Attendance Policy

Government guidance on attendance is set out clearly in the document School Attendance July 2019

To be read in conjunction with

- School Attendance August 2020
- The Education (Student Registration Amendment) Regulations 2016 which set out the grounds for deletion from roll.
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/792/contents/made
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021
- Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2021 to 2022 academic year - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Aim

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all students can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – students need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

In line with Government Expectations, BMS aims to:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- ensure every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- act early to address patterns of absence;
- support parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly;
- ensure all students are punctual to their lessons.

BMS fully complies with the law, which requires all schools including independent schools to have an admission register and an attendance register. All students (regardless of their age) are placed on both registers.

Addition for the academic year 2021-22

During the coronavirus pandemic, when schools were closed to most students from 23 March to 31 July 2020 (i.e. Summer Term 2019-20) the Government issued guidance that schools attendance procedures should be adapted.

From the start of the autumn term 2020 student attendance will be mandatory.
The usual rules on attendance continue to apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

- the duty on local authorities to put in place arrangements for identifying, and to follow up with, children missing education

New for 2021 to 2022 – not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where students cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

To make sure schools record this accurately and consistently, the Government have made changes to the regulations governing school attendance registers to add a new category of non-attendance – 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'. This category must be used to record sessions that take place in the 2021 to 2022 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19 from Public Health England (PHE), or its successor UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19

This category must only be used to record where a pupil is not attending for the reasons set out above. It should not be used to record any other type of non-attendance or absence - for example, where a parent or pupil is anxious about attending school because of COVID-19.

The schools COVID-19 operational guidance sets out when pupils should self-isolate and when they ought to be tested in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

Examples in which 'not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19' could apply

In line with current legislation, and guidance from PHE (and its successor the UKHSA) and DHSC, examples are as follows.

Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

Pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test, should self-isolate and get a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I (illness). Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.

If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance. Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to self-isolate. They should instead get a PCR test, and should only self-isolate if

they test positive. If they do test positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, the school should use code X in the register.

Pupils who are self-isolating but who have not had a PCR Test

In line with public health advice, pupils with symptoms must self-isolate and schools should strongly encourage pupils to take a PCR test. Where the pupil is unable to take a PCR test, the school should record the pupil as code X in the register.

Schools should follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools can request supporting evidence from the family. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they may record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes, in line with the school attendance: guidance for schools.

Remote education

If a pupil is not attending school because their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around COVID-19, we expect schools to offer them access to remote education. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with, this activity, but this does not need to be tracked in the attendance register.

1. **Procedures for recording and monitoring attendance**

   1.1. **Completing the register**

   - Each form tutor is responsible for completing the register for their class. It is a legal requirement to complete the register at the beginning of each school session morning and afternoon. At the start of each school year, staff receive reminders of the procedures for completing the register.
   - The school day starts at 8.40am. Registers are completed by 8:45am on ISAMs. If a hard copy has had to be used this must be returned to School Office immediately. If a student arrives at school after the completion of the register, they report to the School Office and are marked late. In the afternoon registration takes place at 2.20 pm for the Senior School, and 1.40pm for the Junior School.
   - The register closes at 9.30 am – any student who arrives after this time will be marked as absent for that session

   1.2 **Monitoring attendance**

   The pastoral team monitor attendance at school and in each lesson. School attendance is measured in half days; in the Senior School, registration happens in every lesson and action taken as appropriate if a student is, for example, absent from a lesson but marked as being in school that day.

   - Attendance data for each student is analysed frequently and included in a student's annual report.

- A parent will be contacted by the school on the first day of absence unless notification as to the reason for absence has been received by the school.
- If a student's attendance falls below 95% the school will review this closely with the parent and, where appropriate, strategies and interventions will be put in place (see persistent absence).
- If a student is having difficulty in attending school for any reason, parents should contact the school at the earliest opportunity (see Aims section).
- All schools have to maintain attendance data for all students. Requests for references from other educational institutions or potential employers can include questions about attendance.

The School expects and encourages good attendance by students.

2. Illness and Medical Appointments

Please use the 'Report an Absence' button in My School Portal if your child is not able to attend school.

If you are unable to do this, please call the absence line on 01234 332579 on each day of any absence from school leaving your child's name, year and tutor group, and the reason for absence BEFORE 10.00am. If a student is going to be absent for a period of time, for example due to a stay in hospital, we do not require notification each day, as long as we are advised of the expected absence period. There is also a dedicated absence email address: absence@bedmod.co.uk.

No cause except illness is considered sufficient excuse for absence from school, unless permission has been obtained beforehand. When planned leave of absence is desired, application must be made by letter to the Head of Year, a reasonable time beforehand stating the reason for which leave is desired. BMS discourages the taking of holidays during term time.

Arriving Late

If a student is late arriving at school they MUST sign in at the School Office stating the time and reason for lateness. Any student leaving the school site (permission having been granted) MUST sign out at Reception.

3. Holidays during term time

The law changed in September 2013, and schools can no longer give permission for holidays during term time unless such exceptional circumstances can be shown. The occasions where permission will be given for holidays during term time will therefore be very limited. The schools will confirm the outcome of the request in writing and if permission is granted, the letter will state the number of days for which the student is allowed to be absent.

4. Sixth Form

This policy also applies to Sixth Form students.

5. Students living at more than one address/non-resident parents

5.1 Where parents no longer live together or the student only lives with one parent, and contact details for both parents have been provided to the schools, any parent seeking permission to take their child out of school will be asked if they have notified the other parent of this request.

5.2 Other requests for leave of absence

5.3 In the event that permission is granted students, supported where appropriate by their parents, are expected to make up any work missed. Students in years 9, 10 and 11 and in the Sixth Form will need to contact each of their subject teachers before permission is applied for to ascertain any particular impact on the GCSE programme.

6. Punctuality

If a student is late arriving at school they MUST sign in at the School Office stating the time and reason for lateness. Any student leaving the school site (permission being granted) must sign out at reception.

Students are expected to arrive on time for each lesson with appropriate materials. If students are late for lessons then the sanctions in the schools' behaviour policies may be applied.

On occasions when a larger group of students are late due to traffic or transport issues, the school may use period 1 to record attendance.

7. Persistent Absence

The DFE states that a child has persistent absence when they have missed more than 10% of possible attendance sessions. This means any child with absence below 90% for a full academic year.

In line with Government guidelines, BMS pastoral teams will monitor the attendance of individual students and work with parents to ensure that additional steps are taken to support any student with persistent absence. This will include students who have long term illnesses or who have been suspended from school.

The support may be in the form of a letter, drawing parents' attention to their child's absence or it may be offering the support of outside agencies such as Greys Medical Centre in the event of a long term medical absence.

Where attendance is poor the Local Authority does have powers to take action to enforce school attendance. Periods of unauthorised absence where the student is not known to be ill and the parents cannot be contacted can lead to a student being removed from the school roll.

8. Supporting students during an extended period of absence and when they return to school following a period of absence

The school will support children in the following ways:

- when a student has extended absence the school (via the Tutor) will liaise with parent/carer and subject teachers to arrange for appropriate work to be sent home;
- the Tutor will contact the parent/carer on a weekly basis;
- Subject teachers will mark and assess work giving clear feedback and liaising with parent/carer or other agencies to support student learning and progress;
- the form tutor and/or Head of Year will ensure a programme of induction back to school is in place for the appropriate time.

9. Students Moving to a New Address and/or School

- Where the parent of a student notifies the school that the student will live at another address schools must record in the admission register: (a) the full name of the parent with whom the student will live, (b) the new address, and (c) the date from when it is expected the student will live at this address.
- Where a parent notifies the school that the student is registered at another school or will be attending a different school, schools must record in the admission register: (a)

the name of the other school, and (b) the date of when the student first attended, or is due to start attending, that school.

10. Legal requirements for the publication of attendance information

Reporting to parents

On every written report parents receive details of their child's attendance and punctuality. This information includes the possible attendance, the number of authorised absences (and therefore by deduction the actual attendance) the number of unauthorised absences and the number of lates.

11. In the event of adverse weather

In the event of adverse weather, BMS may make changes to the way parents are asked to notify the school of a child's absence. When this is the case, information will be sent out via Post-modern.

12. Children missing in Education (including Safeguarding response)

BMS fully accepts its responsibilities to provide a safeguarding response to Children Missing in Education and understands as a school it plays a key role in ensuring children do not become CME.

A child missing from education is not in itself a child protection matter, and there may be an innocent explanation for this. However, regular school attendance is an important safeguard and unexplained non-attendance can be an early indicator of problems, risk and vulnerability.

Schools should endeavour to deal with this problem in three ways:

- By preventing poor school attendance and truancy;

- By acting once absence occurred to establish children's safety and try to get them back to school;

- By taking action to trace children whose whereabouts are not known.

BMS will inform both **Bedford Borough and the relevant Local Authority** (i.e., the one in which the child resides) when a child's name is about to be deleted from the admission register under all fifteen grounds outside the standard transition points (Junior School Year 6 into 7 and Senior School Year 11 into 12).

When removing a name, the notification to the Local Authority will include (a) the full name of the student, (b) the full name and address of any parent with whom the student normally resides, (c) at least one telephone number of the parent, (d) the student's future address and destination school and (e) the ground in regulation 8 under which the student's name is to be removed from the admission register.

The school will **make reasonable enquiries** to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the Local Authority before deleting the student's name from the register if the deletion is under regulation 8 (1), sub paragraphs (f)(iii) and (h)(iii).

BMS will notify the Local Authority **within five days** of adding a student's name to the admission register at a **non-standard** transition point.

As an independent school, BMS does not use the CTF (Common Transfer Files). However, where these files are sent by a students' previous school, BMS will either accept or reject the file.

A child may be removed from the school following a written request from parents to educate at home. In the event of this happening, the relevant Local Authority and Early Help service will be informed.

If any member of the school staff has reason to believe a child is missing from or about to be missing from education, they must inform the DSL. The DSL will then inform the Local Authority, Early Help or in the case of a Child in Need or a Child in Need of Protection, MASH or the police.

In the following circumstances a referral to Children's Services and/or the police should always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime;

- The child is subject of a Child Protection Plan;

- The child is subject of Section 47 enquiries;

- The child is looked after;

- There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;

- There is a history of the family moving frequently;

- There are serious issues of attendance.

All Practitioners should follow the appropriate Local Authority CME procedures.

Mrs. J Goodacre
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Designated Safeguarding Lead

October 2021
Review Date October 2022