



Bideford College

Part of Athena Learning Trust

Bideford College

Pupil Attendance Policy

Review

Review due: August 2026

Reviewed by: Trustees

Review period: Annual

Version: 2.0



This policy is the responsibility of: Nick Tyrrell

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 and Safeguarding Policy of Bideford College (these can be found on the schools' or the Athena Learning Trust websites).

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 the Student Welfare Policy, Safeguarding Policy and the Scheme of Delegation. If there is any ambiguity or conflict then the Student Welfare Policy, Safeguarding 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 Attendance lead for Athena Learning Trust (see the Athena Learning trust Safeguarding Policy) should be consulted.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)

Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Please note: The term 'children missing education' is different from 'children absent from education'. Supporting children who are absent from education helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future.

'Parent' as set out in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, defines parent to include: natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and; any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with said child.

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

97% - Very Good Attendance

96% - 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

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 8:40 on the morning of each day of the student's absence. The quickest and easiest way is via the MCAS webpage. Alternatively, please call the attendance team and leave a message.
- 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.
- If no telephone call is received confirming absence, the Attendance Officer 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 3 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 95%, 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 with a member of staff. An attendance support plan will be agreed on to address any issues preventing a child from attending school. If no improvement is seen, at *10 sessions* of unauthorised absence or more in 10 weeks a penalty notice may be issued and or referred to the local authority for further actions.

Stage 3

If no improvement is seen, or at *10 sessions* of unauthorised absence or more in 10 weeks, an attendance action plan meeting will take place with a member of the senior leadership team and/or other relevant staff. If parents choose not to attend the first meeting it will take place in their absence, however an option to re-arrange will be given. If no improvement is seen in attendance, the case is referred to the school absence penalty notice team or internal school teams to begin legal proceedings, including serving a penalty notice or other 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 involve our attendance and/or pastoral team. This involvement will be most supportive and pronounced for children at risk of persistent absence or currently persistently absent (i.e. below 90% attendance).

Please note that at any point in the process a penalty notice may be issued in accordance with guidance of 10 unauthorised absences in a 10 week period.

Medical evidence may also be requested on a case by case basis at any point in the process so that school can best support the child.

Lateness

The school day begins at 8:45 am with morning greeting where morning registration takes place.

Morning registration – 8:45 am to 9:10 am. Registers are closed at 9:40 am

- If a student arrives late to registration, after 9.10am, they must 'sign in' at reception.
- If a student arrives late to registration a sanction will be issued, where appropriate
- Should it be deemed reasons for lateness are investigated and responded to.
- Lateness after registration closes is recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) and parents will be able to view this on the MCAS webpage/app.

Absences that the school is unable to authorise include:

- Holidays during term time
- Arrival after the registers close at 9:40am 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; duration at the discretion of the school. 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 .

Traveller pupils

Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

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 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, as well as consideration for a Penalty Notice.

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 an exceptional leave of absence 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 2024 will be £80 per parent if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, increasing to £160 if paid after this date, but within 28 days. Failure to pay can result in a referral to court. If a second penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period, the fine will automatically rise to £160 per parent with no option to pay the lower rate of £80. If a parent then commits a third offence in a 3-year rolling period, the local authority will need to consider other enforcement options available to them. This could include prosecution, including a £2500 fine.

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. 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