



**Bideford College**

Part of the Athena Learning Trust

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## **Pupil Attendance Policy**

### **Review**

Reviewed on: 16 December 2022

Reviewed by: Trust Board

Review period: 3 years





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This policy is the responsibility of: Anne Marie Conroy

This policy is subject to agreement by the Board of Trustees on 16 December 2022.

This Attendance Policy applies to Bideford College, and all governors and staff of the school must abide by this policy which has been adopted in accordance with and pursuant to the Student Welfare Policy of Bideford College .

It is the responsibility of the local governing body and Principal of the school to ensure that their school and its staff adhere to this policy. In implementing this policy school staff must take account of any advice given to them by the CEO and/or Board of Trustees.

This policy is subject to Bideford College Student Welfare Policy and the Scheme of Delegation approved for the school. If there is any ambiguity or conflict then the Bideford College Student Welfare Policy and the Scheme of Delegation and any specific Scheme or alteration or restriction to the Scheme approved by the Board of Trustees takes precedence. If there is any question or doubt about the interpretation of this, the CEO should be consulted.



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## **Bideford College Attendance Policy**

At Bideford College we firmly believe that all students benefit from outstanding school attendance. To this end, we will do all we can to ensure that our students achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted upon promptly. In order for a student's attendance record to be deemed very good, it must be 96% or above:

100%- Outstanding Attendance

96% - Very Good Attendance

94% - Good Attendance

## **Aims and objectives**

We intend to establish systems and practices which will:

- Create an ethos in which excellent attendance is the norm.
- Maintain a safe, secure environment where students feel valued and welcome, thereby positively encouraging attendance.
- Raise student awareness of the importance of punctuality and uninterrupted attendance, and encourage in students a sense of responsibility.
- Celebrate excellent school attendance.
- Support students and families who experience difficulties maintaining good school attendance.

## **Expectations**

We expect that all students will:

- Attend every day that school is open to them
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day



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We expect that all parents who have day to day responsibility for the children and young people will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day
- Contact the school before 9am on the morning of each day of the student's absence by calling the attendance line
- All absences should be followed up by a letter explaining the reason and date of absence or a medical appointment card. Any unexplained absence is treated as an unauthorised absence
- Parents are encouraged to contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

## **Bideford College has a responsibility to ensure that all teachers:**

- Complete registers accurately and punctually during every registration period and lesson
- Assist the attendance officer in following up any unexplained absences upon the student's return to school
- Inform the Head of Year/Safeguarding Team/SLT of concerns
- Be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to the attendance officer

## **Responding to Non-Attendance**

Student attendance is continually monitored by the attendance officer. When a student does not attend school, the school will respond in the following manner:

- If no telephone call is received from the parent, the Attendance Officer will activate the 'First Day Absence' call. The system will text/email the Priority 1 parent's contact Number.



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- If no telephone call is received confirming absence, the Attendance Officer or the Pastoral Leader will call all contacts to establish a reason for absence.
- If a student has unexplained absence for three consecutive days with no contact from contacts, a home visit will take place on the third day.
- For any students with unexplained absence that are children in need or under a child protection plan, the Attendance Officer will report to DSL immediately for advice.
- In the event of no response being received for the absence, a letter will be sent home. If no response is received within 10 days of the date of the letter, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Periods of absence from school of 4 days or more will require medical evidence to be provided. This can be in the form of an appointment card, appointment letter, Doctor's letter, photograph of prescription or medication prescribed, screenshot of appointment text message, appointment email.

## **Pupils who are dual-registered**

Where pupils are registered at more than solely the Bideford College setting, the school works closely with these providers to monitor pupil attendance and to follow-up on any non-attendance promptly. This includes implementing appropriate systems for non-attendance and persistent non-attendance.

## **There are 4 stages of dealing with absenteeism at Bideford College**

### **Stage 1**

A letter will be sent to the parent of any student whose attendance falls below 94%, this will be accompanied by a phone call by a member of staff to offer support to improve attendance. This is monitored for a period of 2 weeks.

### **Stage 2**

If there is no marked improvement, parents will receive Letter 2 and be invited in for a meeting



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with a member of staff. An attendance support plan will be agreed on to address any issues preventing a child from attending school.

