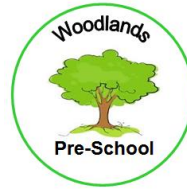


# Binley Woods Primary School and Woodlands Pre-School



## Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Developed by: Mrs K Sharp

Date: October 2024

Review Date: October 2026

Adopted by

Governing Body: November 2024

| Policy Review Log |  |                 |                       |
|-------------------|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Scheduled Reviews |  | Interim Reviews |                       |
| Date              |  | Date            | Details of amendments |
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## **1. Introduction and Aims**

Attendance at school is vital so that children have their full access to education and can fulfil their potentials as learners. Attendance at Binley Woods Primary School is everyone's responsibility including staff, children, parents/carers, governors and wider stakeholders. As a supportive and nurturing school, working with and helping families to improve school attendance, is integral to our practice.

Attendance at school is also a protective, safeguarding factor in children's lives and is the responsibility of all school staff and governors. When children do not attend school regularly or there are patterns of absence, we will act with professional curiosity to raise concerns about children's well-being and safety. We will work with families and act to ensure these concerns are dealt with promptly.

### **Our attendance policy aims to:**

- Fulfil the aims of the statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' (2024) and the Education Act (1996)
- Provide a relational and supportive approach for parents and carers so the school can maintain high levels of school attendance
- Set out clear procedures so we can provide families with a consistency of support for their child's attendance
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities

### **We will manage attendance by:**

- Preventing patterns of absence from developing by promoting good attendance
- Intervening early using data to spot patterns of absence before they become persistent and working with families to remove the barriers to attendance
- Targeting support for persistent and severe absentees with all local partners, working together to re-engage pupils
- Recognising unauthorised absences and referring to the local authority when appropriate

Our procedures will follow the guidance set out in 'Working together to improve school attendance' (2024):

#### **Expect**

We aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

#### **Monitor**

We will rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

### **Listen and understand**

When a pattern is spotted, we will discuss individual circumstances with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

### **Facilitate support**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

### **Formalise support**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond.

### **Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **2. Support**

We recognise that some children find it harder to attend school than their peers and may need reasonable adjustments to access education. All circumstances are different and we will invite families to talk to us about any particular barriers to school attendance so we can work together to put the correct support in place. This could include:

### **Universal Support**

- Inviting parents / carers into school to discuss attendance
- Supporting children and families by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance
- Where barriers are outside the school's control, discussing and offering support and signposting to the right voluntary support. Where referrals are required we will do this with the consent of families
- Meeting with the families of children at risk of persistent and severe absence at the earliest opportunity
- To continue to meet regularly to review impact of any support - to celebrate success and offer further help if needed

### **Additional Support**

- Home Visits
- Create individual attendance plans
- Draw on targeted or specialist support from external agencies
- Opening Early Help pathways

- Following the EBSA pathway for those children struggling with ‘emotionally based school avoidance’
- Understanding but challenging and not tolerating school absence

### 3. Roles and Responsibilities

All school staff (including governors) have an important role to play in making a positive difference and contributing to a whole school approach to attendance. We have a consistent approach to attendance across the school and families should be able to speak to any member of staff about attendance issues.

We have included key information below on staff and governor roles in school:

|                                                                 |                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Our school attendance champion is:                              | K Sharp                                |
| Our named governor with responsibility for attendance is:       | L Beck                                 |
| Please do talk to any of these trusted people about attendance: | Class teachers<br>Admin (office staff) |
| The number to call to report your child’s absence is:           | 02476 543 754                          |

Absence can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and can also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues. Our staff with responsibility for safeguarding are:

|                                       |                                               |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Designated Safeguarding Leads:        | K Sharp (main school)<br>D Hicks (Pre-School) |
| Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads: | S Loxton<br>J Apostol<br>J Fowler             |

### 4. Attendance and Punctuality - Expectations of Children and Parents

School expects children to attend school daily and for parents and carers to support their child’s attendance. Children should be in school if they are physically and medically well enough to attend and if they do not have medical appointments that cannot be made outside school hours.

- Children should arrive at school between 8.45am and 8.55am
- We will take registers at 8.55 am and 1.15 pm
- Registers close in the morning at 9.20 in the morning. After this time, children will receive an unauthorised late mark in the register.
- Very occasionally, we will make different arrangements for children with specific needs. These will be communicated on an individual basis.
- Parents should call the school office (number above) **each day**, if their child is absent from school.
- If we have not received information from you about your child’s absence, we will attempt to contact you. School should have a minimum of two contact numbers per

child. If we are unable to get hold of you we may conduct a home visit or raise the absence as a safeguarding concern.

## 5. School Routines

Each morning we will:

- Meet and greet children at the school door and in the classroom
- Take registers and follow up any unexplained absences (calling families / home visits / engaging external agencies)
- Admin staff will raise any unexplained absences before 10.30 am to the Headteacher / Safeguarding team

Each half term we will:

- Rigorously track children's attendance. (Where there are concerns, we will track the attendance of individual children more regularly)
- Inform parents of their child's attendance for the academic year
- Ask parents and carers to attend attendance meetings where attendance is falling below 90%. This may be a discussion with the class teacher or Headteacher.
- Celebrate and thank parents / carers / children where attendance is improving

## 6. Persistent and Severe Absence

A child is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% of their possible attendance (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year); this can be authorised or unauthorised absence.

A child is defined by the Government as a '**severe absentee**' when they miss 50% of their possible attendance or more schooling throughout the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence.

Where absence escalates, we will work with external agencies to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage pupils. We will sensitively consider some of the reasons for a child's absence. In these cases, we understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

Particular focus will be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils 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 across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners will work together to make this group the top priority for support - this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.

## **7. Escalation of Procedures**

Our process for escalating our concerns will be as follows:

- a) Reviewing attendance data at least half termly (more frequently where we have concerns). This will include a review of patterns of attendance.
- b) Informing all parents / carers of their child's attendance levels
- c) Inviting parents / carers to speak to staff where attendance is below 90%
- d) Monitoring improvements / falling data percentages
- e) Putting in place an attendance action plan working with families
- f) Signposting families to support
- g) Involving external agencies to offer specific and targeted help including consideration of an EHCP

This process will largely be led by the Headteacher and supported by school staff. We will continually review data and specific circumstances to ensure we are supporting at the right level.

## **8. Formalising Support - The Warwickshire Attendance Service and Legal Interventions**

Before considering making a referral to the local authority, the school will consider carefully if parents and carers are actively trying to support in improving school attendance or if support is more appropriate.

The school is responsible for liaising closely with the Local Authority's Warwickshire Attendance Service and will follow their standard approaches in managing attendance issues. Where all voluntary support options have not been successful, or have not been engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents.

Warwickshire Attendance Service can use the following legal interventions/formalised support; Attendance Contracts, Notice to Improve, issue of Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, Attendance Prosecution, consideration of application of Parenting Orders. Warwickshire Attendance Service will decide which intervention will be most appropriate, however only after considering the individual circumstances of a family.

Voluntary support options are not appropriate for an unauthorised Leave of Absence in term time. Prosecutions for non-school attendance must be conducted in line with the 'Warwickshire County Council Non-school attendance and Penalty Notice code of conduct' and the Code for Crown Prosecutors and must pass the evidential and public interest tests.

## **9. Leave of Absence & Referrals**

The DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' 2024 attendance guidance states:

"Generally, the DfE does not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance"

- The law states a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if it considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

## Expectations

- A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Permission for a Leave of Absence from a school may only be given by a person who the school's proprietor has authorised to do so (an authorised person).
- Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.
- Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.
- Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school.
- When making an application for Leave of Absence parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify the parents of their decision. The school may also request further information on the application and supporting documentation where appropriate.
- It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.
- Where applications for Leave of Absences are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an "unauthorised" absence. Where a leave of absence is requested but additional days take either prior to or after the request, they may be considered as part of the leave of absence.
- Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council. Penalty notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings.

- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

## **Leave of Absence taken in the academic year 2024-25**

The law relating to Penalty Notices changed with effect from 19 August 2024. Therefore, Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absence taken from September 2024 will be issued in accordance with the updated legislation.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices - 4 in total).

- First Leave of Absence Offence: The amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.
- Second Leave of Absence Offence within a 3-year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount.
- Third Leave of Absence offence within a 3-year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice). A Penalty Notice will not be issued and the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

## **10. Non-Compulsory Age Pupils**

Although there is no legal requirement for a pupil to attend nursery, it is widely acknowledged establishing routines including good attendance in early years reaps benefits when children become of compulsory age.

The DfE have now advised in the Working together to improve school attendance that: On each occasion the register is taken the appropriate national attendance and absence code must be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admission register at the time.

The codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics. The data helps schools, local authorities, and the government gain a greater understanding of the delivery of education and the level of, and reason for, absence.

We therefore have the same attendance expectations for our Reception-aged children as we do for those who are school-aged.

## **11. Legal Responsibilities**

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude; to any special

educational needs he 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. 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.

Parents/carers and guardians have a legal responsibility to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education by regular attendance at school or otherwise under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

Section 576 Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not;
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person;
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/guardian is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Schools must take the attendance register at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- present;
- absent;
- attending an approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## **12. Types of Absence**

The school will record absences in line with the DfE Attendance coding guidance. Only the Head Teacher or designated member of staff have the authority to **authorise** or **unauthorise** absences.

There are two types of absence:

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for an acceptable reason, such as illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable causes.

Where possible, we ask that medical appointments be made outside of school time, during school holidays or at a time to minimise absence from school. However, we understand some medical appointments cannot be changed - please liaise with our admin team if this is the case.

**Unauthorised absences** are when a pupil is absent without prior authorisation from the school and/or when no justifiable reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer or guardian (including when parents have failed to provide a reason despite attempts to establish a reason by the school).

This type of absence could lead to the school referring to the Local Authority and/or increasing the level of support offered to improve attendance.

### **13. Children Missing in Education**

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) leaders have ensured that:

- Staff understand what to do when children do not attend regularly.
- Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for students who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions) are in place.
- Staff know that travelling to conflict zones could be an indicator of FGM and forced marriage.
- Procedures are in place to ensure that the local authority is always informed if pupils':
  - leave the school to be home educated
  - move away from the school location
  - remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age
  - are permanently excluded
- Schools will ensure that students who are expected to attend the school but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority.
- When a student leaves, schools will record the name of the student's new school and their expected start date.

### **14. Deletions From the Register**

The school will only delete a pupil from their register in accordance with The School Attendance (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the local Authority will be notified of this removal. Our school will inform Children's Service when a child with safeguarding concerns is due to be removed from the school register.

### **15. Data & Monitoring**

The school will use data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most. We will use data to reduce persistent and severe absence.

- Attendance data will be shared with parents / carers regularly at parent's evenings, in half termly letters home and in annual reports
- We will ensure our use of data is effective by meeting with families, reviewing plans and measuring the impact of any changes.
- Attendance data will be analysed at least half termly. General attendance data is shared with governors on at least a termly basis
- Attendance data will be shared with wider support services including children's services when there is a need for external support.

### **16. Disseminating and Implementing this Policy**

This policy will be approved by governors every two years. The policy will be circulated to all families and will be available on the school website.

E-mail messages and newsletter updates about attendance will be regularly shared with parents and carers. Communications will be visual and easy to access.

Staff will receive regular training and updates to remind them of their responsibilities around attendance.

## **Appendix A - Warwickshire Targeted Attendance Support Pathway**

