

Bridge House Independent School



Attendance Policy

2020

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This policy was agreed and adopted on

SignedHeadteacher

and will be reviewed annually

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1. INTRODUCTION

Bridge House Independent School is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all pupils. The School believes that all pupils benefit from the education that it provides and therefore from regular school attendance. To this end, the school will do as much as they can to maximise all possible attendance. Any problems/issues affecting attendance will be dealt with as quickly as possible and where appropriate support will be given to improve attendance.

The Government states that an attendance rate of less than 95% will have a detrimental effect on a child's education. It is therefore the School's aim that each of our pupils should have an attendance rate as high as possible, this being in excess of 95% each academic year unless there are exceptional circumstances, out of the child's control, that affect their attendance at school. If this is the case, the School will support that child and their family to ensure that their attendance rate is as high as it can possibly be.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Bridge House Independent School's:

Safeguarding Children Policy, SEND Policy and Meeting the Medical Needs of Children Policy

2. AIMS:

It is recognised that

- As a school, we aim to ensure that all children achieve excellent attendance.
- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as required by law.
- Excellent attendance will be recognised and rewarded with a comprehensive award programme throughout the school year.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

3. EXPECTATIONS:

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- That they attend school regularly; our target is at least 97% attendance.
- That they will arrive on time (registration is at 09:05) and be appropriately prepared for the day.

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- That they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

We expect the following from parents:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually, as is their legal duty. School opens at 8:30 am, and access to the school is from 8:45 am. The register is taken at 09:05 am.
- Parents should ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason, such as sickness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, preferably before 9:00 am on the first morning of absence, providing a reason for absence. This may be done by phone, letter or in person. If illness continues for longer than five days, medical evidence will be required, e.g. Doctor's appointment card. Failure to contact school during the absence may result in a home visit, a Police Safe and Well visit or referral to Children's Services
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's attendance or performance.
- To attempt to make all medical and dental appointments during school holidays or after school hours where possible. Medical appointments during school hours will not be authorised unless an appointment card, hospital letter or text from the GP/hospital/Dentist is forwarded to school. Providing these retrospectively is acceptable. Absence will only be authorised for the duration of the appointment plus any reasonable travel time.
- Parents will understand that holidays in term time have a detrimental effect on a child's education and will avoid arranging family holidays in term time.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from our school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Registers are taken at 09:05; arrival after 9:15 is indicated by **code L** in the register. If the pupil fails to arrive in school after the register closes (9:30) it will be classed as an unauthorised absence (**code U**)
- In the event that a child fails to attend punctually on 10 or more occasions, a letter will be sent to parents/carers requesting that they attend a meeting in school to discuss the matter further and to offer support as necessary. Failure to improve punctuality could lead to further action being taken.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Where attendance falls below 95%, tailored intervention/support strategies will be implemented.
- Recognition for excellent/improving attendance.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us.
- Regular reports on their child's attendance and punctuality in mid-year and end of year reports and at parents' evenings.
- A quality education.

Termly reports will be made by the Head Teacher to the school's Proprietor on the issues of attendance and punctuality.

4. ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE THROUGH GOOD PRACTICE AND REWARDS:

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Attendance will be encouraged in the following ways:

- Accurate completion of the registers at the beginning of each morning and afternoon.
- Attendance checks being completed at appropriate times
- Recording of attendance on individual reports.
- Sending parents/carers regular absence figures as appropriate
- The efficient use of a computerised registration system to provide valuable year group, class and individual attendance data which can assist speedy analysis and a timely response by the school.
- Establishing a mechanism and offering support to those parents/carers who are concerned that their child may be experiencing difficulty in attending school
- The benefits of good attendance promoted by teaching staff and high-lighted in school assemblies.
- A comprehensive award scheme: stickers, certificates, prizes, letters and trophies to encourage good attendance
- Identifying and taking a team approach towards supporting pupils and families who have attendance problems.
- Holidays during term time are actively discouraged. Due to the link between attendance and attainment the government has put a priority on reducing all forms of absence. Therefore our policy on term time holidays, which is based on legislation and government guidelines is summarised as:
 - The law says that parents/carers do not have the right to take their children out of school for a holiday in term time – The Education (Pupil Regulations)(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
 - Any requests for holiday must be made at least two weeks in advance, in writing and in line with Government Guidelines. These will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Taking a holiday in term time, simply to save money does not constitute an exceptional circumstance and may result in further action being taken by the school. Being unable to take holidays due to the seasonal nature of parents/carers work is also not an exceptional circumstance.
 - All parents/carers should apply for leave no less than 14 days prior to the period of absence. Failure to do so may result in the absence being unauthorised.
 - If the absence is not agreed and the pupil goes on the holiday, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in further action being taken by the school.
 - Where a child was removed from school for a holiday during the previous academic year, the absence will automatically be recorded as unauthorised and may result in further action being taken by the school.
 - Where a child fails to return to school within 10 days of a previously notified date, the school has the right to remove the child from the school roll and report the child as a Child Missing Education to Lincolnshire County Council

5. RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE:

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively.

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents/carers by the close of register on the first day of absence, they will be contacted for a reason. Where contact cannot be made by telephone, a member of the attendance or safeguarding team may make a home visit to establish the whereabouts of the child.
- If a child is absent from school and no response is made to attempts to contact the family, Children's Services and the Police may be contacted and could be asked to make a "safe and

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well” check on the family. If no contact is made within 5 days, the School will contact Child Missing Education at Lincolnshire County Council.

- If any pupil is absent for a period of 10 days (particularly when we have had no acceptable explanation from parents/carers) the absence will be unauthorised and notified to Lincolnshire County Council’s Pupils Not Attending Regularly (PNAR) service.
- Attendance will be monitored by the school. If a pupils attendance falls below 90% for any reason (including illness or holidays), they will be classed as Persistent Absentees (PA). A letter will be sent to parents to make them aware of this. If attendance does not improve within two weeks of a school notifying parents of poor attendance, they will be asked to attend a School Attendance Plan meeting. This meeting will include the appropriate staff, parent/carer and student and will aim to identify and solve any problems that are preventing the pupil from attending school. Parent/carers are obliged to attend.
- Staff are to raise any concerns they have in relation to a child’s attendance with the Attendance leader in the first instance. The Attendance Leader is to be informed of any absence which: -
 - a) appears irregular;
 - b) shows regular patterns e.g. repeated absence on the same day/s of each week;
 - c) is unexplained or unauthorised.

This may be referred to the Headteacher, Family Support Leader or Designated Safeguarding Lead where necessary.

6. REINTEGRATION

- The return to school for a student after a long-term absence requires special planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme.
- Designated staff should be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme.
- All staff should be aware that this can be a difficult process that will require careful handling and that any problems should be notified to the responsible staff member as soon as possible
- Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual needs and may involve phased, part-time re-entry with support in lessons as appropriate. Support from the SEND Team may be required.
- Staff will be notified of the return of long-term absentees in advance of their return.

The support of the Pastoral Support Programme will require the involvement of appropriate staff, other agencies, the pupil them self and their parent/carer. Such programmes should be amended as necessary.

7. DEALING WITH PUPILS NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL

Bridge House Independent School is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all students. However, we do realise that at times, due to illness, this is not always possible. Our

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“Meeting the Medical Needs of Children” Policy clearly outlines how we will work with pupils, parents/carers and other professionals to ensure that their education is affected as little as possible and that there is a smooth transition back into full time education. The procedures for dealing with these absences remain as stated earlier in this policy:

- Parents should inform school on the morning of the first day of absence and must provide medical evidence for any absences of 5 consecutive days or more. If records indicate that there is likely to be a health issue, school will request that medical evidence is provided by the family GP to support this and enable school to offer suitable provision.

