

Attendance Policy

The Bridge Education Centre

Name of school: The Bridge Education Centre

Policy approved and adopted:

September 2015

Person(s) responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy:

Headteacher

Due for review:

September 2017

National guidance:

DfE Guidance School Attendance (2014):

"Schools should:

- 1. promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence,*
- 2. ensure every child has access to full-time education, and*
- 3. act early to address patterns of absence.*

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school attend regularly. All pupils must be punctual to their lessons."

This policy has been written using the following documents as guidance:

- Model Attendance Policy for Schools, Academies and Education Centres (HCC)
- Code of conduct (Hampshire Services: HIAS School Improvement).

Please note –

- A home-school agreement is not statutory for education centres.
- The Headteacher (July 2015) has approached all Eastleigh/Winchester secondary schools for copies of their policies, so that there can be consistent practise between schools and the education centre; this will need to be reviewed post September 2015.

Section 1: Rationale/Statement of Intent:

To promote learning in order to accelerate pupil progress, and develop pupils as confident and independent lifelong learners. For this to be achieved, a high level of attendance is essential.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils, and every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. In order for them to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital that pupils attend their education, on time, every day. The routines developed around attendance and punctuality at school, are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work and/or training.

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 friendships easier to cope with
- regular learners find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful when transitioning between all phases.

Section 2: Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child. To help us to focus on this we will:

- report termly on how pupils are performing in school, as well as attendance and punctuality
- celebrate and reward good or improving attendance
- regularly review attendance and contact parents/carers where there are concerns.

The Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. A designated member of the leadership team will ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. S/he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of pupils:

- attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence,
- arrive in school on time, and
- to go to all their registrations and lessons on time.

Responsibilities of parents/carers -

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

Section 3.1: Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the day at 9.00am and again for the afternoon session at 12.25pm.

Section 3.2: Lateness /punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions, as well as to lessons. A breakfast club runs from 8.45am – 8.55am. The school day begins at 9.00am and all (full-time) pupils are expected to be in school at that time.

Morning registration is at 9.00am and closes at 9.30am.

Afternoon registration is at 12.25pm and closes at 12.55pm.

- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence (code 'U') in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows pupils to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence (coded 'M'). Parents/carers are asked to make doctors/dentists appointments outside of school hours or during school holidays where possible.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents/carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and any support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance. (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

Section 3.3: What to do when a child is absent?

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

First day absence

When a child is absent, parents/carers are expected to:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the tutor or a member of LT any planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.

When a child is absent, we will:

- telephone or text on the first day of absence, and each day afterwards unless we have been notified of longer periods of absence
- invite parents/carers in to discuss concerns with tutor or Pastoral Lead (Behaviour and Attendance)
- review whether to refer the matter to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panel if absence is unauthorised and below 90%; parents will be contacted regarding concerns and the possible referral, which will be monitored and referred if is no improvement.

Third day absence

If a child is still away after three days and there has been no contact from parents/carers, a letter will be sent asking parents/carers to contact the school as a matter of urgency.

Please Note: If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers after three days of absence, the school is required to start child missing in education (CME) procedures/enquiries as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. All reasonable enquires will be made to establish contact with parents and the child including, making enquires to known friends, wider family and police intel.

Ten day's absence

There is a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is still absent, without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child has not been seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer(s) then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Continued or ongoing absence

If a child misses 10% (3 weeks/21 sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Where this occurs, parents/carers will be invited to attend a review with their child to resolve any issues in order to support improvement in attendance. This will be monitored and further possible legal action considered where attendance does not improve (see section 6 of this policy).

Parents are encouraged to avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments, and only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

Section 4: Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: (Pupil registration - England); regulations state that:

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Headteachers 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. Consequently, there is no legal entitlement for time off in school 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 in advance, 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 set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct parents/carers, will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance with the code (see section 6 for detail).

Useful links:

1. 'School attendance' 2015 located at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>
2. National Association of Headteachers guidance document on 'Authorised Absence' 2014
<http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-and-pupils/naht-issues-new-guidance-on-authorised-absence/>
3. Guidance on recording absence <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-maindocument.pdf>
4. Guidance on approval of 'Extended leave of absence' see county guidance
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

Section 5: Understanding types of absence – authorised & unauthorised

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 of absence from school after a request from the parents/carers. This includes:
 - parents/carers 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 they have been on holiday.

Section 6: Penalty notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in any continuous 100 session period, and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- parenting orders
- penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)
- prosecution.

Legal measures for absence taken when the headteacher has declined parents/carers request for leave of absence

A penalty notice will be issued where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
2. a holiday that has been taken without permission and the unauthorised absence (coded G) is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week period.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Penalty notices for non-attendance - Hampshire's Code of Conduct

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue penalty notices for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive (codes 'G, U, or O' on the register)
- persistently late (coded 'U') for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded 'L'), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (using code 'O'), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance unless the issuing of a penalty notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child has other types of unauthorised absence (coded 'O and U') and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single penalty notice is issued for either:

- 1. 10 sessions (5days) of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week school period**
- 2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents/carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a penalty notice is issued **to one or more parent/carer** for each child.

NB. This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday.

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing penalty notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

For national guidance refer to: '**Parental responsibility measures for behaviour and attendance**' which covers legal measures for non-attendance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>

For county guidance refer to: 'Guidance for Schools on available support and procedures for pursuing legal action for non-attendance at school' May 2015

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/attendance-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

Section 7.1: What can parents do to encourage their child to attend School?

Children are sometimes be 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 in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's tutor or the Family Support, immediately and openly discuss their concerns. In some cases, parents may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of their child's difficulties with another professional.

Section 7.2: Leavers

Pupils moving on are generally managed through transition plans and monitored by centre staff as pupils return to schools.

If pupils leave the centre and we do not have details, including contact details and new school details, then the child will be considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education (CME)'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate the child concerned, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the police and other agencies.

Section 7.3: Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or TV work & modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher 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. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

Useful links:

For further advice and guidance on child employment and performance licenses visit Hantsweb at
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/child-employment.htm>

National Advice - <https://www.gov.uk/child-performance-licence-england-scotland-wales>

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

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 discretion of the Headteacher whether to authorise this. Permission for a child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Section 7.5: Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman 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 & GRT and Showman see County Guidance at:
<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf>

Further support & Guidance is available from Hampshire's EMTAS Service

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.

Additonal sections (optional for secondary schools) -

Section 7.6: Study Leave

We believe that pupils' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. No study leave will be granted during this period, therefore, pupils will be expected to attend school in the usual way. Study leave will only be granted to Year 11 pupils during the time of the GCSE examination period. Should any pupils wish to attend school (or should their parents wish them to) on the days and at times when they are not sitting examinations, arrangements will be made for them to do so. The school will work within the legal requirements of:

- study leave should only be granted to Year 11 pupils and never to those in other year groups
- it should never exceed 15 school days in a year and is most appropriately granted during the examination period itself, i.e. not before the beginning of that period
- it should always be granted sparingly taking account of an individual pupil's ability to manage and benefit from unsupervised study
- any pupil has the right to attend school during study leave and a parent has the right to insist he/she does so
- any sessions given to pupils as study leave has a statistical meaning of authorised absence (it is not an 'approved educational activity' as it is unsupervised) and should be recorded and reported on by the school as such.

Section 7.6: Teenage Pregnancy

Support will be directed to keeping a pupil in school and wherever possible her return to full time education as soon as possible after the birth. A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Appendices

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable -

[a] to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and

[b] to any special needs s/he may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Guidance documents on attendance.

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording.

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website

Hampshire County Council Guidance is available on Hantsweb at

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>