



Attendance Policy

Version	Date	Author/Role	Ratified by	Review Date
1	May 2017	Wendy Harrison (Guru Carana)	Curriculum	May 2019
2	Jan 2019	Ms Shelpa Patel: Interim Headteacher	Curriculum	Jan 2021

School Matters!



Introduction

The Law and School Attendance

The 1996 Education Act (s7) places a legal responsibility upon parents/carers to ensure that their child fully attends the school at which they are registered. This means that your child must attend school every day and on time (unless as parents/carers you can prove that the absence was with the authorisation of the school or that it was unavoidable).

Policy Statement

Regular and punctual attendance to school is important. It contributes to receiving a comprehensive education and is good preparation for further education and/or work. Pupils need to have regular attendance to school to ensure they have access to education and learn the relevant skills for socialisation for the maximum number of days and hours. Missing school can leave gaps in knowledge and understanding and also place the pupil at a disadvantage in both their educational and social development. This policy states the Bhaktivedanta Manor School's aims and expectations regarding attendance and lateness, as well as how we will support the child and their family who are not meeting the expected levels of attendance. It is our culture to support our families in all ways possible. Working as a team, we aim to provide each child every opportunity to achieve their full potential. In order to do this it is essential that all pupils attend school regularly, and on time. To achieve our aims, it is, therefore, our duty to ensure that all parents and guardians understand the importance of regular attendance, the sort of absences we will and will not authorise and the procedures to be followed if children need to be absent from school. It applies to all registered children at the school and is available to all parent/s and/or carer/s on our school website.

~~It is proven that poor attendance is generally linked to poor performance (progress and attainment) in the classroom. This can result in children struggling with their relationships with their peers, developing low self-confidence and experiencing a disrupted pattern to their education; all of which can be damaging in the long run.~~

Aims of this policy

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupil's achievement through high attendance
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create the mood of good attendance and punctuality as the norm within our school.
- Raise awareness of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and regular punctuality at every stage of the child's education.
- Work with parents and carers to help pupils to realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Monitor and record attendance and lateness data to help recognise positive and negative patterns of attendance and lateness.
- Recognise the important role of staff, but especially Class teachers, in promoting good attendance

We will achieve these aims by:

- Classing attendance as poor if it is below 94%.
- Making sure that parents understand the responsibility placed on them to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time through termly articles

in the school newsletter, parent conversations, the Parents Handbook (or Kindergarten Information pack) and parent evenings.

- Supporting the children to attend school regularly, through promoting positive attendance
- Communicating with parents when the school recognises an issue with their child's attendance or punctuality.
- Developing and implementing effective procedures to monitor, record and review cases when a child has poor attendance or punctuality.
- Sharing attendance data with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) when attendance falls below 90% and there is a concern about the child's attendance.

Responsibilities

All staff share a responsibility for identifying concerns about attendance and punctuality, but some are better placed to record and report these concerns. The following specifies who holds responsibilities over above the general level.

Class Teacher

- Keep an overview of attendance within their specific class, complete daily registers appropriately looking for patterns in poor attendance either in blocks or on particular days, and being mindful of unusual explanations or reasons for poor attendance and or punctuality
- Inform the Head/DSL when there is a concern.
- Provide information to the DSL/Head if a referral to Families First is to be made
- Meet with the parents, and possibly the child, if attendance or punctuality is poor.
- Share with the Class the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Engage with the parent community about whole Class attendance and or punctuality.

Headteacher/DSL

- Receive concerns from class teachers and add these to the children's confidential safeguarding files.
- To help support the child, their family and the class teacher to improve attendance and punctuality.
- To report any concerns to the relevant body if and when they arise.
- To provide reports and background information to any relevant body.
- To record these interactions with external agencies
- To report any attendance and punctuality issues or trends to the Governors

Administration Staff

- To input attendance and lateness data onto the schools recording procedure
- To report trends of attendance and punctuality data to the Headteacher/DSL when:
 - Attendance falls below 90%
 - Punctuality falls below 90%
- To receive messages from parents about why their child is not at school or will be late.
- To contact parents, who have not informed the school, to ascertain why their children are not in school.
- To record information about when children leave school early.

- To send out standard letters to parents when attendance and / or punctuality drops below the thresholds outlined above.

As well as the responsibilities the staff hold, parents and carers are also in a position of responsibility.

Parents and Carers

To ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually unless their child is unable to do so for medical reasons.

- *To contact the school office to inform the school as to why their child is not in attendance.*
- *To inform the school, in writing, in advance of any medical appointments leading to absence from school. To record the absence as medical, we need to have a written note or appointment card from the doctor or dentist.*
- *To minimise the amount of time their child is absent from school by keeping non-school activities to the holiday times.*
- *To talk to the school as soon as possible to help support their child if they are showing reluctance to attend school.*

Registration

Every school is required by law(Education(Pupil Registration (England) Regulations 2006) to maintain two separate registers, an Admissions register, known as the “School Roll”, and an Attendance register.Schools are required to ensure that an attendance register is taken twice a day, at the start of the morning session, and during the afternoon for all day pupils. The Regulations specify the contents of both registers and the manner in which they are operated and maintained. As such registers should be treated as legal documents – indeed they may be used as evidence in court cases. For this reason they should also be retained for a minimum of three years in school.

Keeping the Attendance Register

- All classes are to maintain daily pupil registers for morning and afternoon sessions.
- For each pupil, the register must be marked either as present or absent. If the pupil is absent, the register **must** clearly differentiate between whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised by the School.
- Coding given by the DfE - see ‘School attendance, Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, November 2016’ must be used to minimise error. (see appendix D)
- All registers will be checked by the office admin and any unexplained absence investigated as per our procedures- see below in “Procedures”

Authorised Absences

An authorised absence – one which the school agrees is a reasonable one – will only be granted for:

1. Child illness
2. Medical appointments
3. External Examinations (e.g. music or dancing exams, entrance exams)
4. Educational assessments conducted by approved agencies
5. Religious observances (e.g. funerals, major festival days in religions other than Hinduism)
6. Educational activity at an alternative site (e.g. participation in a county sports event)
7. Visits to prospective new schools

8. Very special family circumstances

Family holidays may be authorised if your child's attendance meets the Government requirements of **97%**. However, we do understand that statistics do not always tell a full story and past attendance will also be taken into consideration before a final decision is made. The holiday must not exceed 10 school days except in exceptional circumstances, with the permission of the Governing Body. Failure to request for leave of absence will incur a fine of £60 per child per session.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from the Headteacher or other authorised representative of the School- this includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. Absences which the school would not consider reasonable, include:

1. A trip to the theatre
2. Shopping for new shoes
3. Your child staying at home because a parent is ill
4. Having a haircut

All such absences need to be avoided in the interest of ensuring that your child develops a good habit of attending school regularly, allowing them to fulfil their potential academically, socially and emotionally. Unauthorised absences will be recorded and monitored and further action may be taken.

If you need to request a period of authorised absence:

If you need to make a request to the Head Teacher for a period of authorised absence, you need to complete the Leave of Absence request form (see appendix B - form available on the website or from the school office) and return to the Head Teacher. Please submit your request to the Head Teacher at least 4 weeks in advance of the leave, so that there is time for the request to be considered and for approval to be given if appropriate. Absence will not be authorised during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Taking your child out of school in an emergency

- If you need to take your child out of school in an emergency, or earlier than usual (due to appointments etc) this must be done in person explaining why you need to remove your child and how long you expect them to absent for.
- The pupil must be signed out at the schools office and their name entered into the 'Pupil on/off site book in the office
- Under no circumstances are parents to collect their children from the classrooms.
- If the class teachers feel that the circumstances under which the child is being removed is concerning, they must inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Temporary School Closures

Where the school has to close due to severe weather conditions, fire or other structural damage or for in-service training, no attendance registers are needed.

Monitoring of Attendance

Schools have to regularly inform the local authority of any pupils who are regularly absent from school, have irregular attendance, or have missed 10 school days or more without the school's permission

Schools are also under a safeguarding duty, under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to investigate any unexplained absences.

At Bhaktivedanta Manor School,

- Attendance is monitored regularly by teachers and the Head Teacher
- Summary attendance information is reported and discussed at every full governing body meeting, as a standing item on the agenda.
- We engage with any external agency (eg Children Missing Education Team) when required or when it is felt there is a concern which needs to be shared.

The full details of our registration and attendance monitoring procedures are detailed in Appendix A

Absence Procedures

1. ***On the first day of and any further absence:*** If your child is ill or is absent for any reason, please phone or email the School Office **for every day by 8.30am** of absence, giving your reason for keeping them at home.

2. ***On your child's return to school:*** The school has to receive a letter or a signed absence slip (available from the offices) from the parents or guardian for each absence, if not previously reported by phone or email. If we do not have a reason within two weeks, the absence has to be recorded as unauthorised.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their time at school. It is the responsibility of the school to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

The school expects attendance of at least 97%. At the end of each term the School Office/Head will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters (see Appendix C) to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance.

We send letters for the following reasons:

1. Attendance below 95% for the first time - letter sent to parents to say their child's attendance is causing some concern. An appointment with the class teacher will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this
2. Attendance falls below 90% over a second term, with no identifiable reason – Letter sent with a specific appointment given to meet with Head Teacher and begin to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor attendance.
3. If, following stages 1 and 2, there has been no significant improvement – Panel Interview arranged with the Head Teacher to plan together for improvements. At this point, parents will also be informed that if the

attendance falls below 90% we may contact local Multi Agency Services Hub (MASH), Families First, with our concerns

4. In the unlikely event of there still being no improvement – The School will inform you that they are not able to authorise any absences without seeing medical evidence that there has been the need for a Doctor's appointment or a prescription has been issued.
5. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school may report that the child is missing education.
6. When this happens, the Child Missing Education Officer will work with the school and the parents, to support the child returning to school and improving their attendance.
7. The school will engage with and support the family and Child Missing Education team as fully as possible

The Governing Body has access to attendance figures and unauthorised absence data. If they are unhappy that attendance is not being improved in these extreme cases the Governing Body is likely to take action against families where persistent absence is a problem. The school has a right to fine parents up to £60 per day for unauthorised absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Punctuality

The full details of our punctuality procedures are detailed in Appendix A

Registration times are at 9.00am and 2.00pm. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for your child and for the rest of the class. If your child arrives in school after that time, they will be marked as absent, so persistent lateness will also affect your child's attendance figures.

There is a late book at the school office. If your child arrives after 9.05am you must report to the school office where your child's name and reasons for being late will be entered into the book. If a child is later than 9.15 am more than 2 days a week there will be a fine of £10 to the parents. Obviously we will take into account if there is particularly bad traffic one day due to unforeseen circumstances.

School Leavers/Children at Risk of Missing Education

The Headteacher will inform Hertfordshire Council of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- *Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education.*
- *No longer live within reasonable distance of the school*
- *Have a certified medical condition and are not in a fit state to go to school*
- *Are in custody for more than 4 months*
- *Have been permanently excluded*

References:

- Appendix A – Registration & Punctuality Procedures
- Appendix B – Request for Leave of Absence (Holiday in term time)
- Appendix C - Sample Attendance and Punctuality Letters
- Appendix D - Register coding
- Children missing from Education, statutory guidance September 201

Compliance:

- School attendance, Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent school and local authorities, November 201
 - The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
 - The 1996 Education Act (s7)
 - 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
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PARENT RESPONSE SLIP: Attendance Policy

I have read and fully understand the Attendance Policy (reviewed February 2019).
I will make every effort to ensure that my child attends regularly and understand the consequences of sustained and unexplained absence.

Child Name:

Class:

Signed _____ Date _____

Appendix A Attendance Monitoring Procedures

DAILY PROCEDURES

Morning Register Procedures

Parents/carers to call school on school phone or email admin@bvmschool.co.uk on the first day of absence by 8.30am.

Office admin staff to,

- Check calls/voicemail and emails as a priority first thing in the morning and make a note of the children that will be absent and the reasons why on the “Attendance Monitoring Register”
- Make a note ALSO on the absence slip for inserting into class registers to inform teachers
- Register will open at 9.00 and close at 9.05 when it will be sent to the office- yr 2 child will bring over the EYFS and yrs 1 & 2 registers. Admin support to collect register if not sent to office promptly.
- Children arriving after this register closes must report to the school office and will be entered into the “Late Arrival Book.” Children in Rama Class or any that are distressed can be escorted to the class by the parent/carer, otherwise call other late children to make their own way into class
- When register arrives in office, admin support will
 - insert the relevant absence code for the children that are absent and insert absence slip for teacher information into register
 - Insert the relevant code for children that are late into register
 - Complete the totals section for the morning session at the bottom of the register page
- If there are any children that are absent and there is no reason given (ie no call or email received) admin support will,
 - contact the parent/carer to find out the reason for absence and continue to do this until 10.00am
 - **If no contact is made by 10.30am, the admin support will inform the HT (or DSL in HT absence) who will initiate safeguarding procedures for absent pupils****
- Admin support to complete the “Daily Pupil Count” sheet and pin on office noticeboard. At the end of the week, this sheet will be filed into the Attendance Monitoring Folder

*** See below: Absence Procedures for Safeguarding Pupils*

Afternoon Register Procedures

- The register must be completed by 2.10pm and sent to the office
- Office admin staff will check the entries and enter the relevant absence code for any pupil that was authorised to leave the school during the lunchtime period (see *Children Leaving School During the Day Procedure*).
- Staff to collect registers from the office in the morning

Children Leaving School During the Day Procedure

- A book will be maintained for pupils that have to leave school during the school day for appointments or because they may be unwell. Admin staff will enter names into the book and inform staff if relevant

Absence Procedures for Safeguarding Pupils

- If an absent child is on the schools Vulnerable Children's Register, is a Child at Risk or is on the Child Protection Register and no reason is given for the absence and contact cannot be made with the parents/carers or other emergency numbers we have on record, the procedures in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed

Weekly Procedures

- The HT/DSL will monitor the daily absences on a weekly basis and identify pupils with a pattern of less than 96% to agree any further actions that might need to be taken, particularly for pupils that have frequent repeat absences, as this could be an indicator of a pupil/family that is vulnerable/in need
- The weekly attendance rate for each class and the whole school will also be calculated
- A "Best Class Attendance" certificate will be awarded to the class with the highest attendance

Half Termly Procedures

- Children with less than 95% for the half term will be identified and strategies to support better attendance discussed and initiated with the staff team (see also the Attendance Policy)
- The half termly attendance rate for each class and the whole school will also be calculated
- A "Best Class Attendance" cup will be awarded to the class with the highest attendance for the first half term

Termly Procedures

- Children with less than 95% for the term will be identified and strategies to support better attendance discussed and initiated with the staff team (see also the Attendance Policy)
- The termly attendance rate for each class and the whole school will also be calculated
- A "Best Class Attendance" cup will be awarded to the class with the highest attendance for the second half term
- Individual attendance awards will be given to pupils with attendance over 96%

A display to celebrate school attendance will be created and maintained throughout the school year

APPENDIX B

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

Every lesson really does count for your child and children can quickly fall behind if even one day is missed. This includes days taken as leave in term time and 'long weekends'. Catching up even a little lost time in school can be difficult for children; they may become more reluctant to attend and are more likely to be lonely or bullied. If poor attendance habits develop at primary school, children can struggle at secondary school or be at increased risk of harm.

Decisions to authorise leave during term time is at the discretion of individual Head teachers. Attached is an application form for you to request permission for your child to be absent from school to take part in a family holiday. Before completing the application form, please read these notes carefully:

- The law states that you do not have the right to take your child out of school for holidays during term time. If you wish to take your child on holiday during term time, you must apply for permission in writing using the attached form. Permission for authorised leave of absence may be granted for holidays totalling no more than two weeks (10 school days) in any school year, unless there are very exceptional circumstances.
- There are certain times of the year when a child may experience problems because of missing school. These include examination periods, at the time of starting a new school and at the start of a new school term. In deciding whether to authorise your child's absence and give permission for a holiday in term time, the school will take these and other factors into account.
- If the school refuse your application and you still take your child out of school the absences will be treated as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences can lead to a Penalty being issued against you for irregular school attendance.

Having read these notes, if you still wish to apply for a leave of absence for your child to accompany you on holiday during term time then please complete the application attached. This form should be returned to your child's school 4 weeks in advance of the proposed holiday.

Appendix C

Sample attendance and punctuality letters

Sample low attendance letter

Address

Date

Dear Parent's name,

Your child, NAME, has a school attendance of below 95%. As such, we are writing to remind you of how important it is for NAME to attend school to make the most of the education we offer.

We promote good attendance at our school so that NAME has as much opportunity to learn, serving them best both now and in the future. If NAME's attendance continues to fall below 95% then we may invite you in for a meeting to discuss with your child's teacher and a member of the Welfare Group.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher

cc'd

Headteacher

Sample Attendance Information Request Letter

Address

Date

Dear Parent's Name,

Your child, NAME, was absent from school on DATE. Please can you write to us to explain the reason for NAME's absence?

If there it was due to a medical appointment, please bring in written confirmation of this from the medical professional, or an appointment card. Without this, we are unable to authorise the absence.

Yours sincerely,

Office Admin Support

Sample punctuality letter

Dear Parent,

We are concerned about your child's punctuality. In the current half term, Child's name has now been late on X occasions without any written explanation of an unavoidable reason.

In our view the good habit of arriving on time for lessons is something that fosters a sense of responsibility, and avoids any disruption to the class. As you will be aware from our school handbook, children should arrive in the classroom to start the morning between 8.50 and 9.00am a.m. and be ready for the register at 9.00am a.m. If they arrive after 9.05 a.m. they are late.

We are aware that circumstances beyond your control can, on occasion contribute to lateness - for example roadworks or extreme weather conditions, exceptional personal circumstances, and allowance is made for these eventualities.

If there is some ongoing difficulty with arriving punctually, please let us know how we might help you. Should your child continue to arrive late to school on a further 3 or more occasions then you will be required to attend an interview with your child's teacher or the Headteacher.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher

cc'd

Head teacher

Appendix D

ABSENCE AND ATTENDANCE CODES TO BE USED IN REGISTERS

Source: Absence and Attendance codes; Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities (DfES August 2006)

/	Present -am	\	Present-pm
C	Authorised absence not covered elsewhere – Compassionate (funeral, family crisis) or participating in a public performance, etc.	N	No reason yet given for absence.
E	Excluded with no alternative provision made.	O	Unauthorised absence; either no reason or inadequate reason given.
F	Extended Family holiday, authorised (over 2 weeks)	P	Approved sporting activity
G	Family holiday, unauthorised (Gone away!) or in excess of agreed days	R	Religious Observance
H	Family Holiday, authorised (2 weeks or less)	U	Late without reason – after close of registration (9.30 am or 2 pm)
I	Illness (not medical appointments)	Y	Forced school closure (bad weather, no power, etc)
J	Interview for employment or further education	#	School closed to pupils (e.g. Inset day)
L	Late without reason – before close of registration (9.30 am or 2 pm) Y Forced school closure (bad weather, no		
M	Medical or dental appointment		