



Bell Lane
Academy

Attendance Policy

Updated July 2017

Approved by Governing Body July 2017

Review date March 2018

Bell Lane Academy promotes the view that regular attendance is important to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all our children. We believe that the whole academy community shares responsibility for attendance (see Appendix 2 for the guidance that underpins this policy).

Aim:

- To raise levels of attendance
- To improve punctuality
- To raise levels of attainment
- To maximise opportunities both in school and later life

Good attendance is important because:

- **Statistics show a direct link between under achievement and poor attendance.**
Every lesson really does count for a child and children can quickly fall behind if even one day is missed. This includes days where children could go to school but don't feel like it.
- **Regular attendees make better progress, both socially and academically.**
Good regular attendance often means doing well academically, better relationships with other children and better overall behaviour in school.
- **Regular attendees find school routines and school work easier to cope with.**
It's much easier for a child to know what they have to do if they have been in school on the day it has been taught.
- **Regular attendees find learning more satisfying.**
Catching up even a little lost time from school can be really difficult and demotivating.
- **Regular attendees have an easier transfer to secondary school.**
If bad habits develop at primary school, children can struggle at secondary school or be at increased risk of harm if poor attendance habits develop. Research shows that 17 days' absence equates to a drop of one grade at GCSE level.

Good attendance and punctuality isn't just about what happens in school – absence and lateness when a child is young can limit their future opportunities, and set up bad habits for work and life.

We will always try to help when a parent has trouble getting a child to the academy.

Parents can help us by:

- Ringing on the first morning of all absences **by 9:15am** with the reason and saying when their child will return.
- Arranging dental and medical appointments out of school hours or during school breaks.
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if their child has an extended period of absence due to illness.

The academy will:

- Follow up all unexplained absences with a phone call before 9.30am.
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters, the academy prospectus and home school agreement.
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance.
- Publish every child's attendance figures on his/her annual report.
- Let parents know if we have any concerns regarding their child's attendance.
- If we continue to have concerns, we will make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer who visits the school regularly to review and support with attendance matters.

Authorised absence

Only in exceptional circumstances are absences allowed by law and are known as authorised absences e.g. if a child is ill, bereavement or religious observance. *¹

Unauthorised absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are NOT permitted by law. These are known as unauthorised absences. Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Waiting in for a delivery
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Going shopping
- Going for a hair cut
- Birthdays
- Holidays or visits in term time

Unauthorised absences have by law to be reported to the Local Authority.

10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence will trigger a referral to the local authority for fining.

All money from fines goes directly to the local authority and not to the academy.

Term time leave of absence

In line with other local and national schools, our policy is that no holidays will be authorised during term time. *¹

If parents choose to take their child on holiday, the absence will be deemed as unauthorised and a fine will be issued by the Local Authority.

The more time a child is absent from the academy, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A good understanding of the work set can only take place when a child is in the classroom.

Punctuality

- Children must be on the academy premises at 8.50am at the latest and line up with their class when the bell rings.
- **Registration in classes finishes at 8.55am.** The outside gates will be locked at 8.55am and all latecomers must enter the academy by the main entrance. **A late mark will be given for children arriving after 8.55am.**
- Parents/Guardians must sign in children who are late in the late book at the academy office. This book is monitored on a weekly basis. Parents of those children who regularly arrive late to the academy will be contacted.
- It is important for every child to be on time as the first few minutes of the academy day are often used to give instructions or organise timetables for the rest of the day.
- If a child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for the child.
- **Arrival after the closure of academy registration at 9:15am will be marked as an unauthorised absence** in line with the Department for Education guidance.
- We will let parents know if we have any concerns about their child's punctuality.
- Children who remain uncollected at the end of the academy day will be referred to a place of safety (such as social services) if the academy is unable to contact a parent or guardian.

*¹ See Appendix 1 for more information

Pupils with medical conditions

For pupils with a medical condition*, reasonable adjustments to the attendance policy may be made in discussion with the headteacher and following approval by the governing body. These will be made on a case by case basis.

