

BETHANY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

NOVEMBER 2021

INTRODUCTION

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to progress well and achieve their full potential academically and socially. Bethany School fully recognises it's shared responsibly, along with parents, to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Bethany School is open for 320 sessions (morning and afternoon) each year.

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

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education. Particularly 'School attendance, Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' August 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head Teacher and Governors at our school work together to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This attendance policy ensures that all families, 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:

- Improve 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 with 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.
- 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.

Bethany School encourages parents to have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually. We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through effective communication with parents, pupils, staff and Governors on school attendance matters, including any difficulties or issues which are preventing good attendance. Bethany School aims to equip pupils to take responsibility for good school attendance and will use a variety of means to achieve this, such as identifying and monitoring poor attendance and lateness, taking steps to support pupils and implementing procedures which promote good attendance.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Head Teacher is responsible for overall monitoring of school attendance, including trends in authorised and unauthorised absence which are reported to School Governors, and liaising with families as needed. Particular attention will be given to following up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school, informing parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence and discouraging unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time. The Head Teacher must notify the Local Authority Children Missing from Education Team if any child's attendance causes concern, and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve. Specifically if the pupil has been absent for a continuous period of 10 unauthorised days and if a child is removed from the admission register. See guidance from Sheffield City Council found at the link below.

https://www.safeguardingsheffieldchildren.org/assets/1/missing_from_education_home_or_care_sept_21.pdf

Teaching staff are responsible for taking the registers and 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. They must report concerns to the Head Teacher.

Teaching staff must report an absence which has not been accounted for by 9am to the school office. Office staff will contact parents of absent children where no contact has been made.

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 and informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. Parents are also asked to talk 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.

Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own attendance and punctuality as they move into the Secondary stage of Bethany School and will be involved in discussions about any issues.

DEFINITIONS

THE ADMISSION AND ATTENDANCE REGISTER

Bethany school complies with the law which requires all schools to have an admission register and an attendance register which commences on the agreed start date for each pupil. The attendance register

must be taken twice a day to record whether a pupil was present or absent with the correct notification used for absences. The admission register must be accurately kept in accordance with the education regulations 2006 (as amended by the education regulations 2016)(See 'School attendance, Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' August 2020 and Addendum in relation to coronavirus 2021/22 for absence codes).

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. Or if a child has a medical appointment which the school has been notified about.

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.

PROCEDURES

REGISTRATION

All the school doors open 8:20am and the register is taken at 8:30am and 1pm by the class teacher.

Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

LATENESS

Any pupil who comes into school after 8:30 am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented in the register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9 am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U – arrived after register closed).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 8.30am 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 be contacted 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 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 on the register

Common codes are

Present: / (am), \ (pm)

Authorised - Code C

Unauthorised - Code O

Late (arrived before 9am) – Code L

Late (arrived after 9am) - Code U

Illness – Code I

Medical or dental appointment - Code M

Work experience – Code W

Educational visit or trip – Code V

Study Leave - S

Family afternoon - B

Snow day, School closure - Y

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 and will take the necessary steps to contact parents about this as needed.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then the parent will be contacted and the reason for absence established.

ILLNESS

Where schools accept that a pupil is ill they will authorise the absence (Code I). At Bethany School parents must telephone or email the school office before 9 am on the first day of illness.

CORONAVIRUS ABSENCE

Bethany School has taken note of the document below with regards to how absences related to coronavirus are recorded for the year 2021/22.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2021-to-2022-academic-year>

Attendance at Bethany school is still accepted to be mandatory, and the same duties of recording attendance and absence are in place. Where a pupils does not attend school because their travel or attendance would be contrary to guidance from Public health England the following codes apply

Pupils who are self-isolating because of COVID symptoms or a positive lateral flow test – Code X

Pupils who are self-isolating and have received a positive PCR test – Code I

Pupils who are self-isolating with COVID symptoms but are not taking a PCR test – Code X (this should be followed up to encourage the pupils to take a PCR test)

Remote/Blended learning – if a pupil is not attending school because they are following government guidance around COVID1-19, Bethany school will offer access to remote education (see Blended learning policy). Engagement will be monitored and encouraged by the class teacher but this does not need to be tracked on the register.

PARENTAL REQUEST FOR ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL FOR HOLIDAY

As Bethany school is an independent school the head teacher may consider authorising absences during term time.

The Regulations state that:

'Time off for family holidays is not a right. Schools have discretion to allow up to ten days absence in a school year for a family holiday if circumstances warrant it'.

'Holidays which are taken for the following reasons should not be authorised: Availability of cheap holidays, availability of desired education, poor weather in school holiday periods, overlap with the beginning/end of term.'

Parents wishing to request permission to take their children out of school for reasons other than those above or for a family holiday should complete a Holiday Request Form. However, because at Bethany School we already have a shorter school day and extended holiday periods we would expect that these requests would be infrequent. We would not give permission for Y10/11 pupils to take a holiday during their GCSE courses.

ADDRESSING ATTENDANCE CONCERNS

Parents who withdraw their children from a Family Afternoon Activity (except for reasons given in the policy) incur an unauthorised absence mark for their children.

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

In 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. 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. 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 Education Authority.

MONITORING ATTENDANCE

Bethany School, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded in the register(s). Staff have opportunities to discuss attendance concerns in their regular meetings, and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as contact made with parents or referral to the School Governors for more formal input.

TRANSFERRING A PUIPIL TO ANOTHER SCHOOL OR HOME EDUCATION

Bethany school is required to inform the Local Authority when a pupils name is removed from the admission register in accordance with the Education (pupil registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 amendments. The document below gives details about the circumstances and procedures from the Sheffield Local Authority.

https://www.safeguardingsheffieldchildren.org/assets/1/missing_from_education_home_or_care_sept_21.pdf

Policy Adopted by Governors on:	08/11/2021
Policy Due for Review:	2024/2025