



# Bishop Aldhelm's C.E. Primary School

*Loved by God; United in Learning*

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*Love, Unity,  
Courage  
and Inspiration*



## Attendance Policy



**September 2023 – September 2024**



## **Attendance Policy**

**Date of Policy:** September 2023

**Next review due:** September 2024

At Bishop Aldhelm's we recognise that good attendance (above 96%) is key to good pupil outcomes. The links between regular attendance, reaching potential attainment and future life opportunities are well researched. For this reason the school will encourage good attendance and be robust in monitoring attendance and take action when attendance falls below the expected level.

Good attendance impacts significantly on progress, learning, friendship groups and the child's overall happiness at school.

Absence can be a symptom of:

- Health or medical needs
- Low aspirations and or/disaffection
- Wider Safeguarding issues
- Generational trend
- Economic climate
- Lack of regard of the importance of regular attendance

As a school we are sensitive to the needs of children and their families and will always aim to offer support to address any difficulties that are in place.

### **Aims**

- To maximise our attendance rates across our school by encouraging, recognising and rewarding good attendance. We recognise good attendance as those who attend school above 96% of the time as well as those whose attendance has improved or those who overcome difficulties even if their attendance is not yet above the national expected standard of 96%.
- To work closely with children, parents/carers and other professional agencies, where medical or health difficulties impact on attendance to support with continued education.
- To support families with attendance and work closely with parents/carers where there are difficulties.
- To investigate individual absences and ensure that children and parents/carers are clear that unauthorised absences are not acceptable.
- To work closely with children and parents/carers, along with other professional agencies, to help them overcome problems which prevent children from attending school regularly.

### **The Legal Framework**

- Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take problems seriously which may lead to non-attendance.
- Penalty Notices may be issued under the Local Authority's (LA) Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices in Cases of Non-Attendance at school. A copy of this Code of Conduct can be obtained from the Attendance Officer or the Education Welfare Service.

## Key times

Attendance lead	
Gates open	8:45am
Registration (and learning activities) begin	8:45am
Last time a 'present' mark is given	9:00am
Late mark given	9-9:30am
Unauthorised absence	9:30am onwards

Number of days off	Attendance % for the year	
0	100%	Excellent!
4	98%	Very good
7	96%	National expectation for attendance
9	95%	Below national expectation
11	94%	
20	90%	Classed as persistently absent. Child will be referred to the attendance officer.
30	85%	Serious concern. Child will be referred to the attendance officer.
38	80%	

***Surely 1 or 2 days absent a week doesn't seem much but this is how it is..***

If your child misses...	That equals...	Which is...	And over 13 years of schooling that's...
1 day per fortnight	20 days per year	4 weeks per year	Nearly 1 ½ years
1 day per week	40 days per year	8 weeks per year	Over 2 ½ years
2 days per week	80 days per year	16 weeks per year	Over 5 years
3 days per week	120 days per year	24 weeks per year	Nearly 8 years

***If your child is late 10 minutes a day - surely that won't matter or affect my child..***

Only missing just..	That equals..	Which is...	Over 13 years of schooling that's...
10 minutes per day	50 minutes per week	Nearly 1 ½ weeks per year	Nearly ½ a year
20 minutes per day	1hour 40minutes per week	Over 2 ½ weeks per year	Nearly 1 year
30 minutes per day	Half a day per week	4 weeks per year	Nearly 1 ½ years
1 hour per day	1 day per week	8 weeks per year	Over 2 ½ years

## **Support**

At Bishop Aldhelm's, we recognise that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, we will work with children and parents/carers to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

## **Monitoring approach to Attendance**

Attendance is checked on a twice daily basis. Parents/carers of pupils who are absent without explanation will be contacted by the School Office, this will be via text message asking parents to phone. If contact is unable to be made, a phone call and voicemail will be left asking for parent/carer to make contact on the number provided.

Parents/carer should expect to be contacted on the first day of their child's absence. If contact is unable to be made, a letter will be sent home with the child upon their return to school. The letter will outline the absence and that contact was unable to be made. Parents will need to provide a reason for absence on the form and send it back into school.

Parents should endeavour to arrange non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours. If this is not possible and the child has a medical appointment during the school day, (GP, hospital, dental, optician, CAMHS, school nurse referral), parent/carer will be asked to provide evidence of the absence; this could be by means of a letter, confirmation from the confirmation from the Reception, prescription or a screenshot of the electronic system that GP surgeries now use. This needs to show the date and time of the appointment along with the name. Paper copies of the evidence will be photocopied and scanned and added to the child's file.

The authorisation of any absence is at the School's discretion. If a pupil is regularly absent due to illness, the school reserves the right not to authorise the absence and to request medical evidence. With parent/carer's permission, the school may also contact the pupil's GP.

In the case of those pupils whose level of attendance is causing concern, the school's Attendance Officer will send home letters and a copy of their child's attendance record to date. In some cases, the school may ask to meet with parents/carers and place the child on an Attendance Plan. The family may also be referred to Early Help for additional support if necessary.

All unauthorised absence will put parents at risk of being issued with a Penalty Notice, or of legal proceedings being issued with a Penalty Notice, or of legal proceedings being instigated for failing to ensure their child's attendance at school.

## **Strategies to Encourage Good Attendance**

We believe that children who do achieve good attendance should be recognised and rewarded thus providing them with positive reinforcement and providing other children further incentives to improve their attendance. Rewards are issued for both excellent attendance and improved attendance. This is done on a weekly for classes and termly basis for individuals.

We recognise 'Good Attendance' as being any of the following:

- Above 96%
- No unauthorised absences
- A significant improvement in attendance

Recognition for this is made by:

- Notice in the weekly post-it
- Certificates
- Personal congratulations from the Attendance Officer or other members of Senior Leadership Team.
- Termly class attendance cup

Positive messages about good attendance are delivered in class time and worships. An attendance board is kept up to date each week with each year class's attendance so that parents/carers and children can easily identify the class who have achieved the highest percentage attendance for the previous week.

Attendance data is always available from the Attendance officer or school office.

### **What do we ask parents to do?**

- Parents/carers are under a legal duty to send their children to school regularly. In June 2017 the Supreme Court delivered judgment in relation to the Isle of Wight council's appeal which sought clarification on what is meant by 'fails to attend regularly' in the context of a prosecution for un-authorised non-attendance at school. The Supreme Court said that 'regular' means 'in accordance with the rules published by the school' and rejected the view that regular meant 'sufficiently frequently'.
- It is the Parent/carer's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence before 9am on the day of absence. This must be done for every day of the child's absence.
- Parental/carer contact should be made by either telephone, email or in person.
- Parent/carer should resolve any in-school problems with the appropriate member of Teaching Staff or Head Teacher without any adverse effect on attendance. Parent/carer should discuss any problems with the school at the earliest opportunity so that parent/carers and staff can work together to address them.
- If no parental/carer contact is made on the day(s) of absence, parents/carer should personally contact the School office on the child's return to school.
- For absence from school for a medical appointment, Parent/carer must provide the letter or text message detailing the appointment.
- Our school website, newsletters and occasional letters provide the parents with details of our expectations.
- If a parent/carer has phoned their child in absent due to sickness, the parent is responsible that their child will remain at home during school hours, unless visiting the Doctor's surgery.

### **What do we ask our staff to do?**

- Welcome children into school
- Check in with children and encourage them into school
- Monitor attendance and raise any concerns to the Headship Team
- Work together with parents/carers to support children in coming into school where there are difficulties

## **Registration and punctuality**

The school opens at 8.45am, registration is from 8.45am till 9am. All schools must keep an attendance register in which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, children are marked present or absent.

The doors to classes will close promptly at 9am. Children arriving after 9am will be required to sign in at the school office and attendance will be marked with an 'L' code with a reason given.

Children who arrive after 9.30am must also sign in at the office and be recorded as late with a 'U' unauthorised absence code, unless a valid reason is given. Again the number of minutes late will be entered along with a reason for the late attendance in comments.

Persistent lateness will result in strategies to address the lateness, initially via an Attendance plan and consequently persistent lateness also places parents at risk of a Penalty Notice being issued.

