

Policy: Main School
Attendance Policy

Approval: Board of Trustees

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**CHELTENHAM
BOURNSIDE
SCHOOL**

Policies

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1. Scope of policy

This policy applies to all students at Bournside and will be used to inform attendance practice within the school.

2. Key requirements/legal duties

By law, all children of compulsory school age (5 to 16) must receive a suitable full-time education. Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to make sure this happens - either by registering their child at a school or by making other arrangements to give them a suitable, full-time education. As a last resort, schools and local authorities have legal powers to deal with poor attendance.

The parent/carer of any child of compulsory school age has a legal duty to secure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he or she is registered. Failure to secure the regular attendance at school of a registered student is a criminal offence which can lead to prosecution of the parent/carer(s) in a magistrates' court.

'Parent' is defined as the following in the Education Act 1996, Section 576:

- All nature parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Any person who has care of a child or young person ie lives with and looks after the child.

Bournside seeks to operate in ways which maximise student potential while supporting parents/carers in meeting their legal requirements. Bournside fulfils its responsibilities in respect of taking a morning and afternoon session registration, of being open for the required 190 student school days unless prevented by extreme weather or other unforeseen exceptional circumstance, and by using the nationally recognised attendance codes.

3. Key principles

- Students at Bournside have the right to the best possible education
- In order for students to access the best possible education, a high level of attendance is essential
- Students' ability to stay and feel safe, enjoy and achieve and to make a positive contribution may be jeopardised by poor attendance.

4. Context

Bournside endeavours to provide a safe learning environment in which students can feel and be safe, enjoy and achieve. Bournside acknowledges the proven correlation between high level attendance and student outcomes. Bournside's attendance policy emphasises positive strategies and a range of interventions to ensure the highest levels of attendance. However, when normal school procedures do not result in good attendance, a range of further measures, including legal action, have to be considered.

5. Aims of the policy

- To raise the profile of the importance of a high level of attendance among students, parents/carers and staff
- To outline a procedure for monitoring attendance and punctuality and intervention strategies
- To eradicate persistent lateness and promote punctuality
- To explain the legal processes for persistent lateness and absence.

6. Attendance practice

Improving attendance is a whole school initiative. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility including parents/carers, students and all members of school staff. This is led by the Deputy Headteacher who works with his/her team to monitor and improve attendance, while raising the profile and emphasising the importance of attendance at individual and whole school level.

Why this is important:

- Attending school every day leads to 100% attendance.
- Attending 4½ days per week leads to 90% attendance (4 weeks missed per year).
- Attending 4 days per week leads to 80% attendance (more than half a term missed per year or 2 full years missed over the course of their school career).
- An average attendance of 80% or less across a child's school career adds up to missing a whole 2 years from school.
- If a child is 5 minutes late every day they will miss three days of learning each year.
- If a child is 15 minutes late every day they will miss 2 weeks of learning each year.

Positive reinforcement

In order to promote high levels of attendance and to recognise individual and collective high percentage attendance or improvement, Bournside uses a range of rewards and positive reinforcement strategies. As appropriate to student age these include:

- Display of individual attendance
- Display of tutor/class attendance
- Certificates
- Mention in assemblies
- Reinforcement through small prizes
- Inclusion in prize draws
- Special awards

7. Regular attendance

At Bournside, we expect pupils to attend every day that the school is open unless a reason acceptable to the school is given and we are able to authorise the absence.

8. Taking the register

Registration is carried out twice a day, using the Electronic Register. Registers are marked using a set code so that reasons for absence can be quickly established. A high standard of marking is regarded as essential. Staff are regularly given updated instructions on the marking of registers. Class teachers are also required to take a register within the first ten minutes of each lesson, using SIMS. A pattern of attendance for the day can be seen clearly by all staff in every session.

Students must have their attendance registered twice per day. It is the practice of this school to register ALL students every session (lessons and tutor periods i.e. on 7 occasions each day). In addition, all teaching staff must check that the students timetabled to be in their lessons are present for each session. The register must record whether the student is present, absent, or attending an approved educational activity.

An 'approved off-site educational activity' is defined as:

- one taking place off the school premises
- approved by a person authorised by the Headteacher
- supervised by a person approved by the Headteacher
- of an educational nature, including work experience, field trips and educational visits.

When a student of compulsory school age is absent it must be marked as an 'authorised' or 'unauthorised' absence using the appropriate code.

9. Attendance monitoring and intervention

Bournside has an escalating approach to reinforcing high levels of attendance and intervening in respect of attendance concern. In summary these are as follows:

- The attendance statistics for every student at Bournside will be reviewed at least fortnightly by the Heads of House and tutors
- Good attendance will continue to receive positive reinforcement in assemblies
- The tutor has responsibility for praising students for high attendance and encouraging and supporting improvement in attendance for students through monitoring, dialogue with the student and recognising improvement
- The Attendance Officer and the PILs (Pastoral Intervention Leaders) work with tutors and parents/carers to improve the attendance of the students in all attendance groups, particularly with those who attendance falls below 90%.
- Where necessary, we will ask the LA for support with students where attendance strategies are not having any impact

10. Authorised and unauthorised absence

If a student is absent from Bournside, it is vital that a parent or carer contacts Bournside at the earliest opportunity to provide a sufficient reason for absence. This should be either by telephone in the first instance, supported by written communication on the student's return to school or via a message sent via the School Gateway.

Absence can only be authorised when there is good cause. If no sufficient reason for absence is provided, attendance will be recorded as unauthorised. Parents/carers cannot authorise absence. This is a decision which rests with Bournside in accordance with the boundaries set by The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1996. When deemed necessary, Bournside reserves the right to request medical evidence to support absence due to illness.

11. Punctuality

It is Bournside's responsibility to provide the best education possible. This can only be achieved if students attend regularly and punctually. Bournside expects all students to arrive at school, registrations and lessons on time. A student is deemed late if they arrive at school after 8.40 am. Poor standards of punctuality are challenged and result in a 30-minute detention held at the end of the same school day for each and every episode of lateness, once the student has been late twice in a term (short term – 6 per year). An increase in lateness or patterns of lateness over a period of time will result in further follow up investigation and action, which will include further sanctions. Persistent lateness may result in a penalty notice being issued.

12. Avoiding holidays and appointments during term time

In order to maximise individual achievement, parents or carers should avoid making routine appointments for students during the school day or taking family holidays during the term time period.

Holidays will not be authorised during term time, and for students of a compulsory school age unauthorised holidays may result in a penalty notice. Warning letters relating to unauthorised absence for holidays, will not be issued.

For any other request for a leave of absence from school by a student, a form must be collected from the Attendance Office from the parent/carer and returned there when completed by the parent/carer on behalf of the student. The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will consider all requests. This must be completed in advance with at least 14 school days notice.

13. Compassionate leave

A parent or carer wishing to apply for compassionate leave for a student should apply in writing to the Headteacher. A decision to grant compassionate leave is at the Headteacher's discretion. A written response from the Headteacher will also follow such a request indicating if it has been agreed.

14. Legal action

All parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends Bournside on a regular and punctual basis. Should any student's attendance or punctuality become a concern, they will be subject to an Education Welfare investigation. When necessary, Bournside's Attendance Officer will recommend legal action. Bournside and the Local Authority work together in partnership when legal action is required.

Legal action includes:

Penalty Notice: In the case of an unauthorised leave of absence, the Headteacher may request that the Local Authority issue a Fixed Penalty Notice without further warning to the parent. Please note that such a penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 if paid within the first 21 days which increase to £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days. Thereafter, if the penalty remains unpaid this may lead to prosecution through the Magistrates' Court.

Prosecution for unauthorised absence: It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at Bournside. Magistrates can issue fines of up to £2,500 per child, impose Parenting Orders and impose a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months. This can result in a criminal record

The school follows the Local Authority guidelines regarding the issuing of penalty notices. The new regulations that came into force on 1st January 2019 are summarised below:

G code (extended family holidays not agreed or longer than agreed) – A penalty notice will only be issued if a minimum of ten sessions of unauthorised absence have taken place within a ten-week period. This has changed from the previous rule of ten sessions of unauthorised absence across an academic year. Issuing a penalty notice is also dependent

on the school making it clear in the attendance policy that unauthorised holidays in term time may result in a penalty notice being issued without warning and clearly defining what is considered as regular attendance.

U code (late after Period 1 registration closes at 9.50am) – A penalty notice will only be issued if ten sessions of unauthorised lateness have occurred within a ten-week period. Before requesting a penalty notice, a warning letter should be sent informing the parents that if there is further unauthorised absence with the next 15 school days, a penalty notice will be requested. The fifteen-day monitoring period commences two days after the letter has been posted first class. If there are no further unauthorised absences within the fifteen school day period, no penalty notice will be issued. However, a penalty notice can be requested should the student receive a further ten sessions of absence within the next 12 months.

O code (confirmed truancy) - School cannot request a penalty notice for an O code absence, they can only complete a request to initiate legal proceedings form. If the Local Authority decides to take legal action against parents regarding O codes, school must provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the absences have been fully investigated and the expected level of casework has been completed.

Excluded pupils in a public place - Parents must be notified in writing at the time of the exclusion that should their child be found in a public place during school hours and on a school day, they could be at risk of receiving a penalty notice from the Local Authority.

15. Supporting and working with parents/carers

In order to support parents/carers in meeting their legal requirements and to maximise individual student attendance, Bournside seeks to keep parents/carers informed of their child's attendance and to actively involve parents/carers on attendance issues. Methods include:

- Unexplained/unaccounted for absences - phone call or letter asking for reasons
- Letters generated when attendance becomes a concern - first and second warning letters
- Parental meetings
- Active involvement by pastoral staff and Attendance Officer
- Attendance information included on student reports
- Opportunity to talk to HoH (Head of House) and Support Department at Parent and Teacher Consultation Evenings

16. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Working in collaboration with School Leadership Team, the Deputy Headteacher will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy, review it annually and submit a report to the Governors. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout Bournside.

