

Vision statement

BRIDGE is a family of schools committed to high performance. We embrace a universal culture of excellence in the learning communities we build.

Aims

To continue building a Multi Academy Trust that promotes strong values, an excellent education for all children, develops highly effective Academy Teams, is financially secure, and ensures effective governance.

To nurture, support and encourage aspirations by providing excellent learning opportunities, inspiring teaching environments, and a creative approach to curriculum subjects that secures engagement from all our learners resulting in high levels of academic progress and outcomes.

To develop outstanding leadership, teaching and support teams by valuing committed, reflective staff, and providing rigorous and challenging professional development for continual School Improvement.

To develop hubs as centres of learning excellence to disseminate best practice, firstly within and then beyond, the MAT.

To successfully engage and communicate with parents/carers in our local communities, supporting pupil progress, well-being and achievement.

Attendance Policy

Purpose

For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education by attending school regularly.

September 2020

Policy Version	V1.0	Next Review Date	09/21
-----------------------	-------------	-------------------------	--------------

Aims

1. Children to be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable
2. To work with parents and carers, communicating with them the importance of good attendance and punctuality
3. To achieve a Trust target of at least 96% attendance with a Persistent Absence target of under 8%

Principles and Practice:

Promote why regular attendance is so important related to learning and safeguarding. Learning: Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the parent/carers legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding:

A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, we will adhere to 'Working together to Safeguard Children' (2019): Protecting children from maltreatment. Preventing impairment of children's health or development. Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care. Taking action to enable all children have the best life chances. Failing to attend our school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Our Method:

- We follow our Trust specific guidelines as detailed in the appendices
- We work alongside the Local Authority Education Welfare Officers
- We work closely with Alternative Provisions to ensure that all children are safeguarded
- We follow the law, abiding by legislation such as 'There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday and the government made an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 to reflect this.'

Roles and Responsibilities**Bridge Schools will:**

- Provide a template policy and procedure to give a consistent approach in all the schools
- Support schools to improve attendance and punctuality
- Provide a consistent approach from the Education Welfare Officer, by reviewing progress on a termly basis

School will:

- Help to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in a regular Newsletter/Blog;
- Report to parents/carers at least termly on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Provide parents/carers with an attendance leaflet, explaining types of absence, why attendance at school is so important and possible consequences of poor attendance;

- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events;
- Telephone/text/email parents/carers on the first day of absence if they have not heard from them; and continue to keep in close communication during any absence, ensuring that all children attend school whenever possible.
- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer (usually Head of School), if the absences/lateness persist;
- May consider consulting with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if attendance moves below 95%;
- Review each requested absence on an individual basis;
- Inform parents/carers of the school attendance target.

Parents/carers will:

- Work alongside school to ensure that smooth communication occurs, resulting in maximised outcomes for every child.
- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – this must happen even if they have already telephoned school;
- Or, call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with parent/carer;
- Provide school with up to date phone numbers. Parents/carers have a duty to notify school as soon as possible of any changes to contact details;
- Contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. In line with KCSIE 2019, school requires at least 2 contacts for each child. This is nearly always successful;
- Ensure that their child is at school on time. If their child is not in school when the register is taken, they may receive a late mark. The register closes 30 minutes after the start of the school day. If a child arrives after that time, they can receive a mark that show they are on site, but will not count as a present mark- denoted as an unauthorised absence.;
- Understand that schools do not expect parents/carers to take their children on holiday in term time;
- Complete a 'leave of absence' request form at least 5 days prior to the requested leave date if needed;
- Work with school to improve the overall attendance, in line with its target.
- If an absence, including a holiday, has been refused for 5 days (10 sessions) or more, then Bridge Schools Trust may follow procedures to enforce a Penalty Notice. This refers to cases where parents/carers know their absence has been refused, but still withdraw the child/ren from school.

Flexi-Schooling:

Bridge Schools Trust is under no obligation to accommodate flexi-schooling. Some schools within the trust have previously agreed to specific cases where children attend school for part of the week combined with being educated at home. In such cases, these will continue, until the child leaves school or both parents/carers and school decide to change the arrangement.

In order to maximise the continuity of teaching, learning and safeguarding of children; Bridge Schools Trust have decided that they are unlikely to agree to any such arrangement (from September 2020). No flexi-schooling will be agreed in the EYFS (other avenues can be explored instead). Parents/carers of children in KS1 and 2 wishing for flexi-schooling to be considered, may express their interest, in writing, to the headteacher. Any such arrangement thereafter will be at the discretion of the headteacher, a formal agreed plan and timescale must be implemented. In any such arrangement, a formal agreed plan must be implemented.

Appendix A

Bridge Schools Trust Attendance Expectation in relation to a Pandemic

Rationale

In March 2020 when schools were first notified that they must close due to COVID 19, the regulations were disapplied to ensure that no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school. However, the circumstances have now changed, and the regulations have been reapplied with the expectation that all children will return to school with the legal responsibility falling to parents to ensure that their children do so. School attendance is mandatory for all children commencing the Autumn term 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

The DfE have provided guidance for schools in relation to managing Pandemic related absence and the Coding Guidance 2020/21 lays out the expectation for schools and parents in relation to coding for absence that is related to the Pandemic for the 2020/21 academic year.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf

We understand the impact that the pandemic will have had on our children, but we know that any further disruption to their school attendance will have a much longer impact on their education, wellbeing and wider development. We are assured by Public Health that the risks to children of becoming severely ill from COVID 19 is extremely low, but we appreciate that as parents the concerns for yourselves or other family members may take priority, and as such we want to ensure that support is available for you and your child to provide access to their education with minimum risk to the wider family.

Shielding advice for all adults and children has been paused as of 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

However, we accept that although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

To make sure we record this accurately and consistently, we will be adhering to the changes in the regulations governing school attendance registers to use the new category of non-attendance – 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'

This category must only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

We will only apply the COVID 19 code where parents evidence the child has met the criteria. If we do not receive evidence that the COVID 19 criteria has been met, the absence will be unauthorised and the main body of our attendance policy will apply. Of specific note:

- *parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;*
- *schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence*
- *the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct'*
- *In any suspected COVID 19 case, either child or household member, in accordance with guidance, all should self-isolate until a test has been taken. If the test is negative, the child can return to school. If the test is positive, we will require evidence and the child should then continue to self-isolate for the remainder of the period up to 14 days from when the symptoms started.*

[stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)

We will provide access to learning when a child is deemed well enough.

NB – Where a child self isolates for suspected COVID 19 for which a test is negative, but they are still too unwell to return, usual absence management will apply.

Leave of Absence

Our school understands that the unprecedented events of 2020 in relation to the Coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic may have led to families taking holidays at times they may not ordinarily have considered for a variety of pandemic related reasons.

In order for us to properly consider each request on its own merit, it will now be more important than ever to provide us with full details of the reason for the holiday request and in what regard the LOA has been adversely affected by the pandemic. Please include any additional information and/or evidence on the request form. Please ensure that you inform us and evidence if you are a front line worker, such as, but not limited to NHS, police etc who has had leave cancelled or blocked within the school holidays, which has resulted in the request for LOA in term time.

Please be advised that usual procedures will apply for LOA in term time that is not deemed by the Head Teacher to be that of exceptional circumstance. All decisions are final and there is no right to appeal.

If you decide to still take your child out of school, without permission, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer the matter to Cornwall Council who may decide to take legal action against you. A penalty notice can be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine per child, per parent of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in Court action. Persistent absences not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court, leading to fines up to £2,500 and/or custodial sentences.

The Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.