BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

Buckingham Primary School

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Adopted by Governors Full GB: November 2025

Date of next review: November 2027

Reviewed Nov 2025: Change of personnel name.
Appendices updated.

1. Introduction

Buckingham Primary School believe that regular school attendance is:

- crucial in supporting children to be safe, healthy and successful
- key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them
- vital in ensuring that children become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Buckingham Primary School values all pupils. As set out in this policy and in Appendix 2, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and provide support to resolve any difficulties. We will also praise and celebrate good attendance and improvements in attendance.

Buckingham Primary 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, anti-bullying, behaviour and teaching & learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

2. Aims

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality
- Ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning
- Enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets

3. Expectations

Buckingham Primary 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.

We expect that **all pupils** will:

- Attend school every day
- Attend school punctually
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher or the school office any problems that may affect their school attendance

We expect that **all parents/carers** will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day
- Ensure that they notify the school daily of any absence via the Parentmail Absence facility or contact the school receptionists, Mrs Campbell/Mrs Stairs, whenever their child is unable to attend school
- Talk to their child about school and take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, celebrate birthdays, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Not take their child on holiday during term-time.

In line with our Child Protection Policy, we have a robust system for monitoring attendance and will act to address absenteeism with parents/carers and pupils promptly and identify any safeguarding issues arising:

- All children attending our school are required to have a minimum of two identified emergency contacts, this is to support prompt communication in the event of a serious incident or a child missing from school
- We have a robust 'first day alert' call system to establish reasons for non-attendance (See Appendix 1)
- Any pupil absent for ten school days, where it has not been possible to make contact with a parent/carer, will be reported as a Child Missing in Education, using the CME Protocol (Children Missing from Education Policy)
- Any absence without satisfactory explanation, of a pupil currently subject to a child protection plan, will be referred to their social worker on the first day of absence.
- Parents must inform the school if there are any changes to where a pupil will be living. The school has a mandatory duty to inform the local authority via the First Response team, if a child under the age of 16 years lives with someone other than their parent, step parent,

aunt, uncle or grandparent for a period of more than 28 days. This is defined as being a private fostering arrangement.

What you can expect from **the school**:

- A warm welcome for children each day by teaching & support staff
- To make attendance and punctuality procedures a priority for all those associated with the school, including pupils, parents, teachers and governors
- To develop an understanding for parents and pupils that high rates of attendance lead to sustained and therefore successful learning
- To follow up promptly on unexplained absences, calling parents or other named contacts and conducting home visits if this is needed for safeguarding reasons or to support a child to attend school.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils so that we can do all we can to remove any barriers to attendance.
- To discourage holiday absence by making it clear to parents that holiday absence in term time is unauthorised and that penalty referrals to the county attendance team may be completed if 10 sessions are missed.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data
- To implement a system of rewards to promote high levels of attendance for each child, e.g. 100% attendance certificates or letters
- To promote effective partnerships with the County Attendance Team of the local authority and other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- To recognise the needs of individual pupils when planning return to school following significant periods of absence
- To inform all parents of attendance rates in termly reports to parents
- To clarify the times for the beginning of each session, school term dates and training days
- To clarify the procedure for parents with regards to lateness or absence
- To ensure clearly defined late registration procedures for parents and pupils
- To respond swiftly to lateness (in respect of both pupils and parents)
- To review attendance regularly
- Comply with the The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and other attendance related legislation
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

- To highlight the importance of attendance for children through:
    - PSHE lessons
    - Assemblies
    - For parents, in parent meetings, newsletters, website
- To report to Governors termly
    - Attendance rate %
    - Authorised absence rate %
    - Unauthorised absence rate %

4. Support Systems

Buckingham Primary 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.

It is important to note that many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that can make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, school work, examinations or variable moods. However, these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly. Prolonged absences may even heighten anxious feelings about attending in the future.

In the first instance, parents should make their child's class teacher 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.

For further detailed support with attendance, parents should contact the Senior Attendance Lead - Mrs Wilson (Assistant Head) via the school office who will then arrange a meeting to discuss individual needs and liaise with the SEN Team if appropriate.

Buckingham Primary School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children. Our attendance ambition is the same for all our pupils and we will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance.

Strategies used may include:

- Communication and discussion with parents and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Nurture/pastoral support
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support

- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units support, e.g. in reach/outreach support from PRU
- Reintegration support packages
- Parent Attendance Contracts

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

5. 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 that 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. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

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 2024, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present
- absent
- present at approved educational activity
- late
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

6. Categorising absence

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

Absence can only be authorised by the school 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 can log a reason for absence using Parentmail or should advise the school receptionists, Mrs Campbell/Mrs Stairs, in person or by telephoning 01280 812864 on each day of their child's absence, providing the reason for absence and an expected date of return. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness (Code I) (Due to Physical Health/Mental Health/SEN/Disability): In most cases completion of the Parentmail absence form, a telephone call or email from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. However, a specific reason should be given, not just 'unwell' or 'ill' so that patterns of types of illness can be monitored across the school. 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 email/letter, prescription etc. We are required to make a sickness return to the County Attendance Team where a pupil may need to have 15 consecutive days or more off, due to sickness or where the total number of days missed during the current school year (consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 days.

Medical/Dental Appointments (Code M): Parents are advised to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible e.g. hospital appointments, pupils should attend school for part of the day if possible. Parents should show the appointment email/letter to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances: The Headteacher may authorise absences in exceptional circumstances, e.g. religious reasons, an agreed part time timetable, other exceptional circumstances.

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

Late Arrival: The register is recorded at 8.55am for the morning session, and is taken by 1.15pm for the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after registration but before the register closes at 9.15am will be marked as present but having arrived late (Code L). Pupils arriving after 9.15am will be recorded as late after the registers have closed (Code U unless any other authorised code is valid). This will be recorded as unauthorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

If pupils arrive after 8.55 pupils must immediately report to the school reception to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

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 were waiting for their uniform to dry. (Code U)

Unauthorised absence (Code O): Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Minor illness of a sibling/family member
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up" or "tired" or "had a late night"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays/Family Days out taken without the authorisation of 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. 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.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before arrangements are made. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken

- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice.

Religious Observance Buckingham Primary 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. (Code R)

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.

However, 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 (Code T) 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.

Buckingham Primary 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 Buckingham Primary 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. Buckingham Primary 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

Buckingham Primary 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

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.

7. 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.

In order to access support to improve attendance, the Local authority will be notified of:

- any new pupil and any deletions from the school admission register outside of standard transition times
- names and addresses of all pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly or who have been absent for a continuous period of 10 school days where one of more codes are unauthorised
- any pupils who may need to have 15 consecutive days or more off, due to sickness or where the total number of days missed during the current school year due to sickness (consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 days.

The Senior Attendance Lead/Assistant Head Mrs Wilson and Attendance Receptionist Mrs Campbell will support teachers and the admin team to monitor attendance on a day to day and weekly basis.

At the end of each month the Senior Attendance Lead/Assistant Head will provide the Headteacher with attendance data for the month.

This Attendance Data will be discussed with the Safeguarding and SEN Team after analysis each month. This data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 2 & 3).

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

Buckingham Primary School will share all attendance data with the Local Authority. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Registers will be kept electronically for a period of 6 years from the date the data was entered.

8. Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, 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
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- 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
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

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

9. Legal Sanctions

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

The County Attendance Team or school may invite parents to attend an Attendance Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

<u>Attendance Contracts and Education Supervision Orders</u>

An Attendance Contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school/local authority to address irregular attendance. It is not legally binding but allows more formal support where voluntary/informal support/intervention has not worked. It is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. There is no obligation for the school to offer the

attendance contract as it may not always be deemed appropriate but it will always be explored as an option before moving to an education supervision order or prosecution.

The contract meeting will give parents (and pupils if appropriate) the opportunity to discuss their views and discuss what support might be helpful in order to improve attendance. It will detail the requirements that the parent(s) is expected to comply with and the agreed support from the school/local authority. The contract will be reviewed regularly and may be in place for any length of time but usually between 3 and 12 months.

The contract and/or refusal to to sign/comply can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Where all supportive options have been exhausted, including an Attendance Contract, an Education Supervision Order can be sought. This is a formal legal intervention. If parents fail to comply with this, the local authority can prosecute and, if convicted, parents will be liable to a fine of up to £1000.

Penalty Notices

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 for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the pupil will miss 10 sessions (5 days)
- A pupil has missed 10 sessions (5 days) unauthorised in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. This can be any combination of unauthorised absence e.g. 4 sessions of holiday in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks) They can be consecutive days or separate and can also span different terms e.g. 2 sessions at the end of Autumn Term and the a further 8 sessions in the following Spring term.

A Notice to Improve is the final opportunity for a parent to engage in support before a penalty notice is issued.

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution.
From Autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

• The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
• A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
• 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 should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Where pupils move schools, we will work to try to ascertain whether parents have received previous penalty notices.

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.

Appendix 1

Attendance Daily Procedure

CLASS DOORS OPEN AT 8.45.
Register is taken by class teachers at 8.55 and saved on SIMS.
From 8:30am School office team pick up any messages/parentmail notifications to explain a child's absence and this is marked in SIMS.

CHILDREN ARRIVING LATE

From 8.55am until 9.15 – any children arriving late to come to the school reception and will be marked as L.
Children arriving 9.15 onwards will be marked U if reason given for absence is not authorized. Receptionist to add a comment to state parent's reason.

CHILDREN UNACCOUNTED FOR

From 9am-10am any parent of a child whose absence has not been explained will be contacted by telephone by the school receptionist. **Parents of children who are most vulnerable to be contacted first**. (no later than 9:15). See google sheet from DSL. If no answer a message will be left.
School reception team to continue trying to contact a parent using alternative phone numbers, email and text. Call additional contacts if necessary.

STILL NO CONTACT FROM FAMILIEIS OF VULNERABLE PUPILS AT 9:30AM

9.30 am If no contact made with parents of vulnerable children, school reception team to notify Mrs Wilson (Attendance Lead), Mr Paulden (Op DSL), Mrs Brewer (DSL) and Mrs Gammon (Deputy DSL), to raise the need for a possible home visit or need to contact external agencies e.g. Social Worker. Mr Paulden (Op DSL) to lead on this. School receptionist to continue trying to contact parents at regular intervals.

STILL NO CONTACT FROM FAMILIES OF ANY PUPILS AT 10AM

10.00am If no contact made with parents of any child, school reception team to notify Mrs Wilson (Attendance Lead), Mr Paulden (Op DSL), Mrs Brewer (DSL) and Mrs Gammon (Deputy DSL) who will decide if further action is necessary. School reception team to continue to attempt to contact.

STILL NO CONTACT AFTER DAY 1

Mr Paulden, Mrs Wilson, Mrs Brewer and Mrs Gammon to refer to 'Addressing school attendance concerns including where no explanation for absence has been provided' document and Attendance Policy for procedure at this point.

Afternoon procedure

Register is taken by class teachers at 1pm and saved on SIMS
If children are out on trips, trip leader to take a register at 1pm and call reception to confirm all children are present.
If any children are unaccounted for, Mrs Campbell/Mrs Stairs to check with teacher and then alert SLT and begin procedure for absconding child/flight risk.

NOTE: Attendance Receptionist to perform weekly check on a Friday of missing marks/unexplained absence..

Appendix 2

Intervention Flow Chart

Attendance Intervention Procedure

Step 1: As part of monthly attendance analysis, the parents of any pupil with below 95% attendance will receive an email/letter to let them know, give information regarding importance of attendance and offer any support to prevent them moving into the 'persistently absent' category. (Below 90%)

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Step 2: If pupil's attendance falls below 90% (persistent absence), parents of the pupil will be contacted again to offer further support and suggest a meeting with Mrs Wilson (Senior Attendance Lead/Assistant Head) and/or staff members from the SEN team/Safeguarding team if appropriate.

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Step 3: If pupil's attendance continues to fall, further support will be sought from external services, including the County Attendance Team and if below 85% it will be logged as a safeguarding concern. Parents will be invited to an Attendance Contract Meeting when appropriate.

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Step 4: If pupil's attendance continues to fall, and parents do not engage with support offered, further support from the County Attendance and external referrals will be made including the possibility of Penalty fines and, as a last resort, possible prosecution.

Appendix 3

Attendance (equivalent days off over a year)	Outcome	Process
99-100% **(up to 2 days missed over the year)**	Excellent – Children are accessing all learning opportunities	Praise Termly recognition (Certificate /Letter) for 100% attendance during that period Daily absences followed up by School Admin Team
96-98% **(up to 7.5 days missed over the year)**	Good – Very few learning opportunities missed.	
90-95% **Risk of becoming persistently absent** **(up to 19 days missed over the year)**	Risk of underachievement	AHT monitors this band of pupils. Email/Letter sent to inform parent of risk of falling into 'persistently absent' category, importance of attendance and offer support. Discuss with County Attendance Team if appropriate.
Under 90% **Persistently Absent** **(Over 19 days missed over the year)**	Persistently Absent Severe risk of underachievement	Letter home advising of falling attendance rate and risk to child's progress, offering support meeting sent from AHT. If no improvement, meeting arranged with AHT (and SEN/Safeguarding Team if appropriate) to offer support to remove barriers. Refer to External services for additional support inc County Attendance Team. Attendance closely monitored and logged as safeguarding concern if under 85%. Home visits where appropriate. Certificates for improved attendance/ 100% months/weeks.
Under 50% **Severely Absent** **(Over 95 days missed over the year)**	Extreme risk of underachievement	As above and attendance monitored daily by AHT/SEN/Safeguarding Team. Regular Parent meetings/Home visits Further support requested from external services.