



Attendance Policy

Bohunt Wokingham

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I. Objectives

For Bohunt Education Trust to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- To support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly (see Appendix Two for advice).
- To promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Background

At Bohunt Education Trust we believe that for a student to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. Every student has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. We believe in working in partnership with our parents/carers to support good attendance and therefore facilitate success in learning.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our students and endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome. Parents/carers and students play a key part in making our Trust and School successful. Parents/carers, students and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

We strive consistently to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all students. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines students 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.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and peer relationships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between our School and higher education, employment or training.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the students.

The procedures regarding attendance in relation to your child are set out in Appendix I.

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy and the procedures in Appendix I meet the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refer to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [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](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy and the procedures in Appendix I also refer to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold. This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Assistant Headteacher Wellbeing (or equivalent) to:

- oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and punctuality
- ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school
- work collaboratively with other staff to ensure high levels of attendance and punctuality, and where this is not the case, that timely interventions are put in place
- report on Attendance matters for the Head to report to the Local Governing Body at termly intervals.
- have day to day oversight of all attendance matters
- actively promote good attendance and punctuality
- work with students and their families who are at risk of becoming persistently absent or late
- ensure that records of attendance are complete and accurate
- take responsibility for preparing case files and other paperwork for attendance interventions such as Penalty Notices and referrals to the County's Attendance Litigation Panel

Heads of Upper and Lower school, Year Progress Leaders and Class Tutor (or equivalent) to:

- review at regular intervals the attendance and punctuality of students under their care
- intervene early with students who show signs of regular absence, lateness or truancy
- regularly praise/reward students with excellent attendance
- work collaboratively with the AHT Welfare (or equivalent) to improve school attendance

Students to:

- maintain high levels of attendance at school
- be rarely late to school or lessons
- attend scheduled public examinations

Parents/Carers:

- Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

5. Understanding types of absence

Pupils 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:

- 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
- 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/carers.

An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence that they have been on holiday.

6. Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state **that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances**. It is important to note that Head Teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family.

There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the school office and website in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds, parents/carers may be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action.

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

7. Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

For further advice and guidance on attendance and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families see Wokingham Borough council

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/planning-policy-information/gypsy-and-traveller-local-plan/>

8. Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.

Appendix One: Procedures

School to include its particular procedures and forms, as well as any benchmarks for certain actions (e.g. fines)

When a student's attendance or punctuality falls below our expectation, the situation will be discussed with parents in the first instance and letters will be sent to formally note the concern. If there is no satisfactory and sustained improvement, the school will write to parents to notify them of the decision to no longer authorise absence and the matter will be referred to the School Attendance Team for further intervention. This intervention will either be a fixed penalty notice or a SAP (School Attendance Panel). County Officers have recourse to a number of legal powers:

a) School Attendance Order (SAO)

- A School Attendance Order is issued if your child is not on roll at any school and the local authority is worried that you have not made arrangements to provide an alternative, suitable, full-time education. SAOs are used to direct you to send your child to a specified school.
- Before serving an SAO, Children's Services Officers should make every effort to discuss the situation with you. If it is not possible to persuade you to make suitable arrangements for your child's education, then you will be served with a notice stating that you are failing in your duty to provide your child with an education.
- The notice must inform you that you need to satisfy the local authority that you are providing an education at school or otherwise within a specified time period (but not less than 15 days beginning with the day the notice was served).
- Local authorities are responsible for prosecuting parents if they breach an SAO and also have the option of seeking an Education Supervision Order.

b) Education Supervision Order (ESO)

- As well as or instead of prosecuting you the local authority may apply to a court for an ESO. This order means that a supervisor will be appointed to you to give you help and advice on getting your child back into education.
- As an alternative to prosecution, authorised local authority staff, police officers and headteachers can issue penalty notices to parents of children who are not attending school regularly. The penalty is £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days. If you fail to pay a penalty fine, you will be prosecuted.

c) Taking you to court

- The local authority may prosecute you (they don't have to issue a penalty notice first) and this could result in a more severe penalty.
- You could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or, in extreme cases, a jail sentence of up to three months. If the court thinks it will help to stop your child missing school, it may also impose a Parenting Order.

d) Parenting Order

- A Parenting Order is a court order which requires you to attend parenting education or support classes. You will also have to do whatever the court says is necessary to improve your child's behaviour and attendance at school.

Attendance Procedures at Bohunt Wokingham

Notification of absence

Parents are requested to report the absence via the studybuys app or telephone the school on the first day of absence with an indication of the length of the absence and expected date of return. If no message has been received, office staff will attempt to make contact with the parent, by telephone and e-mail. Upon returning to school after absence a student should bring an absence note. If the note is straightforward it should be dealt with by the attendance officer. Any extraordinary letters (e.g. outlining a family problem, a recurring medical condition, serious complaint) should be discussed with the Progress Leader who will decide on any appropriate action to be taken and then filed in the student's records.

Leave of Absence Requests

Parents requesting an absence for their child should fill in the Leave of Absence Request form (obtainable from Reception and website) and return it to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will not authorise any leave of absence during term time, other than in exceptional circumstances. A fixed penalty notice will be issued to parents/carers for any leave of absence of five days or more in one occasion or over the course of an academic year.

Sanctions and Rewards

The school recognises regular attendance and punctuality as essential facets of student achievement. There are clearly defined and achievable goals, which recognise and reward good practice in these two areas.

- Excellent (96%+) for a term – certificate/ERA/Attendance raffle – invitation to end of term reward events
- Excellent (96%+) for a year – certificate/ERA/ Attendance raffle - invitation to end of year reward events

Student truancy

A letter home or phone call regarding the absence, followed up by school correction.

The Progress Leader, supported by the Assistant Headteacher (Student Wellbeing), will deal with any escalation of the problem. If the situation fails to improve after the above procedures have been carried out, further action will be taken in conjunction with the LA.

Persistent Absence

Students who have a rate of attendance consistently below **90%** are a cause for concern and their circumstances will be investigated further. Whilst Bohunt Wokingham recognises that there may be genuine reasons for absence that student's attendance will be closely monitored on a half termly

basis and parents may be notified of the concern. Students who are consistently below **90%** attendance are characterised as “persistently absent” and are a significant concern as their academic progress is significantly compromised.

It is worth noting that an attendance rate of 90%, maintained throughout years 7-11, equates to a student being effectively absent for half a year of his/her secondary schooling

Lateness

Students who are late to school will expect the following sanctions:

- Arrive between 8.40-9.00am – students will complete a break time correction for the number of minutes they were late to school. Failure to attend will result in an after school correction.

Letters will be sent home to parents raising our concerns over their child’s punctuality to school.

Referrals to the School Attendance Team

- A referral will be made if the measures described above fail to bring about an improvement in attendance.
- A fixed penalty notice warning may be issued if a student has 10 or more unauthorised sessions during a term.
- A referral for a SAP (school attendance panel) will be made in circumstances where an FPN is not appropriate and for students with 15 or more sessions of absence during the year. Each referral must be accompanied by details of the student’s attendance for the preceding period.

Monitoring

- Tutor monitors attendance on a daily basis and raises any patterns of concern as appropriate with the relevant Progress Leader
- The Assistant Headteacher and Progress Leaders meet regularly to discuss/review the attendance and punctuality policy and how it is being adapted to everyday use.
- Attendance (Half termly/termly) figures are reviewed and tutor group targets set on a regular basis.
- Working practices of the policy are also discussed periodically at the Progress Leaders meeting.
- Half termly attendance statistics will be published and reviewed by Progress Leaders who will monitor attendance with the tutor.
- The Progress Leader meets with the Attendance Officer every two weeks
- The Assistant Headteacher meets with the Headteacher on a regular basis to scrutinise attendance data.
- Attendance reports are submitted to the LA five times a year.

Appendix Two: Advice for Parents

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers, and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from not attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons- difficulties with school work, friendship issues, or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance and work together to tackle the problem.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time in the morning. Ensure that you leave home in plenty of time, with book bag, water bottle and, if necessary, a packed lunch. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education- be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school, other than when transferring to another school, parents are asked to give the Attendance Officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move, new address and telephone numbers, details of their child's new school and the start date when this is known. A form is available in the school office.

If children leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By providing us with all the above information these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the head teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the head teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

First of all, congratulations to them! Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the head teacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the head teacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Where permission is granted, please get in contact with their tutor so that we can work out how best to support them so that their academic progress is not harmed and that coming back into school is not stressful.