

Bright Futures Federation

Attendance Policy

Approved by Governing Body:	13 th May 2026
Review Due:	May 2027

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Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

The Bright Futures Federation is a Sussex-based learning community rooted in Christian values, where pupils, their welfare and outcomes are at the heart of everything we do. We believe that collaboration and partnership between small, ambitious schools leads to greater opportunities for everyone: pupils, staff, parents and communities regardless of background or belief. By working together, we can build a stronger future for our small schools and their unique position in local life and the wider world.

For the purposes of this policy, “the Federation” refers to the Bright Futures Federation and its constituent schools (St Giles CE Primary School, St Peter’s CE Primary School, and any future schools within the Federation). References to “the school” should be interpreted accordingly unless a school-specific responsibility is explicitly stated.

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance, [‘Working together to improve school attendance’](#), states that:

“...schools and partners should work in partnership with pupils and parents¹ collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.”

This policy is a statement of aims, principles and approaches taken to ensure our vision and values remain central to championing high attendance and punctuality at our school ensuring that the safety, protection and welfare of pupils remains paramount in all that we do.

The Attendance Policy has been reviewed in line with guidance from the DfE and local authority (LA). It should be considered alongside our other school policies, risk assessment, and procedures, but specifically: Accessibility; Anti-Bullying; Behaviour; Child Protection; Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School; Digital Safety; SEND; and Teaching and Learning.

2. Aims & Objectives

The staff and governors recognise that high attendance and punctuality are essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. Government statistics demonstrate that the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. All schools are expected to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community as attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils including their safeguarding and welfare.

In line with statutory guidance, we aim for all partners to work together with families to:

- expect high standards of attendance;
- monitor rigorously patterns of attendance;
- listen and understand barriers to attendance in order to attempt to resolve these;
- facilitate support in order to overcome barriers outside of school;
- formalise support where absence persists and support is not working or being engaged with; and
- enforce attendance through statutory interventions when all other avenues have been exhausted.

¹ Where guidance refers to a parent, the school and/or local authority will need to decide which adult is most appropriate to work with. Generally, parents include: all natural parents, whether they are married or not; all those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person; and those who have day to day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

3. Legal Requirement

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

4. Expectations

To manage and improve attendance effectively, all schools are expected to:

- build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them;
- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance;
- have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand;
- accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence;
- 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;
- share information and work 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; and
- 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.

Parent, carers and pupils can also expect the school to:

- ensure that all staff are welcoming to pupils and their parents, creating an atmosphere where they both feel able to raise concerns and share any information that could impact upon attendance;
- act upon any reported instances of bullying or unreasonable behaviour that may cause reluctance in a child to attend school, as set out in either the Behaviour or Anti-Bullying Policy;
- follow up any absences to:
 - ascertain the reason;
 - ensure the proper and appropriate action is taken;
 - identify whether absence is authorised or not; and
- ensure that school staff set a good example by their own punctuality and regular attendance.

The school expects parents to:

- work in partnership with the school to ensure high attendance and punctuality for their child;
- support their child to arrive at school on time and well-prepared for the school day;
- inform the school on the first day the reason for any unexpected absence;
- apply for leave of absence in advance (when exceptional circumstances exist);
- arrange medical, dental or other appointments outside of school hours (where this is not possible, the school's agreement should be sought in advance and the child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment);
- sign pupils in and out at the school office if they arrive, or are collected, outside of normal registration times; and
- contact the school, in confidence, whenever problems occur which may keep their child away from school.

The school expects pupils to:

- attend school regularly, recognising that this is a legal requirement;
- be on time for lessons and school; and
- take responsibility to catch up with any learning missed through absence (when appropriate).

5. Punctuality

The school day officially starts at 8.55am (9am at St Peter's) when children must be ready to learn. When a child is late it disrupts the learning environment, not only for the child but also for staff and other pupils in the class.

The school doors are opened at 8.45am (8.50am at St Peter's) and staff members available at this time to: take urgent messages; answer questions from parents; and ensure that children enter school promptly. Class teachers and/or support staff are in classes at this time welcoming the children with early morning activities.

Registration takes place between 8.55 and 9.00am (9 and 9.05am at St Peter's) so that learning can begin promptly if it has not done so already. Any child arriving once the playground gates have been closed must enter the school via the front door. If a child arrives after registration has taken place then they are 'late' and an 'L' will be marked in the register accompanied by the number of minutes they are late. Any child that arrives after 9.30am, with no valid reason for the late arrival, will be deemed an unauthorised absence and marked 'U' for the morning session.

Parents must endeavour to inform the school if they know a child is going to be late. This may be by email or telephone (see absence).

6. Absence

Parents are expected to inform the school on the first day the reason for absence and to establish an expected date of return. As a reminder, parents should also provide an explanation when their child arrives late for school. If a message is not received, the school office will contact parents directly soon after the class register has been completed. Staff are instructed that under no circumstances should they assume or accept another child's explanation of absence.

