



# Attendance & Punctuality Policy

## Version Control

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# **CONTENTS**

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. PRINCIPLES**
- 3. ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**
- 4. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**
- 5. IMPLICATIONS OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**
- 6. SAFEGUARDING and CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION**
- 7. RELUCTANCE TO GO TO SCHOOL**
- 8. PERSISTENT ABSENCE**
- 9. PUNCTUALITY**
- 10. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**
- 11. COMMUNICATION, REWARDS & INCENTIVES**



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Regular attendance and punctuality in school is very important. Pupils need to attend school regularly, by law, to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Schools within the St. Bede Multi Academy Trust (MAT) fully recognise their responsibilities in ensuring pupils are in school, on time, thus allowing them to access learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

This policy applies to all children and is available to view on our school websites: [www.stbedeacademy.org](http://www.stbedeacademy.org) and [www.tongemooracademy.org](http://www.tongemooracademy.org). It has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education, in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child has attendance of 96% or above, all stakeholders are committed to working closely with parents, other professionals and agencies to achieve this.

The 1996 Education Act, (section 444) states that parents (including non-related adult carers in the child's household) have a **legal responsibility** to ensure that those of compulsory school age are educated, either by '**regular**' attendance at school or 'otherwise'. The 2008 Education and Skills Act, (section 155) specifies the same requirement regarding regular attendance at alternative provision.

**The duty on parents is to ensure that their children are educated, either at school or 'otherwise'**. Education is therefore compulsory. In terms of 'otherwise', children may be educated by their parents at home, by a private tutor or in establishments other than schools, i.e. – further education colleges from the age of 14, special units, hospitals or in alternative educational programmes or work experience. The law allows parents to choose the alternative options, provided they can demonstrate to the Local Authority that the education is full-time and 'suitable' to the child's educational needs, up until the relevant leaving-date for all young people.

Schools must enter pupils on the admission and attendance registers from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified when a pupil will attend the school. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school's academic year. Every amendment made to the admission and the attendance registers must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

**Definition of parent: Section 576 of the Education Act 1996. A parent in relation to any child or young person, includes:-**

- 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.

This also includes all parents who are absent. Parental partners can be included (whether or not they are married or are the natural parent of the child) as they have 'care' of the child. If a pupil lives with a grandparent or older sibling (minimum 18 years) as their main carer, they can also be included as they are the main care provider.



It is also important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the child, that parent is still responsible for ensuring their child attends school every day.

## 2. PRINCIPLES

All stakeholders place a high priority on achieving standards and acknowledge that excellent pupil attendance and punctuality is essential. They undertake this role by monitoring whole school attendance termly and taking appropriate action where necessary.

For children to achieve their full potential, they must be highly motivated to learn and keen and eager to attend school. Regular attendance and punctuality will establish good habits, which will support them throughout their lives.

The Government expects that schools:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- ensure every pupil has access to their entitled education and acts early to address patterns of absence.

Attendance during one school year	Equates to this number of days absence	Equates to this number of weeks absence (approx.)	Equates to this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

## 3. ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Regular attendance at school is the responsibility of parents and carers. Under the 1996 Education Act, parents/carers commit an **offence** if a child does not attend school regularly. **If a child cannot come to school because of illness, the school must be contacted before 8:30am, and EACH subsequent day of absence thereafter.** Failure to report absence each day will result in an unauthorised absence mark being recorded.

If a child is absent from school and we have received no notification as to the reason why, every effort will be made to contact an appropriate adult. The school requires emergency contact phone numbers are up to date and are kept informed of any changes, including home and email addresses.

If contact is made with the parent/carer the school will determine if the absence is authorised or unauthorised; if no contact is made it will be assumed that the child is absent without permission.

The school will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable and has the right to request medical evidence if a parent rings the school to confirm the student is unwell, or if there is cause for concern. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised until this evidence is received and parents/carers will be advised of this.



Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance and provide evidence of the appointment through a letter, appointment card or appointment text via phone.

**Parents/carers are encouraged to read the Public Health England publication ‘Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and other childcare settings’ (September 2014) as it provides useful guidance on whether an illness necessitates students taking time off school.**

At the Head of School’s discretion, other absence **may** be authorised under certain specific circumstances.

