	Phone school if absent or suspect may not arrive		
	School		
10	Attendance report		
11	Mentor/link person		
12	Buddy		
13	Place of safety		
14	Special responsibility		
15	Discussion with form/subject tutor		
16	Modification of registration		
17	Modification of curriculum/ timetable		
18	Change of form/tutor group		
19	Extra-curricular activities		
20	Additional Careers advice		
21	Work Experience		
22	Targeted first day response		
23	Meet with school nurse		
24	Youth Connexions input		
25	Customised reward/privilege for good attendance		
	Student		
26	Make sure you are ready for school		
27	Complete own attendance chart		
28	Discuss any problems as soon as possible with member of school staff		
29	Keep diary - bullying, difficulty with lessons etc.		

APPENDIX D - ATTENDANCE CODES

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Temporary use of codes related to coronavirus:

- pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' should be recorded using code X
- schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak