

Introduction

This policy is written in conjunction with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 No. 1751; the Education Act 1996. Poor attendance disadvantages children and missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. The attendance policy is therefore an important tool in the work of schools to drive up standards and pupils' attainment. At The Gates we aim to ensure that the children in our school attend regularly and on time, and where this is not the case, school follow a staged procedure designed to encourage consistent attendance.

The performance indicator by which we judge the success of our efforts is set each year by our average attendance figure. Information about expected standards of attendance and punctuality is included once a term on the school newsletter.

The government expect Schools and agencies to: Promote good attendance and reduce absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and act early to address patterns of absence.

The government expects parents/ carers to: Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children, of compulsory school age attend regularly; ensure their child is punctual to their lessons; dressed in school uniform and equipped. Parents/carers are also responsible for informing school of the reason for any absence by phone call or personal visit.

A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December.

Aims of the policy

- To ensure high levels of attendance for all pupils
- To raise attainment for pupils by improving attendance
- To safeguard pupils

Registers

The school keeps 2 registers: one is the admissions register and one is the attendance register. All children who are receiving an education at the school during the traditional school day must be placed on both the admissions register and the attendance register.

Attendance Register

Registers are marked in line with Authority guidelines and completed within 10 minutes of the start of each session.

School hours are from 8.50am until 3.20pm and classroom doors open in the morning at 8.40am. This equates to 32.5 hours on an average week.

Each school day has 2 sessions:

- AM Session: EYFS/KS1/KS2 8:50am
- PM Session: EYFS and KS1 12.30pm and KS2 1:00pm

Children not present at registration but arriving after the session starts should be marked late-present- 'L'. Children who arrive after 9.20am will be marked as late-absent – 'U'.

The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census

Authorised absence

Illness/medical conditions

Parents should contact the school on the first day of absence (between 8:30am and 9:00am). Messages can be left on the school's answerphone regarding absence.

Unexplained Absences

The school operates a system of 'First Day Calls' for all pupils. This means that the school will contact parents on the first day of absence, as soon after 9.30am as possible, if there has been no contact from an appropriate adult to explain the absence. All absence is reviewed daily by the Headteacher /School Business Manager. Particular attention is given to the following circumstances and may result in a home visit to check on the child's welfare:-

- Child Protection/Child in Need – A child that is absent from school with no response from parents by 10.00am.
- Children with any other status - A child that is absent from school with no response from parents within 2 days after contact has been attempted
- A child that is absent for 3 days (even if parents have contacted school)

A note will be made in Sims/Attendance. If the school has concerns about unexplained absence, the Early Intervention Team (EIT) will be contacted and may visit home.

First Day Visits by Early Intervention Service

A home visit will be undertaken on the first and where appropriate, subsequent days of absence. (i.e. where a child does not attend on the expected return date). These visits are in order to check on the child's welfare and establish the reason for absence. Visits are undertaken for the following children who are on roll who are not in school

- Children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan (For children subject to a Child Protection Plan with neighbouring authorities who cross the boundary to attend a Bolton school, the school should contact the named Social Worker from the home authority to establish arrangements for reporting absence)
- Children who are subject to an Interim Care Order and living at home
- Looked After children who are living with parents
- Children who are on a temporary Child Protection Plan having recently moved into the area from another authority

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' absence. A letter or a telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter /message will the absence be authorised.

The Headteacher is responsible for the determination of authorisation and parents receive contact from the school outlining the possible consequences of any absence in term time, which are not the result of unavoidable illness or injury.

Long term illness

Children with longer term illnesses (longer than 2 continuous weeks) may require home tuition. Parents should contact the school to arrange this.

SEND children/medical conditions

Children with specific medical conditions or with Special Educational Needs may have higher than expected absence. The individual circumstances of the child will be taken into account when discussing attendance with parents.

Religious Observance

Absence for religious observance will be granted. The day must be set aside for religious observance by the religious body. All applications for leave of absence for religious observance must be made in advance of the date(s). Parents should request a form from the office for these purposes. Evidence may be requested of the religious observance.

Unavoidable causes

Parents should inform the school as soon as possible and briefly explain the situation. Leave of absence will be authorised at the discretion of the Head teacher/ Chair of Governors

Holidays

Government legislation, from Sept 2014, removes the reference to 'family holidays' as a reason for the Headteacher to authorise leave of absence. This is not a school decision but a Government decision and is upheld in law. Holidays taken in term time will be unauthorised unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Headteachers, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, can only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances and this will be entirely at the discretion of the Headteacher and will not include term-time holidays. See Appendix 'Guidance for Applying for Leave of Absence in Term Time.

Parents should apply for leave of absence, using a form which can be obtained from the school office. They should give the school as much notice as possible when requesting this but no later than three weeks before the event (with the exception of funerals with copies of the relevant supporting documentation). Leave of absence requests will not be authorised retrospectively, so permission must be requested prior to the start of the holiday date or it will be unauthorised.

Extended leave of absence without explanation

The school will do all in its power to investigate the circumstances of extended leave of absence without explanation but will remove a child's place after 4 continuous weeks' leave of absence. The school will write to the last known address of the child to inform parents/ carers that the child has been deleted from the register.

Lates

It is important that children attend school on time so they maximise their learning potential. Children who arrive late must enter the school via the school office. Office staff will record in the register any children who are late and the time of arrival at school. Lateness is monitored rigorously and a 'late gate' is operated on an ad hoc basis by a member of the Senior Leadership team, asking parents and children as they enter school the reason for their lateness and how this can be addressed to avoid being late again. Parents may be contacted outside this is if there is persistent lateness.

Children Missing Education

Under normal circumstances when a child moves school the receiving school must contact the previous school to inform them they have placed the pupil on roll. In response to this, the previous school must complete a

Common Transfer Form (CTF) and transfer this file to the new school via the secure data transfer site, referred to as School-to-School (S2S). Any school receiving a pupil for whom they have not been sent a CTF and do not know their previous school should contact the Information Management Unit. The purpose of this national system is to try and avoid pupils going missing. Where a pupil leaves a school and no notification of a new school has been received, a school must within 1-10 days of their last date of attendance notify the LA CME officer having completed the 'reasonable enquiries' checklist. The pupil must remain on roll for at least 20 continuous school days whilst further enquiries are completed by the CME Officer. **Craig Swinton** is the Children Missing from Education Officer for Bolton.

- **Pupils located in Bolton** - If the child returns to school or is found during the 20 days the child should not be taken off roll. The school should work with the child/family and if appropriate other agencies to ensure the child remains engaged in education. They may be removed from roll if they then go on roll at another school.
- **Pupils located outside Bolton** - The school should complete the checklist with information of the forwarding address and send to CME Officer who will make enquiries with the receiving authority to confirm the child's whereabouts.
- **Pupils not located** - If after completion of the checklist and submission to the CME Officer the child remains untraceable the school may remove the pupil from the roll subject to confirmation by the Line Manager of the CME Officer. The pupil must remain on roll for at least 20 continuous school days whilst enquiries are completed. The school will post the child on the S2S site. This website enables LA staff on a national basis to see who is missing and provide fresh information where possible. Guidance on the use of the Schools to Schools (S2S) secure website is available on Schools' Extranet.

Deletion from registers

The regulations enable schools to delete compulsory school-age children in the following circumstances:

- the school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order;
- the School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority;
- permanent exclusion; death of the pupil;
- transfer between schools; and education otherwise (other than school);
- failure to return for an extended family holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil;
- in custody for more than four months;
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority on school have tried to locate the pupil (see above); and
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil- with LA agreement.

Communication

Information on procedures relating to lateness, illness and absence is given to parents/carers in the School Key Stage Starter Packs. This information highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason. Regular communication regarding the attendance policy, systems and punctuality, both at the start and the end of the school day, is shared with parents each term on the school newsletter, parent evenings and induction sessions.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are fines of £60/£120 imposed on parents. Penalty notices can only be issued by a local authority officer or the police. Penalty notices are issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

Penalty notices can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school. Penalty notices may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

The Local Authority operates the following trigger system:

- 5 (½ day) unauthorised sessions in two consecutive half terms: Warning letter issued
- A further 5 unauthorised absences within two consecutive half terms: Fixed Penalty Notice issued

If the fine is not paid 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.

If a parent is experiencing problems with their child's attendance support can be obtained from the Child Employment and Enforcement Officer at: -

Early Intervention and Connexions Service

2nd Floor, BASE

Marsden Road

BOLTON

BL1 2PF

Tel: 01204 338173

Dealing with poor attendance

The Government requires schools, by law, to set attendance targets to deal with poor attendance. The school aim is for an overall attendance rate of 96%+.

Both local and central government pay particular attention to reducing the number of pupils who fall into the severely absence category. A pupil is a severe absentee when their attendance falls below 90% at any point during the school year; whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised. When attendance nears this level children miss significant amounts of schooling; meaning that their educational progress is put at risk. We need parents' full support in ensuring that attendance does not reach this level.

In order to improve attendance figures and keep parents informed, the school operates a 'traffic lights' system, assessed each term

- Green Pupils with an attendance between 96% and 100%.
- Amber Pupils with attendance between 92.1% and 95.9%.
- Red Pupils with attendance below 92%.

Parents will be issued a letter each half term with their child's cumulative attendance which will indicate which bracket their child's attendance falls into as above.

In addition to the above, attendance is monitored every half term to identify children early who are not attending well – this is done on a forensic basis.

Any child who moves into the 'Red' bracket (unless exceptional circumstances) will be added to the attendance tracker and issued a letter advising that any future absences will require evidence for this to be authorised.

For severely absent children, the school may make a referral to the Early Intervention Team in the Local Authority. The EIT will advise the school about the action that should be taken in each individual case, for example, an Early Help Assessment Form may be completed.

Rewarding good attendance

There are a number of initiatives in school to acknowledge and rewards good attendance. These include:-

- Overall class 100% attendance for a week or highest class attendance – a credit to the class bank account
- Individual weekly 100% attendance rewarded with a sticker
- 100% attendance for whole academic year – book voucher reward

Nursery Children

The school aim is for overall attendance of 96%. This is the expectation for all children who attend The Gates Primary, including Nursery children and the Attendance Policy applies to these children. Parents will be given one term for their child's attendance to show significant signs of improvement. If the attendance does not improve, the school may decide to remove the place, unless there are exceptional circumstances. At least one week's written notice will be given if the place is to be removed. Families may request to be referred to Families Information Service at the Local Authority who will be able to assist them in finding an alternative provider.

Leave Of Absence and Holidays In Term Time

Amendments by the DfE do not allow Headteachers to grant leave for a family holiday under any circumstances. Leave of absence may be considered in what the Government call 'exceptional' circumstances. This is not statutory. Here are the examples given by the Governing Body and how the Head teacher should respond:

Reason	Justification	Decision
Holidays are cheaper during term time	This is not an exceptional circumstance	Absence will not be authorised
Parent/ carers employer allocated holiday fall in term time	This is not an exceptional circumstance and is an issue that needs to be resolved between parents and their employer, not school	Absence will not be authorised

Exceptional Circumstances- Examples

Reason	Justification	Decision
Parent/ carer is in the armed forces	Short/limited period of leave before returning to official duties	Absence can be authorised. <i>Evidence of leave needed</i>
Parent/ carer is in the fire service	The fire service prescribe holidays annually depending on their watch	Absence can be authorised. <i>Evidence of leave needed</i>
Parent/ carer undergone or undergoing extensive medical treatment	Request for leave has been made to coincide with a treatment schedule or at the end of a treatment	Absence can be authorised <i>Medical evidence needed</i>
Pupil's ongoing health/ medical; needs or the need for specialist accommodation	Considered as an exceptional circumstance because holidays may not be able to happen out of	Absence can be authorised <i>Medical evidence needed</i>

	term time	
Weddings for close family members for parents, grandparents, sibling abroad or in the UK	Not all members of the wedding party might consider school term times when planning their wedding day	Maximum 3 days authorised. <i>Evidence of wedding booking needed.</i>
Child visiting a sick close relative, grandparent or sibling, abroad or in the UK	Unforeseen illness may fall in term time	Depending on destination, a maximum of 5 days can be authorised. <i>Evidence of medical condition needed.</i>
Child attending a funeral in the UK or abroad	Funeral date may fall in term time	Maximum of 3 days authorised. <i>Evidence of funeral needed.</i>
Child attending modelling, acting or approved sporting activities	These events may fall in term time	Absence authorised depending on nature of request and impact on education. <i>Evidence of event needed.</i>
Child visiting a parent/ carer in custody	Visiting times may not fall in school holidays	1 day authorised <i>Evidence of visit needed</i>
Child attending as religious festival or pilgrimage	Hajj- once in a career Eid- one day a year	Hajj- Maximum 10 days authorised Eid- one day a year authorised
Child attending an important religious observances/ ceremonies	These events may fall in term time	Maximum 1 days authorised. <i>Evidence of observance/ ceremony needed.</i>

This guidance is neither exhaustive nor definitive. Each application for a leave of absence would be considered case by case and remains at the discretion of the head teacher taking into account all factors, including past and current attendance rates in school. Any child being monitored as a result of poor attendance will not have any of the above exceptional absences authorised.

Monitoring

The Headteacher is the strategic lead for school attendance and is responsible for the monitoring and review of this policy and makes decisions in line with school policy. Contact details are via school email address – office@thegates.bolton.sch.uk