

Bispham Endowed Church of England Primary School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Approved by:

Full Governing Board

Last reviewed in:

November 2024

Next review due by:

November 2025

BISPHAM ENDOWED CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICY FOR

ATTENDANCE and PUNCTUALITY

School Mission Statement

'Firmly Rooted We Flourish'

Overview

At Bispham Endowed Church of England Primary School we believe that if children are to get the greatest benefit from their education in our school it is important that they attend school every day and arrive punctually. As children grow and prepare for the next stages of their education and employment they need to see good attendance and punctuality as important qualities that are valued by employers and others. As a school we have very high expectations of all our children in relation to their attendance and punctuality and we do all that we can to promote and encourage this aspect of school life. Where children are not meeting our high expectations for attendance and punctuality we put into place effective strategies to bring about improvement.

As attendance and punctuality are so crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, Bispham Endowed places great emphasis on the importance of attendance and punctuality in its communication with parents and carers and spends time raising their profile with the children in school.

All staff are encouraged to show concern and care about the welfare of every child in school and class teachers have a key role to play in monitoring the attendance and punctuality of the children in their class.

Objectives

- To ensure that all pupils attend school every day.
- To ensure that all pupils are punctual.
- To engage the support of parents and carers in ensuring that their children attend school every day and that they arrive on time.
- To keep good records of attendance through the use of school registers and to take prompt action to follow up absences.
- To investigate and act immediately where truancy is suspected or confirmed.
- To work effectively with the Local Authority and other agencies to follow up attendance issues promptly and effectively.
- To monitor closely pupils with attendance and punctuality issues and to work with parents and carers, and where appropriate other agencies, to bring about improvement.

How do we promote attendance and punctuality?

- At Bispham Endowed, all matters concerning attendance and punctuality are the responsibility of the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher works in close liaison with Attendance Manager, who is the member of the Office Team responsible for managing attendance data, and with the school's Pupil Welfare Officer.
- Attendance and punctuality are promoted through a variety of strategies which are reviewed by the Attendance Co-ordinator in liaison with the whole staff.
- Each term, and at the end of the school year, the class with the best attendance and the class with the best record of punctuality is awarded a trophy and special stickers.
- Children who have full attendance and no late marks for the whole year are awarded a special certificate.
- The presentation of awards takes place during a special whole school assembly.

How do we communicate about attendance and punctuality?

- Information on attendance, punctuality, absence and lateness is given to parents and carers in the School Prospectus and via the school web site.
- The family of every new child to school receive information about the prospectus and is encouraged to access the web site. This information highlights the importance school places on children being at school on time and attending every day and explains how parents and carers should notify school if their child is absent for any reason.
- A leaflet giving further information about attendance and punctuality in 'user friendly' language is included in the Induction Packs for nursery and reception children and for post reception children who join the school at the start of a new school year or during the year.
- When children are admitted as non-routine admissions, reference is made to the school's high expectations and high standards in relation to attendance and punctuality during the new family's induction interview with the Headteacher or another member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- At the pre-school induction meetings for parents and carers of children who are about to enter the nursery or the reception classes, the importance of attendance is discussed and explained by the Attendance Co-ordinator.

- The talk also highlights the importance of parents and carers and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to the school day and explains how vital it is that children are collected from school on time at the end of the day in order to alleviate the stress caused by young children feeling they have been left behind.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to share any worries their child might have in school with the class teacher for we know from experience that little things can upset children, make them unhappy and so reluctant to come to school.
- Parents and carers are made aware of this and are advised what the best course of action to take is rather than keep their child off school.
- At this initial meeting parents and carers are asked to arrange family holidays within school holidays, rather than in term time, so that their child's education is not disrupted.
- The school's Pupil Welfare Officer talks to parents and carers informally about attendance and punctuality during the induction sessions for pre-school children in the summer term.
- Staff are updated about attendance matters at staff meetings and are given guidance on marking registers.
- All staff are expected to complete attendance registers accurately for each session in school.

Absence

- Parents and carers are asked to inform the school as soon as their child is absent for any reason either by a telephone call or speaking directly to their child's teacher.
- The Headteacher / Office Manager operates a 'first day of absence' call system and if there has been no contact from the family of an absent child, then she will telephone the parent/carer or other contacts for the child to enquire why the child is not in school.
- If a child returns to school after an absence without an explanation, a standard 'absence' letter is sent home asking the parent or carer to complete a form to explain why the child was not at school.
- All staff are aware that only the school can authorise a child's absence, not the parent or carer, and understand that we do not have to accept the explanation offered for an absence if we feel it is not a valid reason.
- Any concerns staff have about a child's absences are referred to the Attendance Manager or the Attendance Co-ordinator.
- If a child is absent for more than a few days (five days at the most) without an explanation the Office Manager or the Pupil Welfare Officer will contact the parents or carers of the child.
- If a child has poor patterns of attendance, such as lengthy absences or broken weeks, then the Pupil Welfare Officer will contact the parents/carers by telephone or by a home visit.

- In July 2015, parents and carers were advised that from the beginning of September 2015 when the government reduced the persistent absence threshold from 15% to 10%, school would not authorise an absence due to illness for any child whose attendance rate was less than 93% (for any reason), without first obtaining medical evidence.
- Such evidence was identified as an appointment card for the doctor, the dentist, the hospital or the walk-in centre, the back of a prescription or a medication bottle/box prescribed by a medical practitioner.
- At their summer term 2015 meeting, the Governing Board of Bispham Endowed Church of England Primary School agreed that, as of September 2015, penalty notices for non-attendance may be issued in cases of unauthorised absence. The circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued include:
 - ❖ Parentally condoned absence
 - ❖ Unauthorised leave i.e. holidays taken in term time
 - ❖ Unwarranted delayed return from authorised leave
 - ❖ Persistent late arrival after the register has closed
- Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority, i.e. Blackpool Council, to each person who is a parent of the child, as defined by Section 576 of the Education Act 1996. This may mean that more than one penalty notice is issued in relation to each child in the family and each parent then has a responsibility to pay their own individual fine. The penalty notice currently involves a fine of £60 per child per parent/carer, rising to £120 per child/ per parent/carer if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the fine is not paid, then the matter is referred to the Magistrates' Court and as a consequence parent(s)/carer(s) may be prosecuted.
- Parents and carers were advised of this change to the school's Attendance Policy via a standard letter which was sent out with each child's annual school report in July 2014. This letter is reviewed and updated and sent home each July with each child's report. Parents and carers of families new to the school are also given an up to date copy of this letter.

Holidays in School Time

- As of September 2013 schools have not been able to authorise holidays in school time, except in exceptional circumstances.
- In July 2015 the Governing Board of this school agreed that, as of September 2015, penalty notices for non-attendance may be issued in cases of unauthorised absence. The circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued include unauthorised leave i.e. holidays taken in term time.
- In order to meet our safeguarding responsibilities, we ask that parents and carers who do choose to take a holiday in school time still complete a 'holiday form' which can be obtained from the School Office, informing us of the dates on which their child will not be attending school.
- A copy of the form is then returned to the parent and carer, advising the parent/carer if their child's absence will be subject to a penalty notice. Parents and carers are asked to collect the completed form from the School Office and to sign to say that they have received it.

Lateness

- All staff mark their class attendance registers in a consistent way in order to identify those children who are late for school.
- Pupils arriving late to school i.e. after 8:55 a.m. are recorded in the Late Register in the School Office and receive an L mark.
- Pupils arriving to school after the registers close at 9:30 a.m. are also recorded in the Late Register in the School Office but receive a U mark as their absence is unauthorised.
- The registers are also monitored for late marks in the School Office by the Attendance Manager.
- If the Attendance Manager or a teacher feels that a pattern of lateness is apparent for any child, then a 'late letter' or a text is sent home.
- Continued lateness involves a further 'late letter' being sent home and if further action is necessary then the Pupil Welfare Officer will be asked to home visit in order to express the concerns of the school.

Truancy

- There are very few children in primary school who do deliberately truant from school.
- If truancy is suspected the Office Manager immediately contacts the Pupil Welfare Officer, the parents or carers either by telephone or by home visiting and possibly the police if this is felt necessary.
- Parents and carers are then encouraged to bring their child to school so that the reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved.
- If there are any worries or problems in school that might lead the child to not attend then these are discussed with the class teacher and any appropriate action taken.

The Pupil Welfare Officer

- The Office Manager meets each week with the school's Pupil Welfare Officer to review attendance for the previous week, to review cases involving individual children or families and to discuss any other matters concerning attendance and punctuality.
- All staff are encouraged to discuss any concerns they have about children in their care with the Office Manager / Headteacher prior to these meetings.
- The Pupil Welfare Officer undertakes a whole school register screen every half term and liaises with the Office Manager about any concerns arising from this screening.
- Where necessary the school works closely with the Local Authority to take action against those unlawfully keeping children from school.

Outcomes

At Bispham Endowed Church of England Primary School we do all we can to ensure that children come happily, willingly and punctually to school to ensure that they gain the great possible value from the education which we provide.