#### **4. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**

Under the DfE guidance, ‘Advice on School Attendance’, parents can no longer expect schools to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. The Heads of School will not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are ‘exceptional circumstances’. Examples would be:

- where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specific time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in any of the school holidays. This must be evidenced by the production of the policy document of the organisation;
- service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark on a tour abroad.

**For any requests for leave during term time, a ‘Leave of Absence’ form MUST be completed.**

The Heads of School will determine the number of days a child can be away from school, if the leave is granted. **From this perspective, leave of absence in term time is no longer a parental right and will only be authorised at the Heads of School /Deputy Headteacher’s discretion.** Under DfE guidelines the school will notify the Local Authority if a parent takes leave of absence **without** the Head of School’s permission. In these cases, code **G (family holiday not agreed)** will be used on the register to show this absence is **unauthorised**.

Absence of a child where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given will be recoded as code **O (Unauthorised Absence)**. Such circumstances may include a child:

- leaving the school premises without permission or legitimate reason;
- not returning to school in an afternoon after attending a medical appointment in the morning;
- not attending school to attend a day trip;
- not attending school as it is their birthday or the birthday of a family member;
- not attending school as the family has gone to the airport to meet a visiting relative;
- not attending school due to attending a hospital appointment for another family member;
- not attending school due to the fact the family returned late the previous evening from a family holiday;
- not attending school as they are caring for younger siblings;



A child arriving after 9:30am, after the registers have closed, will receive an unauthorised **Code U (Late after registration closed)**.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

**IMPORTANT: No leave of absence will be authorised unless the school feels the circumstances are unavoidable, and is at the Headteacher's discretion.**

Any unauthorised absence (**Codes O, G or U**) will result in the school to:

- issue a formal written warning to the parent/carer once five sessions (2½ days) of unauthorised absence (**Codes O and/or U**) have been reached, outlining the possibility of a Penalty Charge Notice being issued, if unauthorised absence continues. If there is no improvement the school will apply to the Local Authority for a Penalty Charge Notice to be issued once this reaches 10 sessions (five days); (see Appendix 3).
- apply to the Local Authority for a Penalty Charge Notice to be issued for unauthorised holiday (**Code G**) of 10 sessions (five days) or more. This will be actioned once the child returns to school and no warning is given.

The Penalty Charge Notice will need to be paid in full, separately, by both parents within 21 days and will increase if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the Penalty Charge Notice is not paid within 28 days, parents can be prosecuted under section 444, the Education Act 1996. (see Appendix 4).

## 6. SAFEGUARDING and CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

School staff reserve the right to either contact parents/carers directly or make an immediate referral to Early Intervention, Children's Services or the Police if they feel a pupil is potentially at risk by being taken out of school during term time. The school will seek advice from the Local Authority if a pupil fails to return from an extended family holiday during term time, and the school has made reasonable enquiries but cannot locate the pupil or their family. **This applies to leave of absences that are both authorised and unauthorised by the school.**

A child missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff will follow the school's procedures for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future (Keeping Children Safe in Education (updated September 2021) and Children Missing in Education Nov 2013, updated Sept 2016).

The school notifies the Local Authority of any child who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of five days (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulation 12.

The school will demonstrate that reasonable enquiries have been made to ascertain the whereabouts of children who would be considered 'missing', and will invoke Child Missing in Education (CME) procedures to potentially remove the child from roll under such circumstances, in consultation with the Local Authority.



**Where a child leaves the school without a notified destination or other school, the school follows Bolton Council 'Children Missing in Education' Procedures.**

## **7. RELUCTANCE TO GO TO SCHOOL**

Sometimes children can be anxious about leaving home to go to school. They may tell you that they feel unwell or give another reason not to attend. You may notice that they are worried from things that they say e.g., that they do not want to do particular subjects, feel that they have no friends or are being bullied. If this is the case, please contact the school as soon as possible to speak to class teacher.

## **8. PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

Children with attendance **below 90%** fall into the 'Persistent Absentee' category and the school has a responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year.

According to the DfE guidance ***'If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the Local Authority'***. In addition, ***'Local Authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996)'***.

When a child's attendance falls below 90% (at any stage of the year) a School Attendance Meeting with parents/carers will be arranged to discuss attendance concerns (see Appendix 1 - SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEETING). An **Attendance Action Plan** will also be discussed and agreed to help improve attendance. This will contain improvement targets with set timescales and an overview of the support provided by the school to support the child and his/her family.

The school may also consider implementing a **Parenting Contract** if the child continues to be absent from school. .

If your child's attendance does not improve, despite what support the school has put into place, a referral may be made to the Local Authority School Attendance Panel.

Parent/carers failure to comply with any **Action Plan** or **Parenting Contract** may be used as evidence if the Local Authority decides to prosecute parents/carers.

## **9. PUNCTUALITY**

The law treats some persistent lateness in the same way as poor attendance and parents may be prosecuted by the Local Authority if late arrival is not resolved. Poor punctuality can lead to your child to:

- feel embarrassed in front of their friends;
- miss the beginning of vital lessons;
- miss important instructions for the rest of the school day;
- learn bad habits which could affect their employability in the future.





Persistent lateness can also result in 'lost learning' time for a child:

<b>Minutes late per day during the school year</b>	<b>Equates to this number of days in lost teaching</b>
5 minutes	3.4 days
10 minutes	6.9 days
15 minutes	10.3 days
20 minutes	13.8 days
30 minutes	20.7 days

Children who arrive late must be signed in at the school office by a parent/carer and a reason for the lateness must be given. Punctuality will be monitored by the Attendance Officer and parents/carers will be contacted if this becomes persistent.

Any child arriving after 9:30am for any reason other than medical will be marked as unauthorised **Code U** (Late after registers closed).

Children who have to leave for any reason throughout the day should be signed out at the main office by their parent/carer or appropriate adult.

Punctuality also applies to parents/carers when collecting their child at the end of the school day. Please see Appendix 2 (LATE COLLECTION OF CHILDREN AT HOMETIME) for warnings and charges which may occur if children are persistently collected late.

## 10. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

What parents/carers should do to improve attendance?

- Provide **two** emergency contact phone numbers and an email address and ensure these are kept up to date.
- notify the school on **EACH** day that their child is absent.
- try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time. If this is not possible try to minimise the disruption to the day by getting an early morning appointment so that your child can attend afterwards, or a late afternoon appointment so they can complete most of the school day.
- encourage your child to take responsibility for being on time for school; ensure they have a realistic bedtime and will not be too tired to get up in the morning;
- talk positively about going to school and work with school to resolve any worries or concerns;
- monitor your child's internet and social media use to ensure they are not experiencing any difficulties that may prevent them from wanting to attend school.

What the school does to improve attendance:

- Marks the registers in accordance with the law twice a day;
- carries out robust daily calling procedures, including priority routine calls for vulnerable children or children with a social worker;
- maintains records and monitors attendance of children on a regular basis;





- authorises absences in accordance with the Government guidelines; only the school can authorise absence;
- encourages parents/carers to accept support where it is deemed appropriate;
- works with external agencies to maintain good attendance; contributes to multi-agency meetings to review progress and agrees actions to support the child/family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality at school;
- provides reintegration support for children returning from absence;
- maintains a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards;
- works in partnership with the Local Authority and external agencies to improve school attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism, sometimes utilising legal interventions.

## **11. COMMUNICATION, REWARDS & INCENTIVES**

Our schools work with parents/carers to encourage good attendance. This is promoted through social media, parent evenings and other school communications. Good attendance is celebrated and parents/carers are well informed of the school's expectations of at least 96.5% attendance (our school target), and the importance of punctuality.

Helping to create patterns of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and all members of staff. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- report to parents/carers termly and annually on their child's attendance;
- celebrate good attendance weekly and display achievements;
- award non-uniform tokens for 100% attendance (including 100% with COVID & medical reasons with evidence), and most improved each half term;
- award an extra playtime each week to classes with 100% attendance and most improved attendance;
- award a non-uniform/class party day to each class who achieve 96.5% every half term.



## APPENDIX 1 – SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEETING

The purpose of a School Attendance Meeting is for you and your child (if appropriate) to meet with the Attendance Officer and/or other staff member to identify the reasons for absence, and to work together to improve attendance.