17. Responsibilities

The governing nody will:

- receive reports from the Deputy Headteacher
- review the working of the policy in the light of the Deputy Headteacher's report
- ensure that the policy is promoted and implemented throughout the School and is known by the parents/carers.

The Headteacher will:

- receive reports from the Deputy Headteacher in the Headteacher's Report to Governors
- review the working of the policy in the light of the Deputy Headteacher's report
- ensure that the policy is promoted and implemented throughout the School and is known by the parents/carers
- liaise with the Local Authority agencies and police when they wish to exercise their powers to enforce truants to return to the school
- determine (in collaboration with relevant senior staff) whether to authorise any proposed compassionate leave absences requested in writing, or absences which have taken place for which no request was made.

The Deputy Headteacher will:

- set attendance targets as part of the School Pastoral Review Plan
- monitor progress of attendance targets
- ensure that strategies are in place to promote and implement the policy throughout the school
- notify parents/carers as appropriate that if a student of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly his/her parents/carers commit an offence
 - initiate appropriate staff strategies to improve attendance
 - arrange appropriate training for staff
 - deal with issues of inadequate registering
- liaise with the appropriate bodies (including the Local Authority's agencies) over persistent absentees
- make regular reports with statistics to the Headteacher and Governing Body through the Headteacher's Report to Governors

Heads of House will:

- reward good attendance
- oversee the attendance arrangements for their year group
- work with all attendance staff to ensure the efficient running of the system
- contact parents/carers over student absence patterns where appropriate
- initiate the Attendance Improvement Process in collaboration with the EPI Team
- advise the Deputy Headteacher on any strategies which could be initiated or improved
- ensure that tutors have access to attendance data/ statistics
- oversee the training of tutors in attendance data/statistics and policy
- liaise with PILs and Attendance Officer to ensure that offsite providers are communicated with in regard to student attendance.

The Attendance Officer will:

- make regular checks on the efficiency of the registering
- ensure that all suspected truancy is followed up and dealt with
- contact parents/carers over student absence patterns when appropriate
- meet fortnightly with relevant staff to discuss attendance and devise attendance plans for students where attendance and/or punctuality is a concern
- issue penalty notices and commence prosecution for unauthorised holidays and persistent absence, as directed by the Deputy Headteacher

- make reports to the Deputy Headteacher on the efficiency of the system
- liaise with the Deputy Headteacher over training needs
- inform the Deputy Headteacher of reasons for student absence
- produce attendance data/statistics for the Deputy Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body
- liaise with HoHs and PILs who will visit homes as and when necessary, as directed by the Deputy Headteacher
- alert the Deputy Headteacher to patterns of absence and truancy
- Initiate AIMs meetings (Attendance Improvement Meetings) that involve the LA and parents/carers.
- participate in the Attendance Improvement Process in collaboration with the EPI Team
- liaise with the LA Team on behalf of the school over potential prosecutions for poor attendance.

Pastoral Intervention Leaders will:

- reward good attendance
- input/check daily attendance figures
- contact parents/carers on the student's first day of absence after registration has closed updating the system throughout the day
- ensure that all student absences are noted and absence notifications received from parents/carers
- monitor and support students implementing attendance plans where appropriate
- contact parents/carers to advise them of internal truancy where appropriate
- make home visits where appropriate to deal with attendance and safeguarding concerns
- pass on child protection concerns raised through the Attendance Improvement process to the appropriate bodies
- co-ordinate intervention strategies for students with attendance below 90% (persistent absentees).

Tutors will:

- reward good attendance
- monitor and support student attendance
- ensure that students are registered accurately
- ensure that students provide explanations for their absences and pass these to the Head of House/ PIL
- identify patterns of absence which may be significant
- encourage and praise students with good attendance records
- keep the Head of House/PIL informed of any signs of suspected truancy and inform them of any possible underlying problems which might account for absences
- check the attendance of students at their lessons according to the school system.

Parent/carers are required to:

- ensure their children attend school unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- inform the school of their child's absence on the first day of non-attendance or as soon as possible thereafter
- communicate further with school if their child's absence is longer than one day
- respond to any requests for information from school regarding their child's absence

- not take holidays in term time
- make any request for compassionate leave in writing to the Headteacher.

Students are required to:

- attend regularly unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- if they have been absent ensure that their absence is explained by their parents/carers on the day of return to the school
- sign in if late for the school day
- attend all lessons and be in the correct place specified on their timetable.

18. Links with other policies

This policy has been written based on these requirements from legal regulations:

- The Education Act 1996 – sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- 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