

Attendance Policy

(Non-Statutory - Advisory)

Reviewed/Approved by Trustees' Education Committee: 07/11/2023

Review Cycle: Annually

Review Date: November 2024

Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school.
- We also support prompt punctuality in attending lessons.

We want every student to enjoy their learning and feel valued for who they are.

Parents and students play a part in making our school successful. Parents and the school share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age meets these expectations.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital students attend school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

There is a widespread agreement amongst health and educational professions that school attendance is vital to the life chances of children and young people. Being in school improves health, wellbeing and socialization throughout the school year. The greatest benefits come from children and young people attending school regularly.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#).

Roles and responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school.
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance.

The link trustee for attendance and expectations is Carole Stevenson.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy across the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to trustees.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.

The designated deputy head is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school.
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Having an oversight of data analysis.
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data with the Head of Year.
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with the student and the family.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families with the Head of Year.
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary (delegated responsibility from the Headteacher).

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Heidi Shering and can be contacted via wellbeing@burgate.hants.sch.uk

The Attendance Welfare Officer (AWO) is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data.
- Providing regular attendance reports and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated deputy head and Head of Year as appropriate.
- Advising the designated deputy heads when to issue fixed-penalty notices.
- Building relationships with students and families with poor attendance.
- Works with external agencies, such as Legal Intervention Team to tackle persistent and severe absence.
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The attendance team can be contacted via attendance@burgate.hants.sch.uk

The tutor and subject teacher are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a lesson-by-lesson basis, accurately and promptly.
- Putting in wellbeing calls on day two of an absence.
- Building good relationships with students and encouraging positive engagement in all aspects of school life.
- Identifying barriers to attendance and engagement.
- Reporting any patterns of absences to the Head of Year and AWO.

School office admin team are responsible for:

- Taking calls and logging emails from parents reporting absence on SIMS.
- Ensuring all morning registers are complete and notifying parents of any missing students by 09.15 every morning through school comms.
- Liaising with the AWO to follow up any missing students from the daily attendance register.

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.
- Contact the school to report their child's absence before 08.30 on the day of the absence.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.
- Attend every timetabled session.
- Are expected to communicate with their tutor or subject teacher in advance if they are unable to attend a timetabled session (with parental consent) - Sixth form students only.

Recording attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and ensure all students are placed on this register.

The attendance register will be marked twice daily. Once at the start of the school day at 08.35 in registration with the student's tutor and again at the lunchtime tutor lesson.

It will mark whether every student is:

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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not.
- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

School procedures

Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

Lateness and punctuality

The school day begins at 08.35 and all students are expected to be in school in their tutor room at this time.

All lateness is recorded daily. Punctuality sanctions from the school will follow based on this information and it could also be used by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their learning and education, but also that of other students. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and could be subject to legal action**. Arrival after the close of registration at 08.45 may be marked as unauthorised absence code "U" in line with the Hampshire County Council (HCC) and Department of Education (DfE) guidance.

Parents of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved.

If a student is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded "M". Where possible doctors and dentists' appointments are to be made outside school hours or during school holidays.

Parents should inform the school of any medical appointment in advance and provide a copy of the child's appointment card for their attendance file.

Parents can monitor their child's attendance and punctuality through the parent SIMS app.

We actively promote and reward good attendance and encourage parents and students to share any concerns they have with the pastoral team as soon as possible.

Good attendance habits are best started early and from the day students arrive at the Burgate School and Sixth Form, attendance is monitored and excellent and improving attendance is actively praised through targeted actions from the tutor and head of year.

Unplanned absence

Day One Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. Therefore, it is important parents contact the school with the details of the absence as soon as possible.

Parents must notify the school by 08.30 in the morning of their child's absence. They do this by either calling the school (01425 652039) or by emailing attendance@burgate.hants.sch.uk

As a school we will contact any parent of a child whose absence has not been accounted for by 09.10 via a school comms message. Any parent who has not responded to the school comms message will be contacted directly by the Attendance Welfare Officer (AWO).

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

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

Day Two Absence

When a child is absence for 2 consequent days, the child's tutor will make a "wellbeing" call home and invite parents in to discuss how we can best support the child's return to school.

If a child has a pattern of poor attendance, then parents will be invited in to meet with the Head of Year or Attendance Welfare Officer, in order to support a return to school.

If a child's attendance falls below 90% and there is not substantial medical evidence to support the absences, then the school may make a referral to the Legal Intervention Team.

Day Ten Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without satisfactory explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the parent, then the Local Authority is notified that the child is "at risk of missing". Children's Services will visit the last known address and alert the appropriate services to support the family moving forward.

It is both the responsibility of the school and the parent to ensure the school holds accurate and up to date contact details. Parents can check their contact details on the parent SIMS app.

Ongoing or persistent Absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If a child misses 10% (4 weeks/40 sessions) or more of schooling across the school year for whatever reason, they are defined as a persistent absentee. If a child misses 50% of school they are referred to as severely absent. Where the absence is authorised the school will expect the student to keep up their studies and parents must continue to provide relevant absence certification and maintain regular contact with the school.

The pastoral team and AWO work closely with families to support regular attendance at school. The foundation for good attendance is a strong relationship between school, parents and the child. It is important both the parent and the child understand the impact of poor attendance, not only in terms of academic gaps in knowledge, but also the social disconnect that can occur, and overall wellbeing of a child.

The AWO monitors student absence on a daily and fortnightly basis, depending on the level of need and support required.

A variety of different strategies can be used to support a student who is struggling to attend school including:

- Early communication with home when attendance dips or patterns start to appear.
- Students and parents work with the pastoral team to complete a “Emotionally Based School Avoidance” (EBSA) support booklet.
- Regular meetings with a trusted adult to support the child in school.
- Individualised support programmes: for example, a peer mentor or voucher scheme, ELSA, School Counselling.
- Acknowledgement of excellent or improved attendance through postcards or phone calls home.

Reporting to parents

Parents can monitor their child’s attendance daily via the parents SIMS app. Attendance is reported annually in the end of year report.

As a school, the Burgate School and Sixth Form has good attendance and we work closely with students and parents to ensure good attendance is actively promoted

Attendance is monitored fortnightly and regular contact is made with students and parents with attendance below 95%.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Students are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence.

There are two main categories of absences:

An authorised absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

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

An unauthorised absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child’s leave absence from school after a parent’s request. This includes:

- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence, they have been on holiday.

We are required to work with Hampshire County Council to take legal actions to tackle poor attendance or unauthorised absences. Schools are only able to authorise absence from school in exceptional circumstances. The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

In making a request for an authorised absence from school, parents will need to explain why the circumstances are exceptional. There is no legal right to authorise absence for a family holiday. If a child is taken out of school without permission the absence will be unauthorised and we will consider legal action. Legal measures, in the form of a fixed penalty notice, can be taken for an unauthorised holiday absence of 10 or more sessions (5 days) over a 100-session period.

Parents wishing to request authorised absences from school due to exceptional circumstances need to complete an application form available on the school website or via attendance@burgate.hants.sch.uk

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may consider:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Trustee's Education Committee annually.

Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

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

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

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

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