The reasons for absence will be discussed and identified and different strategies to improve attendance will be considered. A supportive Action Plan will be agreed and implemented and a target of 10-15% improvement will be set. The child's attendance will then be closely monitored for a period of 12 school weeks.

Whilst the intention of the School Attendance Meeting is that the attendance will improve, if the attendance deteriorates by the target review date the Local Authority may recommend legal action is taken. This could include Prosecution in the Magistrates' Court, Education Supervision Orders or Parenting Orders.

**Taking parents/carers to court for unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 Section 444(1) - court can fine each parent/carer up to £1,000 per child, order payment of prosecution costs and/or impose a Parenting Order.

**Taking parents/carers to court for persistent unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A) - court can fine each parent/carer up to £2,500 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs, impose a Parenting Order and/or sentence to a period of imprisonment of up to three months.

Under the 1989 Children Act the Local Authority has the power to issue an **Education Supervision Order (ESO)** and place a child under their supervision on the grounds that the child is not being 'properly educated' and is in danger of 'significant harm'. The Local Authority can issue an order if the child is persistently absent from school. The Local Authority appointed 'Supervisor' can give 'directions' to the parents/carers on how the child should be educated and work with the parent/carer to ensure the child attends school regularly.

Under the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act, if a child continues to have attendance issues after a parent/carer has been convicted, the courts can also issue a **Parenting Order**. This legally requires the parents/carers to participate in a programme of parenting support and counselling. If the unauthorised absence continues, a new case will be brought against the parents/carers but previous parental failure to engage with the school and Local Authority can be cited.



## APPENDIX 2 – LATE COLLECTION OF CHILDREN AT HOMETIME

Failure to collect children from school on time is a form of neglect and children **must** be collected at 3:15pm prompt each day. School entrances open at 3:10pm for parents/carers to wait at their child's allocated collection point. If parents/carers are unable to collect their child on time, they should arrange for another appropriate adult to collect their child, and inform the school beforehand. Alternatively their child can be registered to attend After School Club.

If a child is not collected on time they will be looked after by their teacher until their parent/carer arrives. A record will be kept daily of children who are collected late and the time when they are collected. The following penalties will incur for parents/carers of children who are persistently collected late.

<b>Incident</b>	<b>Penalty</b>
First occasion	Warning issued by teacher
Second occasion	Warning issued by Assistant/Deputy Headteacher
Third occasion	Warning letter issued by Head of School
Fourth occasion	Charge incurred (see below)

### Charges

Child care charges will be incurred on the fourth occasion, and any subsequent occasions, that a child is collected late. After 3:25pm parents/carers will be charged £1 for every minute they are late i.e. if a child is collected at 3:38pm a charge will be incurred of £13; at 3:56pm it will be £31. If a child is collected after 4:15pm, the charge will be £50. These charges are based on the cost to the MAT of providing unplanned childcare.

If children are persistently left in the care of the schools, we are under an obligation to report this to social services as evidence of neglect.

The above charges will also apply to children from all Nurseries within the Trust who are persistently collected late.



ST BEDE C OF E PRIMARY  
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

## APPENDIX 3 – WARNING LETTER

Address  
Address 1  
Town  
Post Code

Date

Dear

**Re: Child's name & DOB**

I am writing to inform you that xxxxxx has had more than five unauthorised absences and/or lates recorded against their name during the term. This level of absence/punctuality is not acceptable and must be improved.

**NB. If a child arrives in school after the attendance register has closed at 9:30am this is classed as unauthorised absence.**

I must warn you that xxxxx must have no further unauthorised absences from school. If there is no improvement in xxxxx's attendance record this matter will be reported to the Local Authority (LA), with a request that you are served with a Penalty Notice.

A Penalty Notice will require each parent to pay a penalty of £60 within 21 days or £120 after that. If you fail to pay the penalty within 28 days the Local Authority may prosecute you in the Magistrates' Court, where you could face a maximum fine of £1,000 per parent. The enclosed leaflet from the LA gives you more details about Penalty Notices.

If you wish to discuss this matter please email xxx.