Where a pupil fails to attend due to refusal, Bridge House Independent School will work with parents/carers and any other related professionals to reintegrate them back into school as soon as possible. 10 days consecutive unauthorised absence will be reported Lincolnshire County Council as a Pupil Not Attending Regularly (PNAR)

Where a student or parent/carer repeatedly fails to engage with school and the professionals put in to assist over a period of 8 weeks, or there continues to be no improvement in attendance, the school maintains the right to refer the matter to Lincolnshire County Council.

8. SCHOOL ORGANISATION:

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education. In addition there will be specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff such as the following:

Headteacher:

- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy.
- To regularly report progress on attendance to Proprietor, pupils and parents.
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence.
- To liaise, when necessary, the LEA's Education Welfare Service.
- To oversee the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- To reward excellent attendance.

Attendance Leader:

- Ensure that registers are completed each morning and afternoon session.
- Contact parents on the first morning of absence if a student is not in school and no reason has been provided for their absence.
- To record all reasons for absence clearly in the register.
- To work with families to improve attendance and punctuality.
- To report to the Headteacher and Senior Team on a regular basis.
- To inform the Headteacher of any concerning cases regarding absence/poor attendance.
- To liaise with other agencies to improve attendance.
- To track whole school attendance and absence data, comparison and summary reports.
- To track the attendance of pupils who fall below 90% and 95%.
- To devise action plans and work with families to improve attendance. To organise/ complete home visits where necessary.

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- Inform Lincolnshire County Council of a Child Missing Education (CME) in the event a child being absent for 5 days and no contact being made with parents/carers, or in the case where it appears that a child is no longer resident in the property held on record at school as the child's home address.
- Notify Lincolnshire County Council when a child has missed 10 consecutive days of unauthorised education via the PNAR.
- Liaise with the staff, and parents/carers to appraise pupils' attendance and reinforce the principles of the attendance policy.

Parents/Carers:

- Contact school, before 9:30 on each day of absence
- Provide written notification or proof of absence, as required, where a period of absence for injury or ill-health extends for longer than 5 consecutive days
- Support their child in achieving maximum attendance
- Attend any meetings as requested

Teacher:

- To complete registers accurately and promptly at the start of each session (8:55 am and 1.00pm).
- To notify the Attendance Leader of suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence.
- To inform Attendance Leader/senior staff of concerns in a timely manner.
- To inform Safeguarding Lead of any situation causing concern above and beyond normal expectations.

Proprietor:

- Request regular attendance progress reports for Proprietor' Meetings.
- Ensure school attendance policies and procedures are adhered to.

Office Staff:

School administrative staff play a vital role in supporting the school's attendance and absence management strategies. They:

- Collate attendance information from messages received, including maintaining a late/absence book and a book for pupils to be signed out when leaving school premises for medical appointments etc. and ensure that these are passed to the attendance lead in good time.

9. LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES:

Research has shown that schools in partnership with the full range of support services have a greater impact on school attendance than when they act alone or when the support services are uncoordinated or disjointed.

Poor school attendance may be a symptom of a wide range of institutional, community, family or individual circumstances. Many of these circumstances will demand expert support beyond the remit

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of the school. It is therefore vital that strong partnerships are established with all agencies that work with children and young people.

Other Agencies to be used where appropriate in individual cases.

- Educational Behavioural and Support Services.
- Educational Psychologists.
- Special Educational Needs Service.
- Social Services.
- Local police.
- Early Help Workers.
- School Nursing Team.
- Lincolnshire County Council Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education Team.
- Lincolnshire County Council Inclusion and Attendance Team.

Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the Act. Each school has a Data Protection Notification which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the police or social services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Categorising Absence:

All schools are required to use a common set of codes to record attendance and absence. The use of fixed codes assists both LAs and the DfE in monitoring pupil absence.

Authorised or Unauthorised Absence:

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as **unauthorised (code O)**.

