

'Where a love of learning grows'



**Birch Wood
School**



**Birch Wood
Vale School**



**Birch Wood
Autism Provision**

Attendance Policy

School Name: Birch Wood School

Policy owner: Rosalind Hopkins

Review Date: July 2022

Next Review Date: July 2024

Date Ratified by Chair Of Governors:

Chair of Governors Signature:

Chair of Governors Print:

Good attendance is critical to raising attainment and it is the responsibility of all staff to maximise and encourage good attendance in all they do on a day to day basis and in their strategic and longer term decision making and planning. Attendance is the responsibility of all; improvements to attendance will only be possible if there is a consistent approach adopted by all staff to encourage the attendance of all students.

Registers are legal documents; it is the responsibility of each and every member of staff to ensure that all registers are completed accurately and on time for both morning and afternoon registration including recording full and accurate reasons for absence of all students in SIMS.

AIMS:

- To encourage all students to attend school regularly and promptly, achieving an attendance rate which enables them to progress and fulfil their potential.
- To encourage positive attitudes to school and attendance from the parents of the students and the wider community.
- To implement whole school policy on attendance and ensure staff are fulfilling this.
- To reduce unauthorised absences within the school.
- To reward good attendance and punctuality in keeping with the rewards system in the school.
- To reduce the numbers of students defined as Persistent Absentees (PAs). The Department for Education has a threshold of 15%, this means that any student whose absence drops below 85% (this includes both authorised and unauthorised absences) could be referred to the Local Authority and parents could be liable for prosecution.

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

- a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance; they are reminded of this duty in the school prospectus.
- b) Prior to the engagement of the Senior Assistant Head with responsibility for attendance, the school will liaise closely with parents and students in order to support the young person to improve their attendance. School may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a student's absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for the Senior Assistant Head's involvement.

Annual Targets.

At Birch Wood Special School our attendance target is set at 95%.

100 - 95%	Excellent! Well done! This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
94 - 86%	Average - Well done, strive to build on this.
Below 85%	Cause for Concern. It IS affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting students learning. School will work with the parent/carer and where necessary, the Health and Well-Being Officers, the School Nurse and/or the Home School Link Worker to improve student attendance. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. The school will not assess all reasons as "valid".

Leave of Absence in Term Time.

Families do not have the right to take their children out of school for family holidays or trips abroad during term time. Government guidance instructs Headteachers **NOT** to authorise leave of absence in term time except in the most exceptional circumstances.

Requests for leave of absence during term time should be made to the Headteacher in writing. Each request will be judged on a case by case basis.

Identified students with specific medical, therapy or Special Educational needs, who have a high level of absence, will be supported by the following strategies:

- 4 weekly monitoring of attendance and absence.
- Recording absence as authorised.
- Working with the Local Authority to record such absences as authorised to reflect attendance as good as can be expected for these students and the school.
- Weekly liaison with parents/carers.

Responsibilities

Maintaining high levels of attendance is the joint responsibility of everyone in the school community, pupils, parents, governors and all staff.

Students:

- Students must arrive promptly to breaks and all their lessons.
- Students must ensure that if they are late for registration that they report their arrival at reception.
- Students must be signed out at the School Reception if they need to leave the school site during the day.
- Students must be signed in at the School Reception on re-entry to school.

Parents/Carers:

Throughout this policy the term “parent” represents one parent, both parents or carer with whom the child resides. Parents are informed of their responsibility to ensure their children attend regularly in the school prospectus. Attendance is discussed with each parent at consultation evenings with the current percentage attendance being reported and is reported as part of Progress and Assessment Reports.

- Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children receive a full time education. This is achieved by regular attendance at school.
- Student absence must be notified by a telephone call from the parents, where possible before 7.30am on each day of absence with a reason for their child’s absence
- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. An appointment card or verification by the doctors/dentist/hospital may be required.
- If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.
- If your child is absent due to sickness and/or diarrhoea then they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.
- Symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) - If you or anyone in your household has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or has recently come into contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) please inform school as soon as possible. Please follow the current government guidance.

Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team:

- Ensure that there is a named member of senior leadership team (Claire Wood – Attendance Lead) to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource and who will report the school’s attendance and related issues through the Governing Body.
- Ensure regular meeting time allocated to Attendance Lead, Home-School Link Worker and Health & Well-being Officer to monitor attendance.
- Ensure school attendance data is reported as required and on time to Children’s Services.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off site, are implemented using SIMS and CPOMS. When a letter is sent to parents, this will be recorded on CPOMS and the Attendance Category as the key indicator.
- Ensure data is interpreted to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Ensure there is a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support students and their families.
- Document interventions used, to a standard required by the Local Authority, should legal proceedings be instigated.

Staff:

- Staff must ensure that all registers are completed accurately and on time for both morning and afternoon registration every day.
- Staff must fully and accurately record reasons for absence of all students in SIMS. If the reason for absence is unknown then staff should make a phone call home or ask the office staff to make a phone call home to find out the reason for absence.
- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents/carers.
- Form positive relationships with students and parents/carers.
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all students to attend and to achieve.
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 (amended 2016) and other attendance related legislation.
- Be aware of and follow the Attendance Policy.
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions.
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support students and their families.
- Document interventions used, to a standard required by the Local Authority, should legal proceedings be instigated.

Role of Home School Link Worker

- Keep track of attendance and, where there is cause for concern, work closely with parents and children to improve poor attendance.
- Make referrals to other agencies where appropriate.
- Liaise with class teachers to agree and implement strategies to re-engage students with emerging attendance problems.
- Work with the Senior Leadership Team to plan re-integration for students who have been absent for a period.

Governing Body:

- Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, the governing body are responsible for monitoring overall attendance.
- The Governing Body are responsible for making sure that the school keeps an attendance register that records pupil attendance at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions of the school day. They also have the responsibility for The Attendance Policy, and for seeing that it is carried out.
- The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that the school's attendance figures remain high.
- An Attendance Report is submitted at each Governor's Meeting.

School Responsibility - Support Systems

- Birch Wood Special 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/Carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child/ren's attendance and/or behaviour in school. For example bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required - through the involvement of the Home School Link Worker, Health and Well-Being Officers, the School Nurse or referrals to external support agencies.
- The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include;
Discussion with parents/carers and students
Involvement with Home School Link Worker, Health and Well-Being Officers, School Nurse
Parent/Carer Agreement
Referrals to Support Agencies

Strategies for Improvement

The roles and responsibility of staff as outlined in the policy and this whole school approach to attendance are the first steps in ensuring good school attendance. However, where students are in danger of dropping below the school's attendance target, the following escalated steps will be followed:

- Students whose attendance drops below 95% for the first time will be contacted by the class teacher and/or the Home School Link Worker (Sarah Alldridge) to discuss reasons and offer strategies to support the young person and improve their attendance.
- A student whose attendance does not improve following this call will be sent letter 1 advising parents that their child's attendance needs to improve within 4 weeks.
- A student whose attendance that does not improve after 4 weeks will receive letter 2 inviting them to attend a meeting in school with the Home School Link Worker and the Senior Assistant Head (Claire Wood) to discuss supportive strategies to improve attendance and actions agreed.
- A student whose attendance that continues to fall after a further 4 weeks will receive letter 3 inviting them to attend a meeting in school with the Home School Link Worker and the Senior Assistant Head and Head of School (Tom Smith/Tom Bradley-Hewell/Amy Dunstan/Joe Knowles) to discuss actions agreed at the last meeting and any further support strategies required. An attendance target will then be set to be reviewed in 4 weeks.
- A student whose attendance does not improve will then receive letter 4 inviting them to attend a meeting with the Executive Headteacher (Rosalind Hopkins), Head of School and the Senior Assistant Head to discuss the next course of action.

Raising Awareness of this Policy

We will raise awareness of this policy via:

- The School website.
- The Staff handbook/Staff induction.
- Meetings with school personnel.
- Communications with home such as newsletters.
- Reports such as Progress and Aspiration Reports.
- Headteacher reports to the Governing Body.

Training

We ensure all school personnel have equal chances of training, career development and promotion.

Periodic training will be organised for school personnel so that they are kept up to date with new information and guide lines concerning equal opportunities.

Equality Impact Assessment

Under the Equality Act (2010) we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

This policy has been equally impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act (2010) as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any student and it helps to promote equality at this school.

Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Policy

The practical application of this policy will be reviewed every two years or when the need arises by the Attendance Lead, the Headteacher and the nominated Governor.