## Stage 3

If no improvement is seen within a further 2 weeks, a letter informing parents that any further absence will require medical evidence will be issued. This letter will explain that any absences following stage 2 will require medical evidence, otherwise they will be unauthorised absence.

## Stage 4

At this point an attendance action plan meeting will take place with a member of the senior leadership team and other relevant staff. If parents miss the first meeting it will be rearranged, if they miss the second it will take place even if they choose not to attend. If no improvement is seen in attendance, the case is referred to the local council education welfare team to begin legal proceedings.

Continued failure to contact the school to report a child's absence may result in a referral to the school's Safeguarding Team, MASH/MARU Team or the police for a welfare check.

Failure to comply with the expectations set by the school may result in further action, by either a referral to appear before the Governor's Attendance Panel, issue of a Penalty Notice, an application for an Education Supervision Order or court prosecution.

At any stage of absenteeism, we will involve our pastoral team and education welfare service. This involvement will be most supportive and pronounced for children at risk of persistent absence or currently persistently absent (i.e. below 90% attendance).

## Lateness

The school day begins at 8.40am with morning Greeting. Morning registration takes place in Greeting.

Morning registration – 8.45am - 8.55am. Registers are closed at 8.55 am

- If a student arrives late to school, after 8.45am, they must 'sign in' via the main reception
- If a student arrives late to school, a break detention will be issued. Where appropriate, reasons for lateness are investigated and responded to in the appropriate manner.



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- Lateness after period 1 is recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) and parents will be notified of this absence via In Touch parent communication system.

## **Absences that the school is unable to authorise include:**

- Holidays during term time
- Arrival after the registers close at 9:30am without prior notification
- Shopping trips, even if this is for school uniform
- Birthday celebrations
- Looking after a relative/pets
- Tiredness due to extra-curricular activities
- All unexplained absences

## **Medical Appointments**

Parents are encouraged to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours but where this is not possible the school should be notified in advance by emailing or sending a letter to the school, addressed to the Attendance Officer. Where it is not possible to arrange appointments outside of school hours, students are encouraged to attend school either side of their appointment.

## **Religious Holidays**

We will authorise absence for major religious holidays. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform us in advance of their intention to keep their child at home. If parents do not inform the school any days missed will be recorded as unauthorised absences. Requests for extended absence for religious observances should be made in writing to the Principal .

## **Holidays**

The school holiday dates are published in advance on the school website and it is essential that parents take their family holidays during the school holidays. It is the school's policy not to authorise absence during term time for holidays and any absence of this nature will be recorded



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as unauthorised. Should parents choose to remove their child from school for a holiday during term, they may be required to attend a meeting with a member of the senior leadership team to discuss this absence.

We recognise that there may be occasions where a parent feels there are extenuating reasons for requesting leave during term time. In such circumstances we advise parents to write to the Principal outlining the reason for the request and the dates the student will be absent from school. Parents will be asked to complete a Holiday Request form. The Principal will inform parents of their decision in writing.

Requests for long periods of absence will not be authorised and a meeting with the Principal and relevant members of staff will be required. Prolonged unauthorised absences may put your child's place at Bideford College at risk.

If parents take their children on holiday during term time without authorisation the School will apply for a Penalty Notice to be issued in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1966 and the Education and Inspection Act 2006. The fine from September 2013 will be £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, increasing to £120 if paid after this date, but within 28 days. Failure to pay can result in a referral to court.

Please note that a Penalty Notice is issued to each parent in respect of each child not attending school. 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.

With the exception of unauthorised holidays taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

## **The Legal Framework**

Regular school attendance of children of compulsory school age is the responsibility of the parent and is a legal requirement in accordance with Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.





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Parents are committing an offence if they fail to comply with this legislation and legal action can be instigated.

Penalty Notices are not the only means of disposal for these offences. Depending on the circumstances of each case, the Local Authority may alternatively decide to issue a caution, or to prosecute the offence in a magistrates' court, or to take no further action.

Penalty Notices for offences under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 must be issued by an authorised officer in accordance with Section 444A of the Education Act 1996. The practice in Devon is for all Penalty Notices to be issued by the Local Authority.

Penalty Notices may be issued by the Local Authority under any of the following circumstances:

- An excluded pupil found in a public place
- Unauthorised holiday during term time
- Persistent lateness after registers have closed