Parents should notify the school office of unexpected absence by phone or email to: office@stgileprimary.co.uk.
(office@st-peters.school)

7. Persistent Lateness or Absence

The Head of School serves as the Senior Attendance Champion. However, we encourage parents to reach out to any member of our staff as soon as possible with any concerns, including those related to lateness or attendance. Prompt communication allows us to provide early support and prevent patterns of non-attendance or lateness from developing.

Following a pattern of late arrival, parents may be sent a letter from the Executive Headteacher and/ or Head of School. Punctuality will then be closely monitored for a further period of time and if necessary, a further letter will be sent inviting parents to an informal meeting with the school to agree support.

If attendance is deemed to be unsatisfactory (below 96% for a term) the school will review the reasons given for absence and will liaise with parents informally. If deemed an issue, the school will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, the school will endeavour to work with all partners to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. These actions will be regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families.

Where no satisfactory reason is given or informal support has not had any impact, parents may be sent a further letter from the Executive Headteacher and/ or Head of School. Attendance levels will continue to be closely monitored and if no improvement is seen, a final letter will be sent inviting parents to a meeting with the school to

further understand the additional barriers to attendance in order to attempt to resolve these.

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils/ families. Statistics show that persistent absentees do less well academically, and are at greater risk of dropping out of education, training or employment. In this instance parents will be invited into school in order to formally agree what this support may look like.

In line with, '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)', support may be recorded through an attendance contract. An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or LA to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. An attendance contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate. An attendance contract is not a punitive tool, it is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. Parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence. There is no obligation on the school or LA to offer an attendance contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but an attendance contract should always be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution

When a child is recorded as absent from school without authority their parent(s) can be held accountable for an offence under S.444 of the Education Act 1996. Following the school response outlined above, if attendance continues to be a concern then the school has the option to refer it to the local authority to consider intervention, dependent on the length and the reason for the absence. This can be by either a request for the:

- use of a [Fixed Penalty Notice \(FPN\)](#); or
- allocation of an Investigating Officer.

Referrals are reviewed and acted upon by [Pupil Entitlement: Investigation \(PE:I\)](#), who finalise which pathway of intervention is to be taken. All cases referred to PE:I are considered on an individual, case-by-case basis, reviewing the submission made by the school. PE:I must be satisfied that an offence under the Education Act 1996 has occurred and then decide the form of intervention to be instigated, if any. For more information on absences and the use of Fixed Penalty Notices, please visit: [School absences - West Sussex County Council](#)

8. Infection Control

The school adheres to government guidelines from the UK Health Security Agency on [how long parents should keep their child off school](#). It is recommended that pupils who have suffered from diarrhoea and vomiting should be kept away from school for 48 hours from their last episode. For up-to-date guidance regarding whether a child is too ill for school, please visit the [NHS Live Well website](#).

Whilst we understand that children are often poorly and are genuinely unable to attend school, if a considerable number of absences are deemed authorised due to illness and/ or health difficulties then it may be necessary to seek medical clarification. If this is the case, parents will be sent a letter advising them to do so.

9. Leave of Absence

All schools can grant a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances at their discretion. It must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Schools are then expected to 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 the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Authorised absence may be categorised as:

- genuine illness;
- attending an approved medical or dental appointment;
- attending an approved educational or sporting activity;

- participating in a regulated performance;
- religious observance;
- compassionate grounds; or
- exceptional circumstances.

Generally, the DfE 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. Leave of absence will also not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours. School holiday dates are published to parents as early as possible. There are 190 days in the school year which means that there are 175 non-school days left for holidays and other leisure activities. Pupil Entitlement: Investigation (PE:I) on behalf of WSCC holds the power to issue a [Fixed Penalty Notices \(FPNs\)](#) to a parent when evidence of an offence under S.444 has been committed.

Any request for leave of absence in relation to one of the above categories should be made at least four weeks in advance and detailed in a letter sent to the school office or using a request form. Please note that although the school recognises that this timeframe is not always practicable, requests for leave of absence cannot be authorised retrospectively. All absences and requests for absence will either be authorised or unauthorised by the Head of School in consultation with the Executive Headteacher and/ or Chair of Governors.

If a child misses learning due to an agreed authorised absence, it may be impractical for the class teacher to provide supplementary work for the child to complete. Parents are welcome to provide their own learning activities during this period.

10. Moving Schools

If parents are considering moving schools then they should discuss the reasons for the move with the current school. If parents then decide to send their child to a different school then must inform the school office as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until it has been confirmed that they have started at their new school. The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of a change of school, then the absence procedure as detailed previously will be followed.

11. Monitoring & Review

The Governing Body will review this policy at least every year or whenever significant changes occur. The review will take account of patterns of attendance, lateness and FPN referrals as shared through the termly Leadership Reports.