Yours sincerely,

xxxxx  
Head of School



## APPENDIX 4 – INFORMATION FROM BOLTON COUNCIL



### School Attendance and Penalty Notices

#### Information for parents and carers

Your child's education is really important. Regular attendance at school increases your child's chance of getting good qualifications and a good job.

Children need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in primary and secondary school.

#### The Law

You are responsible for:

- Ensuring your children receive full time education
- Their regular and punctual attendance at school

As the parent you are committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly and the absence is unauthorised by the Headteacher, even if they are missing school without your knowledge.

If you fail to ensure your child's regular attendance at school the Local Authority may issue a penalty notice or instigate legal proceedings for an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

#### What is regular attendance?

In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school "*regularly*" means attendance in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not "*sufficiently frequent attendance*". This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so and failure to do this may lead to the commission of an offence.

#### What counts as unauthorised absence?

- Any absence from school that the school has not given permission for
- Truancy from school, with or without parent's knowledge
- Parentally-condoned absence (i.e. you know your child is absent from school and you do nothing about it)
- Delayed return from a period of leave of absence
- Arriving late at school after the register has closed

#### Can I take my child out of school for a holiday during term time?

You should not expect your child's school to agree to an absence for a holiday in term time.

In 2013 amendments to the Pupil registration regulations removed all reference to family holidays and made clear that Headteachers should not approve any absence unless in exceptional circumstances.



The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

If you feel there are exceptional circumstances why your child needs to be absent from school, you should apply in advance, by writing to the Headteacher explaining clearly the dates and reasons you are requesting leave of absence.

It is at the discretion of the Headteacher whether or not to authorise the absence. If the school refuses a request for leave of absence and the child is still taken out of school this will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

### **What is a Penalty Notice?**

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and can be issued when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (equivalent of 5 days consecutive or otherwise) over two consecutive half terms. A separate Penalty Notice can be issued for each parent per child.

You have to pay a fine but you do not have to appear in Court. You also have to make sure that your child's attendance at school improves.

Payment of a Penalty Notice enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction.

### **Is a warning given?**

The school will send you a formal letter of warning telling you that a Penalty Notice may be issued. This warning letter will also include details of your child's absences. If you receive a warning letter this is an opportunity for you to work with the school to improve your child's attendance and avoid the need to issue a Penalty Notice.

Your child must have no further unauthorised absences from school from the date of the letter. If your child's unauthorised absence continues and reaches 10 sessions (5 school days) or more, a Penalty Notice will be issued.

There is no limit to the number of times a formal warning may be issued. This depends on each individual case. **However, the school is not required to send a warning letter where the absence is due to an unauthorised holiday during term time.**

### **What are the costs?**

£60 if you pay within 21 days of receipt of a Penalty Notice or £120 if you pay after this but within 28 days. (Per parent, per child).

### **Is there an appeal process?**

There is no right of appeal by parents against a Penalty Notice.

### **What happens if I don't pay?**

If you don't pay in full within 28 days, Bolton Council is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for the original offence of failing to ensure the regular attendance of your child.





If proven this can attract a range of fines up to £1,000 and/or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences depending on individual circumstances.

**Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?**

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. A prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Penalty Notice, depending on your circumstances.

The Local Authority can also prosecute parents for non-attendance without issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice

If the poor school attendance persists the Local Authority may also consider prosecution under Section 444 (1A) of the Education Act 1996, which can carry a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to three months imprisonment.

**What can I do?**

Ensure your child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Lateness can be very disruptive for the class and for your child.

Make sure your child understands that you do not approve of them missing school. If you suspect your child is not happy in school you should contact the school as soon as possible.

Take an interest in your child's education, ask about their day, praise and encourage achievements at school.

**Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?**

If you are experiencing problems with your child's attendance at school, it is really important that you work closely with school to resolve the matter. Alternatively, for further guidance and support you can contact:

**Child Employment and Enforcement Officer  
Early Intervention Service  
2nd Floor, BASE  
Marsden Road  
Bolton  
BL1 2PF  
Tel: 01204 338173**

**Every lesson counts. Improving attendance, raising attainment**

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The legal definitions of 'parent' are:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children's Act (1989)
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person