

Attendance Policy (Students)

Review Date: February 2023

Review by: SLT

Final Approval: SLT

Academy Context

The core values which relate specifically to this policy, state that we are working together to form relationships based on:

Responsibility – everyone is expected to understand the consequences of their actions

Truth - everyone is expected to be honest and to communicate in a positive manner

Justice - everyone is entitled to be treated fairly and to promote the self-esteem of others.

Compassion – everyone is encouraged to be generous in their concern for others

Such values contribute to our common purpose of striving for high quality education with a strong Christian ethos and govern the policy and processes for ensuring high attendance.

Data Protection

Any personal data processed in the delivery of this policy will be processed in accordance with the Academy's Data Protection Policy.

Introduction

In line with national expectation, Bishop Stopford School encourages every student to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance in order to benefit fully from the education provided for them.

Statutory Framework

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

The Academy is legally required to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with

- The Safeguarding – Child Protection Policy
- The Schools and Admissions page on the Northamptonshire County Council Website (for information regarding Penalty Notices).

Policy

The Academy will:

- Take action to ensure attendance is at the highest possible level (and always over 96%)
- Ensure all legal obligations with regard to attendance are met, including statutory reporting of interm absences to the Local Authority
- Promote the importance of good attendance through communication with parents and students
- Monitor and review absence through the Governors' Personnel, Student Care and Discipline SubCommittee
- Liaise with the relevant external agencies regarding Persistent Absence
- Maintain accurate records and other information (eg action planning) in relation to absence
- Intervene in every case of Persistent Absence (ie attendance below 90%)

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Roles and Responsibilities

Maintaining attendance at Bishop Stopford School is the responsibility of everyone in the Academy community.

Students

All students are expected to attend the Academy and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. Students who are identified as experiencing attendance difficulties will be placed on an attendance action plan.

Parents¹

- Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends the Academy regularly, punctually, in correct uniform and equipped for learning.
- If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents are requested to notify the Academy on the first day of absence.
- A student's absence from the Academy will be considered unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received from the parent.
- Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance.
- Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for their child during academy hours.
- Parents must notify the Academy of all absences of their child/ren

Academy

- Attendance is the responsibility of **all** academy staff.
- The Academy will encourage good attendance and punctuality through role modelling and explicit reference to the importance of good attendance.
- The Academy will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality, and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents.
- The Academy will respond to all absenteeism consistently, and take each individual's circumstances into account when devising responses.
- The Academy will remind parents regularly of the legal requirements placed upon them regarding attendance, including the fact that if a student arrives later than the beginning of period 2 and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the student will be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.
- All class teachers will take registers in each of their classes and notify the Head of Year as soon as possible of any concerns over absent students.
- All telephone messages, notes or email messages regarding absence/lateness will be recorded and dated.
- Parental requests for absence will only be considered when exact dates for absence are given.

The Pastoral Team have specific responsibility for monitoring attendance. This includes front-line management of attendance processes, referrals to EIPT and liaison with parents.

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¹ Under Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, the term 'Parent' includes:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Any person, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with a child.

Procedures

Registration

Session registration will take place during Registration (8.35-8.55) and at the start of period 4 (1.151.30). Registers will also be taken for each lesson. If a student does not arrive before the registers close, they will be marked as 'absent'. Students who arrive after registers have closed, register late at Reception. If a student is late on more than two occasions in a week, a detention will be considered. Persistent lateness will result in further intervention.

Authorised / Unauthorised Absence

Authorised Absence: the Academy has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be absent, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

(The following is an illustrative but not exhaustive list of occasions where an absence would be unauthorised.)

- The student was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause
- Off-site educational activity (eg music examination)
- Dual Registered - at another educational establishment
- At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
- Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- Educational visit or trip
- Work experience

Absence is **unauthorised** in all other circumstances, unless the Academy considers it to be *exceptional*. Absence will be deemed to be **unauthorised** for a session if no communication from parents is received and where none of the conditions outlined under authorised absences apply. Educational, Inclusion and Partnership Team (EIPT) advice will be sought where there is any doubt about categorising an absence as authorised or unauthorised.

The following is an illustrative but not exhaustive list of occasions where absence would be unauthorised.

- no explanation is forthcoming; the academy is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the student stays at home to look after siblings
- the student is shopping during academy hours
- birthdays or other special occasions

Referrals and Penalty Notices

All unauthorised absences which are referred to the Educational Inclusion and Partnership Team (EIPT), could result in a Penalty Notice (PN) being issued.

A PN is an alternative to prosecution and requires the parent(s) to pay a fixed amount as a fine for their child's irregular attendance at school. An initial fixed penalty notice of £60 (per household) is issued for each child's absence. In Northamptonshire, the Local Authority issues them through the EIPT following notification from a school. They are used when:

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- When a student has a minimum of 10 school sessions recorded as unauthorised in a 6 school week period; (a school day is two sessions -morning and afternoon) or
- When a student has a series of unauthorised absences leading to irregular attendance.

This includes:

- ❖ Any absence marked in the register as unauthorised;
- ❖ Persistent late arrival at school after the register has been taken and is recorded as an unauthorised absence;
- ❖ An absence in term time which has not been authorised by the head teacher. (The Government has directed that head teachers may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances.)
- ❖ during the first 5 days of exclusion, if deemed appropriate. Parents are made aware of the consequences by letter when a student is excluded from school.

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Appendix 1

1. Request for Absence – eg Holiday, Music Exam, Medical appointment

There are two methods of communication which should be used for all requests:

- Email: studentabsence@bishopstopford.com
- In Writing: Leave of Absence form available from Student Services. This must be sent with an accompanying letter.

2. Emergency Absence – eg Illness, Reporting late

There are two methods of communication which should be used for all emergency absence:

- Telephone: 01536 503503, Option 1 – Dedicated voicemail for absences.
- Email: studentabsence@bishopstopford.com

If a student is late to school for any reason, they must sign in at the Octagon (main reception).

Procedures for following up absence

- If a student is absent without an explanation being received, the Pastoral Team will contact the parents wherever possible, on the first day of absence. If the absentee is a student about whom there are already concerns, the Pastoral Team will determine the best point of contact (parents, Social Services) and follow up as a priority.
- Students will be recorded as having 'unauthorised absence' for any session where an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming.
- If a student is persistently [or intermittently] absent, the Head of Year will send letters to notify parents and set up a meeting if there is no improvement. At this point, an Attendance Contract will be initiated and parents will be informed that persistent absence puts them at risk of a Penalty Notice. Where appropriate, an offer of an EHA will also be extended.
- If a student is persistently absent [or late] and the academy's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the EIPT.

Managing Persistent Absence (PA)

- All PA (ie below 90%) will be identified, monitored and individual action plans instigated when appropriate
- Meetings with parents will be held with the Head of Year/Pastoral Team to develop, monitor, review and evaluate support plans
- Where appropriate, PA will be referred to EIPT and this will be a standing agenda item in link meetings with EIPT

Child Missing In Education (CME)

Home visits will be carried out every 10 days for any student who has not been seen by Academy staff or other professionals for 10 days.

Strategies for promoting attendance

- Attendance data will be monitored regularly and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievements and support and inform policy / practice.
- Students whose attendance is a cause of concern will be set targets for improvement. The Head of Year and Pastoral Team will monitor and review these targets.
- Parents will be reminded regularly [via newsletters, the Academy's brochure, parents' evenings, etc] of the importance of regular attendance.
- Students who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will [when appropriate] have work sent home to them and will be re-integrated back into the Academy upon their return.
- The Pastoral Team will, when appropriate, liaise with other services and agencies when this may serve to support and assist students who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

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- Visits will be made to feeder Primary Schools in order to ensure the smoothest possible secondary transfer. Discussions with Primary School Teachers will seek to identify those students who may require extra support or have EHAs in place.

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