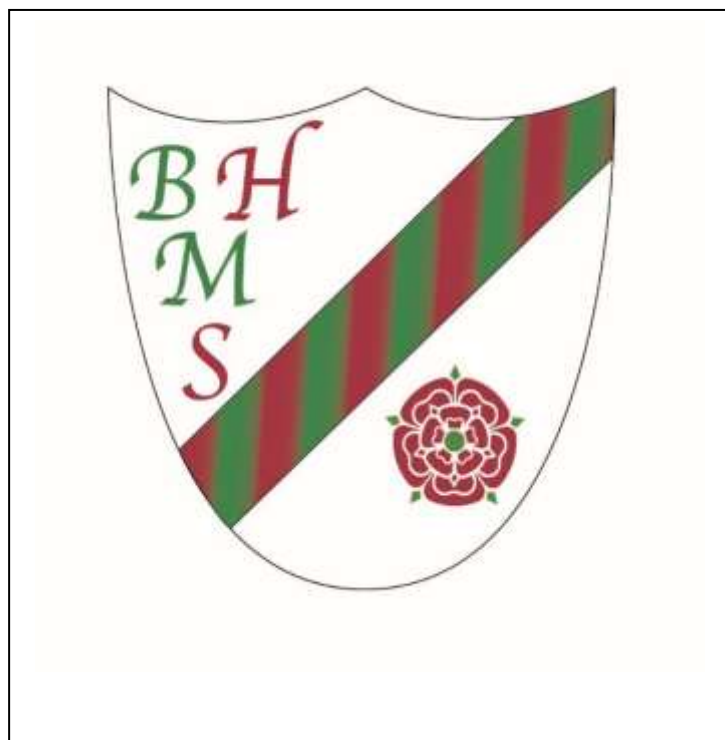


Bedford Hall Methodist Primary School Attendance Policy



Written by:	Epworth Education Trust
Personalised by	L Whittaker
Date agreed:	Autumn 2022
Next Review Date:	Autumn 2023

Mission Statement

Bedford Hall Methodist Primary School strives to provide a caring environment in which every individual can achieve his or her full potential.

To achieve this we wish to create a happy secure and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school, which is conducive to learning and high standards, and is based on Christian values.

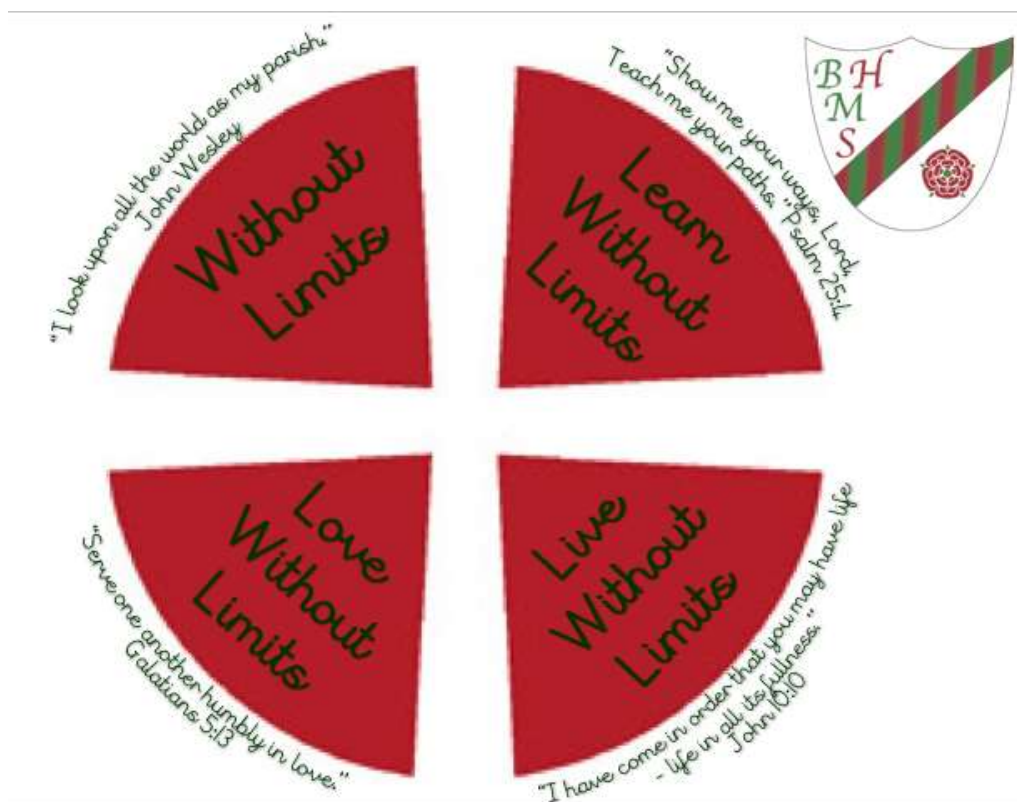
Safeguarding Statement

At the Bedford Hall Methodist Primary School we recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children.

We work to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

The procedures contained in the Safeguarding Policy apply to all staff, volunteers and governors

Vision



Section 1: Rational and Statement of Intent

Statement of Intent

As part of the Epworth Education Trust, Bedford Hall Methodist Primary School's aim is to provide the greatest opportunity for children's learning to take place. All children are entitled to receive a high-quality education that enables each one to reach their full potential.

Epworth Trust considers safeguarding of all its students as one of its critical roles through the completion of registers and insisting on first day response procedures for unexplained reasons. As parents have the key role to play in ensuring children attend school in line with government expectation, we encourage all parents to support this policy by fulfilling their legal responsibilities, through ensuring their child has good time keeping and attendance and all absences are reported timely.

Epworth Trust recognise that there can be wide and complex barriers to accessing education and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and outside agencies should work with parents and pupils to support the removal of these barriers. This means building strong and trusting relationships and working together to ensure the right support is in place. Securing good attendance is therefore not seen in isolation, the effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with the schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing.

Epworth Trust aims to raise the level of parental and teacher awareness of the importance of regular school attendance by striving for partnership between school and the community it serves. We ensure that excellent attendance and punctuality is a high priority.

We intend, with the support of this policy, to increase overall attendance percentages, reduce authorised and unauthorised absences and lateness.

The law on school attendance and right to full time education

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is a legal responsibility of every parent to ensure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. **This means their child must attend every day that the school is open**, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence, in advance, from school. This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

Direct extract from the Department for Education document published May 2022 – Working together to improve school attendance.

Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities to ensure excellent attendance

In order to ensure all schools within the Epworth Trust implement the intention of this policy they will follow government guidance regarding roles and responsibilities as below.

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends every day that the school is open.
- Follow the relevant procedures for notifying the school as soon as possible when their child is unexpectedly absent. (*See section 3.2.2 reporting absence*).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances (*see section 6*).
- Book medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- When required, work with the school and any relevant outside agencies to understand and support any barriers to attendance and proactively work with any support offered.

Schools are expected to:

- Have a clear school attendance policy.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance and punctuality, through a system of rewards.
- Accurately complete admissions and attendance registers.
- Have a robust daily process to follow up absence.
- Have dedicated staff with responsibility for championing and improving attendance (*See Key Staff Section below*).
- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with identified pupils and parents to understand and address barriers to education and their impacts on attendance.
- If required, take an active part in multi-agency efforts with Local Authorities and partners.

Academies and Governing Bodies are expected to:

- Take an active role in attendance improvement.
- Support the school to prioritise attendance.
- Work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.
- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

Key staff at Bedford Hall Methodist Primary School:

Key Staff for the implementation of policy:

Lisa Whittaker (Head of School / DSL)

Kevin Meredith (Safeguarding Governor)

Key Staff for the implementation of day to day procedures:

Karen Aspinall (Attendance Officer / Pastoral Manager / Deputy DSL)
Adrian Hewitt (Pastoral Manager / Deputy DSL)

Section 3 Operating the policy

Section 3.1 Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day and again for the afternoon session. On each occasion each pupil will receive a mark related to whether they are present in school, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. School will use the guidance provided by the government to determine which category a pupil's absence falls into.

Absence marks

Authorised absence means that one of a specific set of circumstances applies:

- Leave of absence granted by the school in exceptional circumstances only (*see section 6 of this policy*)
- Excluded where no alternative provision is made.
- Illness that would prevent your child from attending school – school **MUST** be informed of the type of illness.
- Medical or dental appointments with evidence of attendance. Book medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- Religious observations informed in advance.
- A child attends a sporting, musical, art or religious activity/exam, with prior permission from the school via completion of a 'Request for Leave of Absence' form.

Unauthorised absence is where a pupil's absence is not one of the types of absence listed as authorised or where the reasons for a pupil's absence has not been provided or cannot be established. Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Leave of absence in term time not granted by the school where the reason is not deemed exceptional i.e. Holidays
- Where no reason for absence is established.
- Where school is not satisfied that the reason given is an authorised absence.
- Arriving in school after the register closes at 9.45am i.e oversleeping
- Where no medical evidence has been provided for medical and dental appointments.
- Vague or non-specific illnesses or extended periods of illness where medical advice has not been sought
- Confusion over school dates/times
- Absence of a child when their sibling is ill
- Child or family birthdays

More than 5 days of unauthorised absence will result in a fixed penalty notice being served.

Section 3.2 Day to Day Processes

Section 3.2.1 Lateness / Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the school day. If your child is late they can miss learning time and vital information, cause disruption to the lessons and others. Being late can also cause distress to your child as they could feel awkward arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled. It is important that children establish good routines and habits in preparation for the rest of their lives. Punctuality is a life skill that they need to develop whilst they are young.

The school day begins at 8.50am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time**. Morning registration will close when the gates close at 9.00am. Pupils who arrive between 9.00am and 9.45am will receive a late mark.

If your child arrives in school late, they will need to enter via the school office to be signed in. All lateness is recorded daily. It is the parents' / carers' responsibility to ensure their child is supervised into the school office to be signed in.

Arrival after the close of the register at 9.45am, where not approved by school, will be marked as an unauthorised code U.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing unauthorised lateness is subject to legal action.

Section 3.2.2 Reporting absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of an absence is always required on each day of the absence.

To report an absence, a telephone message stipulating the precise reason for the absence and the anticipated return date must be left on the absence line of the school office on 01942 672614 ext 1 before 9:00am on the first day of absence. Where a proposed date of return is not given, the same procedure must be followed on every subsequent day of absence.

Section 3.2.3 Unexplained absences procedure from day 1

If school have not heard from you regarding your child's absence you will be contacted in the following ways.

- Phone call
- Home visit when contact is not made / there is a pattern of absence / it is part of an Early Help strategy / an absence is ongoing or persistent
- Potential police welfare check.

Section 3.4 Children Missing in Education

A child missing from Education is where a child or young person of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education. If a child has ceased to attend school, it is school's responsibility to make every effort to establish the child's whereabouts.

If the child has not been located after 10 days of absence, and contact regarding non-attendance has been unsuccessful, a Children Missing in Education form will be sent to the Local Authority.

On receipt of the Children Missing in Education forms, the tracing officer at the Local Authority will carry out further investigations such as home visits and initial checks with other agencies (children's social care, health, housing etc).

Section 3.4.1 Change of Address

Where a family have moved house within or out of the borough, your child will remain on Bedford Hall Methodist Primary School's roll until we have been informed they have started a new school. Until this time, it is expected that your child/ren will still attend Bedford Hall Methodist Primary School. If your child does not attend for 10 days and contact is unsuccessful, a Children Missing in Education form will be sent to the Local Authority.

Section 4 Attendance intervention and Working together the improve attendance.

Section 4.1 - Expect

All schools within the Epworth Education Trust aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents. Bedford Hall Methodist Primary School builds a culture where all pupils can be, and want to be, in school daily. This positive culture is celebrated in whole school assembly each week with the class with the highest attendance being awarded (school council influence rewards).

Section 4.2 – Monitoring

In order to achieve high standards of attendance, it is important that school monitor attendance to identify any patterns of absence that have become, or may become problematic.

A problematic pattern of attendance would be where a child:

- Is absent over an extended period of time.
- Has a pattern to absences, for example, absences always on the same days of the week or absences just before or after school holiday periods.
- Is not completing many full weeks of attendance and absent for odd days on a regular basis.
- Has attendance which has fallen below 94%.
- Misses 10% or more of school.

Attendance data will be monitored and used in the following ways:

- To monitor and analyse attendance patterns and trends in order to deliver intervention and support in a targeted way.
- To provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, parents and leaders (including any special educational need co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads).
- To identify pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted action.
- To benchmark attendance data against other schools and national levels to identify areas of improvement.
- To devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance individually and whole school.
- To provide data and reports to Management of the Trust.

In all cases, schools are expected to make patterns of both persistent absence (where a child's attendance falls below 90%) and severe absence a focus of their regular monitoring and identify pupils who need targeted attendance support as quickly as possible.

Section 4.2.1 Communication with parents regarding attendance.

Throughout the year, if your child's attendance becomes a concern you will receive correspondence from the Attendance / Pastoral either through a phone call or letter. This is important as early intervention reduces the risk of your child having barriers to learning.

Section 4.3 – Listen and Understand

Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic we will:

- Build positive and respectful relationships between home and school to establish any barriers to attendance the family may be experiencing.
- Discuss with parents / carers the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing.
- Discuss the negative impacts on learning with parents / carers where they may have misconceptions about what good attendance looks like.

Section 4.4 – Facilitate and Support

In the first instance where absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic: -

- We will informally offer support to pupils and parents / carers by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of school's control we will support parents / carers to access any support, they may need voluntarily.

Section 4.5 – Formalise Support

If the pattern of absence continues to intensify we will hold more formal conversations with parents / carers and work in tandem with local authority's and other relevant partners in one of the following ways:

- Creating a parent contact – This is a formal agreement between school and parent / carer to address irregular attendance. The intention of this is to provide support and offer an alternative to fixed penalty notices / prosecution. However, this can be used as evidence in a prosecution case if parents do not engage.
- Begin the process of a Voluntary Early Help Assessment / Team around the child.

Section 4.6 – Enforce

Where all avenues of support have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, and attendance is not improved, parents / carers may be guilty of an offence and legal action taken in the form of either:

- Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Prosecution – Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort, where all voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed or where support has been deemed inappropriate in the circumstances of individual cases.

Section 5 – Children with Medical conditions

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as any other pupil. In order to achieve this, additional support may be needed to help them access their full-time education.

- Making reasonable adjustments
- Putting together an individual health care plan
- Consider additional support from external partners (including the Local Authority or Health Services)
- Developing joined up pastoral care to consider return to school agreements.
- Considering additional support provided by the local authority.

Section 6 Leave of Absence

The Department for Education states that parents have no entitlement to take their children out of school for a holiday during term time. Any application for leave of absence must only be in exceptional circumstances and must be made by completing a 'Request for Leave of Absence' form (available from the school office) for Miss L Whittaker's (Head of School) attention, in advance of the leave.

If your application is denied parents may be fined by means of a Penalty Notice or Prosecution in the Magistrates Court by the Local Authority.

Relevant Government Guidance: Department for Education Working together to improve school attendance – Published May 2022