The following may be reasons for authorising absences:

- Illness (**code I**); which **does not** include cough, cold, headache, stomach ache, toothache, period pains.
- Family bereavements
- Medical and dental appointments (**code M**) where **proof is available**.
- Days of religious observance (**code R**).
- Fixed term exclusion (**code E**)
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

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- Public performance/examination (where a LCC Performance Licence has been obtained)

NB: pupils who are absent from school but taking part in an approved educational activity should be marked in the usual way but are counted as present for the absence returns to the DFE. To avoid confusion in emergency situations pupils who are off site should not be marked as present on those days but only when they return to school. The following activity falls within this category.

- Field trips and educational visits both in this country and overseas.

Absences will **not** be authorised under the following circumstances:

- Shopping trips
- Holidays in term time where the permission of the school has not been formally given
- Birthdays
- Minding the house or looking after siblings.
- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation.
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified.
- No reason given.
- If school staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or not valid. (Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Headteacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered.)

Family Holidays

From the 1st September 2013 changes have been made to the law which relates to school attendance. The new rules mean that it will be much more difficult for Head Teachers to grant time off for families to take children on holidays in term time. Holidays will only be granted in **exceptional** circumstances (**code H**). Requests for absence are expected in writing, prior to a booking being made and at least 14 days before the absence. Any holiday taken without a written request will automatically be unauthorised. If a request is not granted and the parent/carer takes the child on holiday, the absence will be unauthorised.

If the absence is not agreed and the pupil goes on the holiday, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised (CODE G). This absence may be referred to Lincolnshire County Council and could result in a Fixed Penalty Fine under Section 444(b) of the Education Act 1996.

Resolving Disagreements

Where there is a lack of agreement between the school and the Local Authority as to the appropriateness of issuing a final warning letter or a penalty notice, the matter will be referred to the County Legal Proceedings Panel, whose decision shall be final.

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Lateness:

We actively discourage late arrival by challenging the parents of young people who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation. Parents (or pupils if travelling to school on their own) are required to complete the "Late Book" at the office upon their arrival at school. Our policy is that registers remain open until 9.30 am. In the event of bad weather this period may be extended. Where a pupil arrives during the period when the register is open they will be marked present using the letter 'L'. Where a pupil arrives after register closure they will be marked in the class register using the letter 'U' to indicate that they are on site. Any child with a pattern of late arrival, or 10 or more consecutive late arrivals without good reason, will be referred to the Attendance Lead. A letter will be sent home stating the number of late arrivals and giving notice that the situation needs to improve. If the pupil continues to arrive late, parents/carers will be asked to attend a School Attendance Panel (SAP).

Medical Appointments during school time:

Medical and dental appointments within school time will be classed as unauthorised unless proof can be provided of the appointment. This can be provided retrospectively.

Pupils must be signed out at the school office and then signed back in on their return by their parent/carer.

Removal from the school roll:

There are strict guidelines on the circumstances under which a pupil may be removed from the school roll. This will only be done when fully in accordance with legal requirements and with agreement of the EWS (Child Missing Education Team) where the whereabouts of a child in the UK is unknown.

- Where a school has been notified that the pupil has been registered as a pupil at another school
- Where a pupil has ceased to attend the school and the parent(s) have satisfied the County Council that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than by attendance at school.
- Where the school has been notified by the School Medical Officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state to attend school before becoming legally exempt from the obligation to attend school.
- Where the pupil has been absent without reasonable cause for four academic weeks and the Head Teacher of the school has failed, after reasonable enquiry and consultation with the Education Welfare Service to obtain information on the cause of the absence.
- Where the Head Teacher has been notified that the pupil has died.
- The pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school.
- If a pupil has not returned to school within ten school days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term time.
- Where the pupil has been permanently excluded and this decision has been confirmed by the Pupil Discipline Committee.

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Ensuring Pupil Information is up to date

Schools should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies can be actioned effectively. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states: 'Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'.

Pupils who are missing

Where a child is absent without permission, it is believed that a pupil has left the area and enquiries have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil within the UK, the Common Transfer File should be completed and uploaded to the DFES National Missing Pupils Database. This will be done in close co-operation with the EWS.

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PA flow chart:

