



BCS Policy:

Attendance

Date: September 2022

INTRODUCTION

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. The Branch Christian School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our vision is to have an effective whole school culture of high attendance which is underpinned by clear expectations, procedures and responsibilities. Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and is on the school website and issued to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school at the beginning of the school year; prospective parents will also receive a copy when they apply for a place at The Branch Christian School.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education. Including **Working together to improve school attendance**. Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities May 2022. Applies from September 2022.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head Teacher and Governors at our school, work together to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school is Mrs JE Holt (Jeholt@branchchristianschool.org.uk).

The person parents/carers should contact in the first instance about attendance on a day to day basis is the school Administrator (office@branchchristianschool.org.uk). Please phone the school office on 01924 452511 by 08:45 on the first day of student's absence.

For more detailed support on attendance contact the Head Teacher.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, governors, pupils and parents in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.

Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance (which equates to less than 7 days absent throughout the whole school year) for **all** children, apart from those with chronic health issues.

Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school, students and parents.

Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.

Ensure that our policy promotes good habits at an early age.

Build strong relationships with all our families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.

Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.

Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage pupils to have a sense of their own responsibility.

Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially Supervisors, in promoting good attendance.

Maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

DEFINITIONS

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

PROCEDURES

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To clearly communicate the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern (where attendance is less than 90% ie an average of one day off a fortnight) and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve; school will work with Kirklees LA to put targeted support in place to remove any barriers to reengage students.
- To report attendance statistics to the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Head Teacher.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

SUPERVISORS

Supervisors are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Head Teacher where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.

HEAD TEACHER

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Governing Body.

ADMINISTRATION STAFF

The school Administrator is responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Head Teacher.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

SCHOOL OPENING HOURS

The school doors are opened in the morning 08:15 and closed 08:30. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into the school.

The school doors are opened in the afternoon at 15:30 and closed at 15:40. This time is sufficient for all pupils to leave the school.

REGISTRATION

The school keeps both an Admissions Register and attendance registers.

The Admissions Register is used to record specific personal details of every student in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended.

All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on the admission register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register.

Schools must take the attendance register(s) at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session.

The Administrator has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the Administrator by 08:50 in the morning and 13:00 in the afternoon. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved educational activity as defined in regulation 6(4) or
- Unable to attend school due to exceptional circumstances as defined in regulation 6(5).

Schools must record whether the absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or not. There is no requirement for schools to record whether the absence of pupils not of compulsory school age is authorised or not, but where possible schools should use the national attendance and absence codes to help them monitor their attendance and to form good attendance habits.

Schools must record the nature of the activity where a pupil of compulsory school age is attending an approved educational activity and the nature of the circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Schools cannot delete a pupil's name from the attendance register unless they have a reason (as set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended) to delete the pupil's name from the admission register; the pupil's name must be deleted from both registers at the same time.

Attendance codes will be used according to the document *Working together to improve school attendance*. (See Appendix 1)

Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

LATENESS

Any pupil who comes into school after 08:50 will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late **before the register is closed**; this is documented on the attendance register for each pupil (Attendance code L). *Any child who arrives for school after the register has closed and the school is not satisfied that the reason for lateness is an authorised absence, will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).*

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school late will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

ABSENCES

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the register. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head Teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence we will send a letter requesting these details to be completed by the parents/carers. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

The school will regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.

FIRST DAY CONTACT

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

ILLNESS

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

PARENTAL REQUEST FOR ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL FOR HOLIDAY

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from the school to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

An application for leave of absence will not be granted unless it is made in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with and the school is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstance of the case which justify the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

ADDRESSING ATTENDANCE CONCERNS

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

In The Branch Christian School we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the

parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

MONITORING ATTENDANCE

The Branch Christian School, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded in the register(s). Regular meetings are held with staff to discuss all attendance concerns, and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Policy Review Information:

Review date	Changes made	By whom	Date of next review
September 2022	Adopted CEE Policy	Mrs J Holt Mrs L Cox	September 2023

APPENDIX 1

ATTENDANCE CODES

See *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2022* pages 56 – 65 for full details.

Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Code L: Late arrival before the register is closed

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Code B: Off-site Educational Activity

Code C: Leave of absence granted by the school

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

Code G: Holiday not granted by the school or in excess of the period determined by the school

Code H: Leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday granted by the school

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment)

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

Code M: Medical or dental appointment

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Code O: Absent without authorisation

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

Code R: Religious observance

Code S: Study leave

Code T: Traveller absence

Code V: Educational visit or trip

Code W: Work experience

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school

Code Z: Prospective pupil not on admission register

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure