

# **BETHANY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

## **DECEMBER 2024**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Bethany School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school via our website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education. Including **Working together to improve school attendance 2024**.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school and Senior School Attendance Champion is Mr David Charles. Mrs Susan Clark is the Governor taking responsibility to oversee attendance.

The person parents/carers should contact in the first instance about attendance on a day to day basis is: the School Office 0114 2726994 and [office@bethanyschoolsheffield.org](mailto:office@bethanyschoolsheffield.org)

For more detailed support on attendance contact the Head Teacher

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

Encourage pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.

Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.

Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.

Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.

Ensure that our policy promotes good habits at an early age.

Build strong relationships with all our families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.

Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.

Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage pupils to have a sense of their own responsibility.

Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

Maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Accurately completing admission and attendance registers and implementing effective day to day processes to follow-up absence.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
- Sharing information and working collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

## **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent

Authorised/ Unauthorised absences are recorded in accordance with the Codes contained in the The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 Section 10

## **PROCEDURES**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To clearly communicate the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- Facilitate access to a “relevant officer” to examine and take extracts from the Admissions and Attendance Registers and that the necessary statutory data returns and sharing with the local authority and Secretary of State have been made
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Head Teacher

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

Bethany School should regularly inform parents about their child’s attendance and absence levels. For instance through the pupils' Norms Reports.

The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### **Class teachers**

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Head Teacher where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register.

- Discussing attendance issues at parent meetings where necessary.

## **HEAD TEACHER**

The Head Teacher who is the Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and make sure they are followed by all staff
- a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school
- regularly monitor and evaluate progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes.
- Conducting analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify
- patterns and trends in authorised and unauthorised absence. Benchmark their attendance data (at whole school, year group level) against local and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement and devise specific strategies to address any areas of poor attendance
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Governing Body.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
- Make sure the necessary statutory data returns and sharing to the local authority and Secretary of State have been made and Targeting Support Meetings with the Local Authority take place.
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- ensuring that a back-up copy of the register is made at least once a month in the form of an electronic or printed copy and kept for 6 years, in accordance with The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 Regulations 5 and 6.
- whenever an entry in the school's admission register or attendance register is amended, the register contains—
  - a) the original entry;
  - b) the amended entry;
  - c) the reason for the amendment;
  - d) the date on which the amendment was made; and
  - e) the name of the person who made the amendment.
 and that any printed copy of the register also contains this information
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance which includes completion and alteration of the Register and all information required to be recorded along with the relevant codes.

## **ADMINISTRATION STAFF**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.

## **PARENTS/CARERS**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Providing School with more than one Emergency Contact Number for each pupil if possible.

## **SCHOOL OPENING HOURS**

The school is open in the morning at 8.20am for School starting time of 8.30am.

The school finishes in the afternoon at 2.30pm

## **REGISTRATION**

The school keeps both an Admissions Register and attendance registers in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

The Admissions Register is used to record specific personal details of every student in the school along with the date of admission or readmission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended.

All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on the admission register in accordance with the above regulations and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register.

Schools must take the attendance register(s) at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session.

Each Supervisor has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the Supervisor by 9am in the morning and 1pm in the afternoon. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:-

Physically present in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school by using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Schools must record whether the absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or not. There is no requirement for schools to record whether the absence of pupils not of compulsory school age is authorised or not, but where possible schools should use the national attendance and absence codes to help them monitor their attendance and to form good attendance habits.

Schools must record the nature of the activity where a pupil of compulsory school age is attending an approved educational activity and the nature of the circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies.

Attendance codes will be used according to The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 Section 10. (See Appendix 1)

Registers are legal documents and every entry in the attendance or admission register must be kept secure and preserved for a period 6 years from the date the data was entered.

## **GRANTING LEAVES OF ABSENCES**

School can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. Schools may grant leaves of absence in the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- **Exceptional circumstances.** Bethany School can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. Bethany School will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Generally, Bethany School does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. However each Application for Leave in Exceptional Circumstances shall be considered on a case by case basis.

An application for leave of absence will not be granted unless it is made in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with and the school is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which justify the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

Bethany School can also allow pupils of non-compulsory school age to be absent for sessions they are not timetabled to attend

## **EDUCATION OFF SITE**

As well as the above leaves of absence, all schools can also allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities or to attend other schools or settings:

- To attend an offsite approved educational activity. (For full details see Code B)
- To attend another school at which the pupil is registered (dual-registration). (For full details see Code D)
- To attend provision arranged by the local authority. e.g. alternative provision or as part of an education, health and care plan. (For full details see Code K)
- To participate in an approved sporting activity. (For full details see Code P)
- To attend an educational visit or trip arranged by the school. (For full details see Code V)
- To attend work experience (For full details see Code W)

## **LATENESS**

Any pupil who comes into school after 8.30am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late before the register is closed at 9am; this is documented on the attendance

register for each pupil (Attendance code L). *Any child who arrives for school after the register has closed and the school is not satisfied that the reason for lateness is an authorised absence, will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).*

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school late will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## **ABSENCES**

Parents/carers should contact the school Office on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the register. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head Teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence we will send a letter requesting these details to be completed by the parents/carers. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

Where absence is recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code should be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 working days after the session in accordance with The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 Section 10(7).

The school will regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.

## **FIRST DAY CONTACT**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

## **ILLNESS**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

## **ADDRESSING ATTENDANCE CONCERNS**

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. Governors shall receive Attendance Reports every term along with details of any concerns and action taken to improve attendance.

At Bethany School we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. 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. School aims to support pupils and parents by working together with them to address any barriers to attendance and access any support they may need. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the local authority and other relevant partners and work with them.

### **MONITORING ATTENDANCE**

Bethany School has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded in the register(s). Regular meetings are held with staff to discuss all attendance concerns, and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Policy Adopted by Governors on: 09.12.2024

Policy Last Reviewed on: 08.11.2021

Policy Due for Review on: December 2027 unless otherwise required



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **ATTENDANCE CODES**

Working together to improve school attendance 2024 pages 77-92 for full details.

Code / \: Present in school / = morning session \ = afternoon session

Code L: Late arrival before the register is closed

Code U: Absent at registration but arrived later

Code B: Attending any other approved Educational Activity

Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.

Code C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

Code D: Dual registered at another school

Code E: Suspended or permanently excluded

Code G: Holiday not granted by the school

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment)

Code J1: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

Code K: Attending education provision arranged by the local authority

Code M: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment

Code N: Reason for absence not yet established

Code O: Absent in other or unknown circumstances

Code P: Participating in a sporting activity

Code Q: Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements

Code R: Religious observance

Code S: Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination

Code T: Parent travelling for occupational purposes

Code V: Attending an Educational visit or trip

Code W: Attending Work experience

Code Y1: Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

Code Y2: Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel

Code Y3: Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Code Y4: Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed

Code Y5: Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Code Y6: Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

Code Y7: Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school

Code Z: Prospective pupil not on admission register

Code #: Planned whole school closure