## **Request for Leave of Absence including Holiday Requests**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: Regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office) in advance and before making any travel arrangements. If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in BCP's attendance expectations, parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance the code.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

The most important considerations are:

- Whether the leave of absence could be taken during periods of normal school holiday
- Whether due consideration has been given to the timing of the leave of absence, e.g. at the start of a new term
- The pupil's current level of attendance
- No authorised absence will be given during SAT's periods, this will include all siblings within the family

Parent/carers must apply in writing to the Head Teacher at least three weeks in advance of the planned leave of absence. An application form is available from the school office which, once considered, will be returned to the parent/carer indicating whether or not the period of leave has been agreed. Parent/carers may be asked to come into school to meet with members of staff before a final decision is made.

In cases where overseas travel has been booked in advance of a request, the school may request sight of the travel documentation and where no return travel arrangements have been made, the child may be removed from the school roll on the last day of their attendance.

When a leave of absence is requested for siblings in different schools parents should be aware that schools will liaise prior to a decision being made for any leave of absence requests.

Any requests for leave of absence that have not been agreed by the school, but are subsequently taken will put parents/carers at risk of a Penalty Notice or prosecution.

In cases where a leave of absence request is declined the school will enter a 'G' code in the register which will denote an unauthorised absence.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

An offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a child's regular attendance at the school at which they are a registered pupil, of compulsory school age and that absence is not authorised by the school.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Failure by a parent/carer to ensure the child is not in a public place whilst being excluded from school on more than one occasion.
- Unauthorised Absence of 10 or more sessions (5 school days) with a singular or combination of the codes U and G during any 80 possible school sessions (8 school weeks). These do not need to be consecutive days.
- Unauthorised Leave of Absence of 10 or more consecutive school sessions (G code only) within the academic year.

BCP will review each penalty notice request but will use its discretion for each case.

### **Reviews of Attendance**

Half termly reviews will notify parents/carers of the following:

- If their child's attendance is between 90-95%
- If their child's attendance is below 90% but has improved since the previous half term
- If their child's attendance is below 90% and has not improved since the previous half term. These parents will be invited in for a meeting.

All parents will receive notifications 3 x a year about their child's attendance:

- Autumn Term Parents Evening (October)
- Spring Term Parents Evening (March)
- End of Year Report

All parents with children on the SEN and/or Pupil Premium Register will also receive notification of their child's attendance on their child's termly report cards:

- End of Autumn Term (December)
- End of Spring Term (April)
- End of Summer Term (July)

## **Interventions to Address Poor Attendance**

### **Stage 1**

At half termly reviews, a text will be sent warning that child's attendance is below 95%. Conversations with the school are encouraged to see if there are any ways that we can support. If there is a medical reason why a child is not able to be in school regularly, a health support plan can be written together between school, parents/carers and health professionals to ensure that the appropriate provision is in place.

### **Stage 2**

If attendance doesn't improve, parents/carers will be invited in for a meeting. This meeting will be with a member of the Headship Team. These are supportive meetings. Often these discussions reveal barriers that families are facing to getting their child into school. As a result of this open communication, we are often able to support with strategies and/or provision which results in a child's attendance improving.

### **Stage 3**

If attendance continues to not improve, a personalised support plan will be written to increase the child's attendance.

A member of the Headship Team will contact parents/carers on support plans on a weekly basis to monitor support and attendance.

At this stage, a fixed penalty warning notice may be given.

### **Stage 4**

If, despite the above, the child's attendance still doesn't improve, then a fixed penalty notice will be issued.



## **Interventions to Address Poor Punctuality**

### **Stage 1**

Parents/carers will be notified half termly if their child has been late for 10% of sessions or more. Conversations with the school are encouraged to see if there are any ways that we can support.

### **Stage 2**

If punctuality doesn't improve, parents/carers will be invited in for a meeting. This meeting will be with a member of the Headship Team. Often these discussions reveal barriers that families are facing to getting their child into school. As a result of this open communication, we are often able to support with strategies and/or provision which results in a child's attendance improving.

### **Stage 3**

If punctuality continues to not improve, a personalised support plan will be written.

A member of the Headship Team will contact parents/carers on support plans on a weekly basis to monitor support and punctuality.

At this stage, a fixed penalty warning notice may be given.

### **Stage 4**

If, despite the above, the child's punctuality still doesn't improve, then a fixed penalty notice will be issued.