



Burford School and Nursery

'Enjoy, Achieve, Succeed Together'

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date policy adopted by Governing Body: September 2024	Date of next review: September 2027
This policy will be subject to review every three years by the Governing Body or more frequently in the light of changes in legislation	

1. Statement of Intent

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. Burford School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. It also enables them to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Burford School values all pupils and has an appointed School Attendance Officer to support families in ensuring children achieve high attendance at school. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Burford School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Race Relations Act 2000
- DfE guidance, [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) effective September 2024

2. Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the start of the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. Categorising absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school office by 8.15am on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with parents/carers who have English as an Additional Language. Parents should not inform class teachers directly of absence.

Authorised Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases a telephone call or an email from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for as much of the day as possible. The school may request confirmation of hospital and dental appointments.

Other Authorised Circumstances: In line with the DfE guidance, only in exceptional

circumstances such as funerals can authorised absence be granted by the Headteacher.

Suspended (no alternative provision made): Suspension from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Late Arrival: Registers are taken at 8.45am. Pupils arriving after this time but before 8.50am will be marked as present but having arrived late. Pupils arriving after 8.50am will be recorded as late after register closed and this will therefore create an unauthorised absence on their record (one session).

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. All children should be accompanied to the office by an adult to sign them in.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late, or caught in traffic.

Unauthorised absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Leave of Absence and Extended Leave: Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

In August 2024 the Department for Education introduced a national threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence equivalent to 5 school days within a rolling 10 school week period, after which a penalty notice must be considered. These rules mean it is not possible to take a child out of school for one week's holiday without a penalty notice being considered. It is the policy of our school to not authorise absence for holidays during term time. While permission may be given in very exceptional circumstances, this is very rare and can only be granted by the Headteacher. Any such request should be sent in writing at least one month before the holiday is taken and there should be no assumption that permission will be granted.

If a term time holiday is taken without permission, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team. This may result in the issue of an Education Penalty Notice under section 444A Education Act 1996 in respect of each absent child, to each parent/carer. Penalty notices are intended as an alternative to prosecution. The penalty fine will be £80 per child if paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid within that time, then it will rise to £160 per child.

If a second penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child/children within a 3-year rolling period, the fine will automatically rise to £160 per child and there will be no lower rate option. If a holiday is taken for a third time in a 3-year rolling period, the local

authority will consider other enforcement options available to them.

Parents considering taking their child out of school during term time must send a written request to the Headteacher explaining the reason and duration of said leave. A written response from the Headteacher will be given as soon as possible which will be in line with the DfE guidance, that only in exceptional circumstances such as funerals can authorised leave be granted by the Headteacher.

Religious Observance: Burford School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

In the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school. When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Burford School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at Burford School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Burford School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Burford School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

4. Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil

Burford School will follow Buckinghamshire Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Burford School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

Please note, for children that have not been seen in school for 5 school days, a member of the SLT and one other may make a home visit. If a child is persistently absent, weekly home visits will be arranged with the parents/carers as part of their return to school plan.

6. Using Attendance Data

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Every half term the School Attendance Officer will provide the Headteacher with attendance data for the previous half term for each pupil below 95%.

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Burford School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the requirements of GDPR.

7. Support Systems

Burford School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

8. Legal Sanctions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Burford School will notify the Buckinghamshire Attendance Team of the irregular attendance.

Bucks Attendance Team or school, may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school. In these circumstances a penalty notice would be considered where:
 - The absence takes the pupil to the national threshold of 10 unauthorised absences in a rolling 10 week period
 - A pupil's attendance for the academic year to the date of the request is already below 95%
 - The requested dates are for a period that would be prejudicial to the child's

education eg. The start of term, internal or external assessments, or other major curriculum events

- There is less than a month's notice of the holiday or a request has not been submitted in writing
- There is a pattern of holidays in the previous or current school years
- The holiday is misrepresented by a parent as another activity.

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £80 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £160 per parent/.carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Links to other school policies (available on our school website):

- SEND Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy