

ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS POLICY

(INC. LEAVE OF ABSENCE)



Aspire, Create, Excel

Written by	Kieron Leech, Assistant Headteacher and Luton Borough Council	Date Spring 2025
Approved by Headteacher/Governors	Full Governing Body	Date 10/03/2025
Date for Review	SUMMER TERM 2028	

Introduction and Background

Bushmead Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, well-being and wider life chances. It is vital that pupils are present and on time to make the most of their time in school. Absence, and being late regularly, can be extremely disruptive to a child's education, particularly over time.

When parents decide to have their child registered at Bushmead Primary School, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends regularly and on time. 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.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

This policy has been created to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school, and to outline the school's commitment to attendance protocols.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Our aims:

We aim to improve the levels of attendance by continuing to:

- promote a safe, caring and supportive school ethos
- create an atmosphere where all pupils feel valued, happy and welcome
- seek to improve parental involvement
- set attendance targets for the school year
- ensure that attendance and lateness is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently
- raise and maintain a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the Headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

Target Setting

We understand that there will be occasions when pupils will not be able to attend school due to various reasons. However, minor ailments should not stop your child from attending school. As a result, our overall school target for attendance is set at 97%.

Promoting Regular Attendance

At Bushmead Primary School, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all pupils from the outset. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and well-being. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Have a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters and promote the benefits of high attendance;
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers, and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law;
- Celebrate good and excellent class attendance by displaying and sharing weekly achievements;
- Celebrate excellent individual attendance with 100% certificates termly;
- Report to parents/carers on their child's attendance;
- Make contact with parents/carers if their child's attendance becomes a cause for concern (contact will definitely be made if a child's attendance is below 90% - this is persistent absence) or if patterns of absence are noticed.

Staff and School Roles and Responsibilities

Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions, and to do this promptly to avoid delay. Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, and they are open from 8:55am, closing at 9:15am.

The school's attendance team will regularly monitor pupil attendance. A range of strategies may be used to communicate with parents about their child's attendance. This can include: contact from a child's class teacher; phone calls from the office or attendance team and/or written communication. Where attendance is a concern, formal letters/emails will be sent to parents to make them aware of this, clearly explaining that their child's attendance needs to improve.

In certain circumstances, a meeting may be arranged with parents to enable school to understand what barriers exist for pupils whose attendance causes concern. This may result in an Attendance Contract being issued. Where there is a lack of engagement from parents, school will hold formal conversations with parents (where possible) and raise the issue of the potential need for legal intervention.

If there is still no improvement after these initial interventions, the school will then contact their Local Authority Attendance Support Officer (LAASO) for advice and next steps. This may then lead to intervention from this service.

To ensure that parents are kept updated with regard to their child's personal attendance, they will receive their child's current attendance for the school year at least once per term via MCAS. A pupil's attendance will also be shared alongside the end of year school report.

Lateness will also be rigorously monitored by the attendance team and parents will be contacted via email if their child accrues a certain number of late marks.

Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the same class. **Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility** and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'. It is the school's decision whether an absence is authorised or not, and all information and documentation will be considered before making this decision.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you will be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. We do however ask that (where possible) medical and dental appointments are made outside of school hours.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. Unauthorised absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes (please note that this list is not exhaustive):

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however is counted as an unauthorised absence for the session;
- shopping trips;
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- their own or family birthdays;
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends;
- day trips;
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

The Regulation 9 codes – referred to previously as the Regulation 8 codes in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 – are the legal grounds on which schools can remove a pupil from their Admissions Register (school roll). The full details of the codes can be found in the Working together to improve school attendance guidance. Pupils whose absence meets the criteria may be removed from the school roll. For example, if a child fails to return to school following a period of unauthorised absence i.e. they intend to stay abroad.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and cooperation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a Persistent Absentee.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent**'. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

Reporting Absence Procedures

Pupil absence and the reasons that are given, are rigorously monitored and reviewed at Bushmead Primary School. It is vital that we have the correct information regarding all absences and, as such, parents should follow the following guidance:

Absence – Illness

If a child is absent from school due to illness, parents must contact the email address absence@bushmeadprimaryschool.co.uk prior to 8.55am. No other platforms e.g. Class DOJO, should be used to report absences, including calling the school office. Only the email address above should be used to report absence and this must happen on each subsequent day of absence. School should also be advised as to when the child is likely to return to school.

The child's full name and class should be entered into the subject bar of the email. If a child's class details are unknown, their date of birth should be included in the email. Within the email, reasons for absence (symptoms) along with an expected return date should be included. 'Generally unwell' is not acceptable; reasons for absence must be specific. A decision on whether or not to authorise the absence will be made from the information shared and medical evidence may be requested in certain circumstances. If the absence is not authorised, an unauthorised mark will be entered within the child's Attendance Record which could lead to a Penalty Notice being issued.

It is a parent's responsibility to contact the school about their child's absence. However, if you do not notify school of the absence, or provide sufficient information regarding the absence, school will make contact with parents to obtain the relevant information. If we are unable to make contact, we will use various methods to try and establish why your child is absent. This can include trying to contact emergency contacts on our school records, text and/or email. Unannounced home visits can also take place. This list is not exhaustive and other options may be explored. Absences will be classed as 'unauthorised' until sufficient evidence is given. If no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence, a referral will be made to the Local Authority at which point a child would be classed as 'missing in education' (CME).

Return to School After Sickness & Diarrhoea

Following a period of sickness (vomiting and/or diarrhoea) your child should remain at home for **at least 24 hours**. If you then feel your child is recovered (e.g. eating normally /no other symptoms), they can then return to school 24 hours from the last occasion of vomiting or diarrhoea. Please use your discretion. Any children with 'active' symptoms **MUST** remain at home.

Absence – Appointments

Any planned pupil absences (for appointments) must be advised at least one day prior to the day of the appointment via the school attendance email (absence@bushmeadprimaryschool.co.uk). **The office must not be called to report an absence due to an appointment.**

Evidence, for example, a hospital letter or screenshot of the appointment details **must** be sent at the same time. **No appointments will be authorised without evidence.**

Parents are expected to ensure their children are attending school before and after appointments wherever possible, and to try and make appointments for non-urgent reasons outside of school hours. If this is not possible, a reason must be given to school (e.g. treatment being administered at hospital). If school are not satisfied with the information provided, this can lead to the leave not being authorised. Registers of pupil attendance are legal documents and the information contained within them must be accurate.

If the absence is not authorised, an unauthorised mark will be entered within the child's Attendance Record which could lead to a Penalty Notice being issued.

Absence – Term time absence

A Leave of Absence (LOA) Form should be completed when a child will be absent for any reason (not illness) during the school term. Care should be taken when completing this form. This **must** be completed fully and supporting documents (e.g. flight confirmations) are to be submitted via email to absence@bushmeadprimaryschool.co.uk at least two weeks prior to travel. This form can be found in Appendix 1 .

A decision on whether the LOA is authorised or not will be taken from the information provided on the LOA form. The LOA form will not be processed without all the required documents. If the leave is not authorised and is for 10 sessions (5 days) or more, it is extremely likely that a Penalty Notice will be issued. Once the form is submitted, an email response will be sent by the school regarding this. (Further information on the changes to fines for term time leave can be found on the last page of Appendix 1.)

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed, and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Bushmead Primary School are:

Doors open: 8.40am

Registration starts: 8.55am

Registration closes: 9.00am

End of the school day: 3.30pm

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 8.40am when children can begin to come into school;
- Registers are taken at 8.55am;
- Children arriving after 8.55am are required to come into school via the school office. If accompanied by a parent/carer, they must report to the office staff and provide a reason for their lateness, which is recorded;
- At 9.15am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence. Unauthorised marks can be combined and may lead to a Penalty Notice being issued;
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns;

- From time to time a member of school staff will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school.

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with the school's attendance officer, but parents are encouraged to contact school at any time if they are having difficulties getting their child to school on time.

Late Collection from School/Club/Event

- We expect parents and carers to collect their children promptly at the end of the school day and also from clubs/events.
- Children who are not collected within 10 minutes of the end of the school day (3:40pm) are taken to the school office. After a further 10 minutes, if a parent has been uncontactable, pupils are then taken to Twilight After-School Club and parents are charged for this service. This is a late pick-up and will be recorded on CPOMs as a Safeguarding Concern.
- In the unlikely event that a child has not been collected and there has been no contact from a parent/carer/family member, every effort will be made by the school office staff to contact parents via phone, email and text message, and emergency contact details will also be attempted (if appropriate).
- If no contact has been made and no-one has arrived to collect the child 1 hour after the school closing time, school safeguarding procedures will take effect and Children's Services will be contacted. **This is a child not being picked up and is different to a late pick up, and therefore action needs to be taken in the best interests of the child.**
- The same rules apply for after-school club pick up. However, if a child has not been picked up after 30 minutes and no contact with family or emergency contacts can be made, Children's Services will be called at this point.

Barriers to Attendance

Children may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend and consequently this may result in their reluctance to return to school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, they may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils however we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. Reasonable adjustments can be discussed and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

School Attendance and the Law

New legislation was passed in Spring Term 2024: The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. 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. Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single, consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, for example returning to school on the fourth day (before the five-day minimum) or using the days before and after school holiday dates during the academic year, or repeated absence for birthdays or other family events, the local authority will exercise discretion and consider issuing a penalty notice if appropriate.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed, the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they **do not** have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or their designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a

request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school (Appendix 1). The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Penalty notices will likely be requested, in line with the National Framework and Luton Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

The Headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If the leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide any work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however, advised to read regularly with their children while they are away.

Absence data

At Bushmead Primary School, we use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit pupil attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis. Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Appendix 1 - Leave of Absence Form

For Office Use Only		
Actions:	Date	Initials
Date received and by whom		
Request entered on CPOMS & passed to Headteacher		
Paperwork returned to parents / carers		

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR {INSERT NAME OF CHILD}

You are not entitled to take your son/daughter out of school.

Are you aware of the impact of absence?

- One day off per school year = 99.5% attendance
- Ten days off per school year = 94.7% attendance
- Twenty days off per school year = 90% attendance
- 90% attendance across Years R - 6 = two terms of a School YEAR MISSED

Taking your child out of the school during term time is detrimental to their educational progress.

Parents should not request a leave of absence for their children during term time. There is no legal right to do so. Any agreement to leave is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Pupil Registration Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits in line with certain considerations as outlined in guidance from the Department of Education.

If the absence is not authorised and the student does not attend school at that time, the case will be referred to the Attendance Support Team who may issue a **Penalty Notice of £160 (or £80 if paid within 28 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school.** Please note that further important information relating to Penalty Notice procedures is attached to this document.

Failure to return on the date stated may result in an unannounced home visit and/or your child being reported as Missing in Education. Persistent absence may mean you lose your child's place at Bushmead.

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Name of Student:	
Date of Birth:	
Class:	
Date of first day of absence:	
Date of return to school:	
Number of school days requested:	
Reason for request for leave of absence during term time:	
Address and phone number of child/ren whilst absent.	
Copies of travel documentation attached	Confirm attached if applicable
Evidence of event:- medical evidence, death certificate, wedding invite etc	Confirm attached if applicable
Full Name and address of Parent 1: Is the parent aware of this application?	
Full Name and address of Parent 2: Is the parent aware of this application?	

Signed by parent:

Date:

Name (in block capitals, please):

For School use only:	
Total percentage of all absence this academic year (or during previous year, if applicable):	
Unauthorised pupil absences this academic year:	
Absence record at Bushmead	

Approved? YES / NO

Signed by the Headteacher:

Date:

Feedback to parents / carers:

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s)

I am writing to inform you about the government statutory guidance “**Working Together to improve school attendance**” which has come into effect from **19th August 2024**.

Please make a note of the following changes: -

Per Parent/Per Child Penalty Notices

- Penalty Notices for absences will be issued per child, per parent. This means that if multiple siblings are absent during term time and the absences are unauthorised by the school each parent will receive a separate fine for each child’s absence. Penalty Notices will be issued by the local authority, and the payment will be made directly to them. This is dealt with by the local authority’s **Attendance Support Team** (previously known as Education Welfare Service).

First Offence Penalties

- The first penalty notice issued to each parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at: £160.00 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years)

- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at: A flat rate of £160.00 if paid within 28 days.

Third Offence and any further offences (within 3 years)

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering **prosecution** but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

10 Sessions (5 days) of Unauthorised Absence in a 10-week period

- Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions (which is the same as 5 days) of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period

Yours faithfully,

Ms J Travi

Head Teacher