* reference: 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' DfE December 2015

Leavers

If a child is leaving Bell Lane Academy to go to another school other than at the end of year 6, parents are asked to:

- Give us full information about their plans including reasons for moving school, date of move, new address (or at least the town they will be moving to), the name of the new school and start date when known.
- Confirm with us that we have their current mobile phone number.
- Take our academy's compliment slip with them so that the new school can contact us and records of their child can be transferred.
- Let us know when they actually do move.

Children Missing Education

When pupils leave and the above information has not been provided then a child is considered to be a Child Missing Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations which will include liaising with Family Services (Social Services), the police and other agencies in order to track and locate the child. By parents providing us with the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

Being Proactive

Throughout the year, parents will be kept informed of school's attendance expectations and procedures.

Good attendance and punctuality are essential if children are to make good progress in their learning. To promote good attendance, we use the following strategies:

- Give a certificate and small reward at the end of each term to individual children with 100% attendance.
- Give a voucher for all individual children who achieve 100% attendance for the full academic year.
- Acknowledge which class has the highest attendance every week.
- Give a reward for the class with the best attendance each half term.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We monitor attendance figures very closely.

Registers of all classes are monitored by the attendance officer on a daily basis.

A daily log is kept of:

- All children who arrive late
- All children for whom no notification for absence has been received.
- All phone calls made to parents who have not notified the academy of their child's absence.

Attendance figures are checked weekly by class, year group and on a whole school level.

Letters will be sent to parents by the academy asking them to give reasons for their child's continued lateness. If the situation does not improve, then parents will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher.

Any child with an attendance record of under 90% will have their records examined and referred to the attention of the EWO.

Parents of children who are recorded as having ongoing episodes of unauthorised absence will be requested to attend a meeting with the headteacher (and possibly the Pastoral Care Manager and/or Education Welfare Officer) in order to discuss the situation. Parenting contracts may be drawn up where appropriate.

Legal note

Parents have a duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on law and best practice guidance produced by the Department for Education and the Local Authority. The Educational Welfare Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and punctuality and avoid legal action.

Statements of expectation regarding attendance and punctuality

Role	Responsibility
Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational management of this policy. • Manage incentives to encourage regular attendance. • Consider requests for authorised absence. *1 • Authorise absence after it occurs when a satisfactory explanation is accepted. • Consider the use of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence or lateness. • Complete the headteacher witness statement on pupil absence for court use. • Over see day to day attendance procedures. • Analyse trends in attendance data to identify appropriate action. • Investigate reasons for absence exploring any underlying cause either at home or in the academy. • Ensure action is taken in response to any difficulties reported (e.g.bullying/behaviour). • Ensure that anti bullying and behaviour management policies are followed. • Work in partnership with parents to improve attendance. • Liaise with the Education Welfare Officer and make referrals if necessary. • Work with the EWO towards improved patterns of attendance for referred pupils identifying the course of action that should be taken. • Make referrals to other agencies where appropriate. • Work with class teachers to agree and implement strategies to re-engage pupils with emerging attendance problems. • Work with relevant staff to plan reintegration for pupils who have been absent for a period. • Compile and update standard letters re: % attendance, notification of reasons for absence, lateness. • Report regularly to Governors on attendance. <p>*1 See Appendix 1 for more information</p>
Governors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree all policies and policy changes. • Support the headteacher with making decisions about authorised absences.
Class teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of pupils at the start of morning and afternoon sessions using registration codes. • Alert the attendance officer of any children who demonstrate an unsettled pattern of attendance or whose attendance pattern changes using message system attached to registers. • Report percentage attendance at parent consultations: encourage regular punctual attendance; work to secure this. • Ensure all absence notes are passed to the office staff via the class register. • Work with the headteacher to agree and implement strategies to re-engage pupils with emerging attendance problems.

Office Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor registers and input into Integris. • Update data using Integris. • Record late arrival and reasons in the late book. • Ensure that reasons are accurately recorded in the late book. • Update records using agreed codes. • Make calls to parents when first day of absence contact has not been made by parents. • Prepare standard letters requesting reasons for absence when this is unexplained. • Prepare letters to inform parents when a child's attendance is giving concern and thus being monitored. • Collect absence notes and record reasons for absence. • Meet with the headteacher and take agreed action. • Provide attendance reports when requested. • Liaise with the EWO on attendance matters. • Complete relevant attendance data for WCAT. • Monitor pupil attendance and take action according to this policy. • Ensure data is accurate for WCAT and annual DCSF attendance returns.
Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure their child attends daily and on time. • Keep the academy fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance of their child in the academy. • Telephone the academy on the first day and following days of any absence to inform the academy of the reason. • If attendance becomes a problem, work with the academy to improve matters. • Give serious consideration to whether it is appropriate or necessary to request term time absence.
Education Welfare Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work closely with the academy and families to resolve attendance issues. • Visit the academy for meetings at agreed times. • Identify with the academy cases of unauthorised absence which necessitates action and advice on responses. • Provide written reports to school in the form of consultation sheets. • Complete regular register checks. • On receipt of a written referral, take appropriate action which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on strategies • Assessment home visits • Action planning • Agreed time-limited intervention • Attendance at school meetings • Written record of work undertaken • Verbal feedback where appropriate • Written response to referral within 10 days • Liaise with other agencies • Liaise with other local authority departments • Preparation of cases for prosecution including sending warning letters
Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do all they can to attend the academy every day and on time. • Inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are having difficulty getting to the academy regularly and on time. • Inform a trusted adult if there is any reason that is making them not want to attend the academy e.g. friendship problems.

APPENDIX 1

Bell Lane Academy additional information for parents/guardians relating to holidays in term time

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in term time.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in term time to go on holiday.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations make clear that the Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher should also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Leave of absence in exceptional circumstance:

The Headteacher may only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances.

Examples of exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced that the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays;
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional, evidenced in writing, as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or final visit due to terminal illness of a close relative*;
- Out of school exams such as music, arts or sport. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states 'on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs';
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative* if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional;

Leave will only be authorised for the above reason when a Headteacher (in discussion with the governing body) is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time. There will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional either side of the event for travelling dependent on location.

- In difficult family situations, and in discussion with the governing body, the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

**a close relative is deemed to be any individual with any of the following relationships to the child:*

- *Parent/Guardian and spouse/partner of parent/guardian*
- *Brothers and sisters, including step/half-brothers and sisters.*
- *Grandparents and spouse/partner of grandparents*

Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above circumstances, the Headteacher will consult with the governing body prior to any authorisation being given to the parent. Evidence would be required in each case.

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from the academy is the only option:

- 1) The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils).
- 2) During transition mornings in the second half of the Summer Term.
- 3) SATs weeks (for pupils in Year 6 and Year 2).
- 4) Phonics check week (for pupils in Year 1 and Year 2)

When considering exceptional term time leave requests, the following factors help to reach a decision:

- Time of the academic year when the leave has been requested;
- Duration of the absence – number of school days being missed;
- The child's current attendance and punctuality rate;
- Whether parent/carers have considered limiting the amount of time the child would be absent from the academy e.g. wrapping around school holiday;
- Have alternative care arrangements been considered by the parent/carer to limit the time away from the academy;
- Impact on any interventions such as assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family;
- The impact that the absence will have on the child's learning;
- Whether it falls within any national tests or exams;

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost.
- Holidays taken in term time due to parental work commitments.

APPENDIX 2

Information/Guidance that informs our academy attendance policy

Guidance for headteachers from the NAHT states the following:

“Head teachers already have discretion over the granting of absence during term time. They rightly prioritise learning over holidays. Head teachers are able to - and do - authorise absence in exceptional circumstances.

“The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are where requests are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. NAHT believes that these new guidelines support existing government policy on school absence. They will give head teachers and parents a consistent and reasonable definition of 'exceptional'. This will help with making individual decisions about granting authorised absence in term time.”

Government guidance on register codes

Code R: Religious observance Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which 12 the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents’ religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher’s discretion.

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher. If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

House of Commons BRIEFING PAPER Number 07590, 19 April 2017

4. Are any absences for family holidays allowed?

‘Exceptional circumstances’ are not defined in guidance from the Department for Education, although it’s made clear that family holidays are “unlikely” to be considered as exceptional. Guidance for its members from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) states that absences should be authorised if they’re “rare, significant, unavoidable and short,” and couldn’t reasonably be scheduled outside of term-time. Family holidays are, as a consequence, “not considered an exceptional circumstance.”