



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## BRAMHALL HIGH SCHOOL

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## Current Context

Government guidance states that ***‘central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education’.***

All schools are expected to promote excellent attendance and reduce absence (including persistent absence), ensure every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled, and act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents are expected to perform their **legal duty** by ensuring their children attend regularly and arrive to school on time.

### Definition of Parent – DFE Advice on School Attendance:

- All natural parents whether married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for the child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child or young person.

It is also important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student, that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

## National Context

Section 7, Education Act 1996 – s444 states that parents (including non-related adult carers in the child’s household) have a **legal responsibility** to ensure that those of compulsory school age are educated, either by **‘regular’** attendance at school or **‘otherwise’**. **The duty on parents is to ensure their children are educated, either at a school or ‘otherwise’**. Education is therefore compulsory. In terms of **‘otherwise’** children may be educated by their parents at home, by a private tutor or in establishments other than schools, i.e. – special units, hospitals or in alternative educational programmes or work experience. The law allows parents to choose the alternative options, provided they can demonstrate to the Local Authority that the education is full-time and **‘suitable’** to the child’s education needs, up until the relevant leaving-date for all young people.

### Principles of the Bramhall High School Attendance Policy

At Bramhall High School, we believe excellent attendance and punctuality are vital in helping students achieve their best. Students should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. All research shows that students who attend well achieve well.

The government has laid down guidelines which they expect students at secondary schools to achieve in terms of attendance. It is the expectation of the school that all students **will** achieve **at least** 95% attendance.

There are a variety of reasons for students missing school. Whilst some absences may be unavoidable, we would ask that you support us in ensuring your child's attendance meets both the school and the government's expectations. Any problems with regular attendance, such as concerns over academic support or possible bullying and so on, are best sorted out by school with the students/parents at an early stage.

We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue. Where attendance is an issue, school undertakes a wide range of measures to support students and families. Where we fail to see an improvement in attendance, it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the student receives the support required to bring about an improvement.

Our school target for attendance is 97%+. Absence results in lost learning time and, although students may endeavour to catch up missed work, it cannot replace the teacher-led learning that has taken place. Absentees also miss out on the rich programme of extra-curricular activities and events that make the school experience so enjoyable.

<b>Descriptor</b>	<b>% Attendance</b>	<b>Number of days absent</b>	<b>Lost learning hours</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	100%	0	0
	99%	2	10
<b>Good</b>	98%	4	20
	97%	6	30
<b>Cause for concern (Stage 1)</b>	96%	8	40
	95%	10	50
	94%	12	60
<b>Serious concern (Stage 2)</b>	93%	14	70
	92%	16	80
	91%	18	90
<b>Unsatisfactory: Persistent Absenteeism (Stage 3 and Stage 4)</b>	90%	20	100
<b>Serious cause for concern (Stage 5)</b>	89%	22	110
	88%	24	120
	87%	26	130

## **Our daily procedures: registration**

Under the 2006 Education Regulations the school is **legally** required to register students twice daily. Registers are marked in the morning at 8.45am and in the afternoon at 2pm. It is essential that all students are present for both registration periods. Unavoidable medical appointments should be made around these periods so your child's percentage attendance is unaffected.

Each year a school calendar is put onto the school web site. It clearly indicates the days when your child is expected to be in school. If your child tells you that school is to be closed on a day not indicated on the school calendar, please check by telephoning the school.

### **Absence from school**

If your child cannot come to school because of illness you should advise us on **each day of absence** by telephoning the **Absence Line (0161 925 6330)**. If no message is received we will assume your child is absent without your permission. We will then make every effort to contact you. It is essential the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned we may make a home visit or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' visit. Parents are asked to ensure their child brings in a letter confirming the reasons for the absence when the child returns to school.

**Once contact (verbal and/or written) has been made with the parent, the school will determine if the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised.** The school will only **authorise** a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. The school may request medical evidence if a parent rings the school to confirm the student is unwell. Medical evidence includes medical appointment card with one dated appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence. The Headteacher may not authorise medical absence without this evidence.

Where students are likely to miss more than 15 days of school, they may be entitled to educational provision from the Education of Sick Children Service. It is the school's responsibility to refer in to the service where appropriate. BHS will work in partnership with parents and health professionals to identify students entitled to this provision in line with the Education of Sick Children policy.

### **Medical Appointments**

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance so a decision can be made whether to authorise the absence or not.

We do appreciate that it is often difficult for parents/carers to obtain written confirmation of medical appointments. Parents/carers can obtain 'Medical Authorisation Cards' from The Attendance Office in school to take with them to the doctors to confirm their child has attended a medical appointment (see below). Parents /carers must ensure the card is stamped, dated and signed by the practice receptionist to confirm their child has attended a medical appointment.

**To whom it may concern**

**Bramhall High School is committed to working with students and families to improve attendance and achievement by reducing absence. Please confirm by signature and practice stamp that \_\_\_\_\_ has attended the surgery or practice today.**

**Is this condition likely to impact further on school attendance? YES / NO**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_**

**Practice name / stamp:**

School **may** authorise absence under certain specific circumstances. However, the parent must contact the child's Head of Year in advance to secure authorisation. This **may** include work related interviews and meetings with external agencies (e.g. HYMS).

School **may** also authorise events where students are involved in any supervised sporting events or trials, theatre performances and participation in acts of religious worship. Again, we would request contact is made to the child's Head of Year in advance to secure authorisation.

### **Unauthorised absence from school**

Unauthorised absence is where school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. These absences are an **offence** by the parent. Such circumstances include:

- A student not attending school due to the family returning late the previous evening from a family holiday;
- A student not attending school as they are looking after younger siblings;
- A student not attending school due to attending a hospital appointment for another family member;
- A student attending a medical appointment in the morning but then failing to return to school for afternoon lessons;
- A student not attending school as the family have gone to the airport to meet a visiting relative;
- A student not attending school to go shopping for school clothes/shoes; and,
- A student not attending school as it is her birthday or the birthday of a family member.

## Safeguarding

The school reserves the right to invite parents in to school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns, e.g. – female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, forced marriage, radicalisation etc. In addition, if the school suspects that a student may be at potential risk as a result of their absence from school, the safeguarding team reserve the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate external agencies, e.g. – Social Care, Police. The school will inform parents/carers if a referral is to be made. However, this may not be appropriate in every circumstance, depending on the nature of the safeguarding concern, and a referral may be made without informing the parent/carer.

## Children missing from school

We recognise that when a child goes missing from school it is a potential indicator of a safeguarding concern; therefore, we follow the Stockport Local Safeguarding Board procedures. The school will investigate instances of unauthorised absences and will report students with irregular attendance, or who have been continuously absent for 10 days or more, to Stockport Council. The school reserves the right to contact relevant agencies to seek advice (Children's Social Care, Police, YOS, Housing, Stockport Council etc.) if any child is absent from school for more than five days without confirmation from parents. Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents to ensure the child is safe and well, including home visits. The school will contact relevant agencies on the first day of absence without confirmation from parents/carers if the child is subject to a Child Protection plan or considered vulnerable in other ways.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from school. In such cases, examples listed below, school will take a pro-active approach:

- Students at risk of harm / neglect (school will follow standard Child Protection procedures for referrals to social care / police);
- Children of Gypsy, Roma or Traveller families (school will inform local authority when a GRT student leaves the school without identifying a new destination school);
- Families of Armed Forces (school will contact MOD Children's Education Advisory Service for advice on making arrangements for continuity of education);
- Missing children / runaways (direct referral to Children's Services and Police); and,
- Children who cease to attend a school (referral to Stockport Council).

When a student returns from a period of extended absence appropriate daily checks will be carried out and their attendance, behaviour, emotional and physical well-being will be monitored closely by staff in school. Parents / carers will be invited into school with the student to meet the child's Head of Year as part of the reintegration programme and relevant support will be offered to the student / family as necessary.

## Reluctance to go to school

Sometimes students seem anxious about leaving home to go to school. They may tell you that they feel unwell or give another reason to not attend. You may notice they are worried, perhaps about things such as their learning, their friends or about being bullied. If this is the case please contact the school as soon as possible to speak to the relevant Head of Year. School has an obligation to work with child/family to improve school attendance and address underlying anxieties/reasons for refusal.

## Home Education

Under the DFE guidance on attendance (March 2013), 'Parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full-time education but this does not have to be at a school'. If a parent wishes to withdraw a child from the school the child will be known as 'Electively Home-Educated'. Any parent wishing to withdraw their child from the school will be required to confirm this in writing to the Headteacher. The school will forward this letter to the Local Authority and the child will be removed from the register at Bramhall High School. The Local Authority will then determine whether or not to accept this new arrangement or challenge it. However, parents are unable to withdraw their child from school if they are subject to a 'School Attendance Order'. Children with Special Educational Needs (Education, Health and Care Plans) can be home educated. Where the statement sets out special educational provision that the child should receive at home, the local authority is under a duty to arrange that provision. The local authority must review the child's EHC Plan annually.

## Leave of Absence in term time

Under the DFE 'Advice on School Attendance' parents **cannot** expect schools to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday for up to 10 school days per year. The Headteacher may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances**'. For example, there may have been a bereavement in the family or other serious circumstances. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. **From this perspective, leave of absence in term time is no longer a parental right and will only be authorised at the Headteacher's discretion.** Under DFE guidelines the school may consider taking legal action against a parent/s who takes leave of absence without the Headteacher's permission and apply for an Education Penalty Notice fine to be issued by the Court Section or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority. The £60 Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full separately by both parents within 21 days and will rise to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. Failure to pay this penalty notice may result in prosecution.

If parents wish to take their child out of school during term time a Leave of Absence request form must be completed and handed in to the child's Head of Year. The form must outline the reasons for and dates of the leave of absence. Parents will then be invited into school to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the request. During the meeting a date will be agreed by which the student must return to school after the leave of absence. If the school does authorise a 'Leave of Absence' an Education Penalty Notice fine may be issued to parents if the student does not return to school by this agreed date.

In addition, if the student does not return within 14 days of the agreed return date the school has the right to remove the student from the school register without parental consent. **This would mean the student would lose their place at school.** It is also important for parents to note that the student may also be removed from the school register if the parent decides to remove the student from the country for an extended period of time (more than six weeks).

**It is important for parents / carers to note that the school will not authorise ANY leave of absence unless the Headteacher feels the circumstances are unavoidable.**

Additionally, as previously outlined in the policy, the school reserves the right to either contact the parents / carers directly or make an immediate referral to social care or the police if it is felt the student is potentially at risk. This is particularly relevant to concerns the school may have about sexual exploitation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and radicalisation. The school will seek advice from the local authority if a student fails to return from an extended family holiday during term time and the school and local authority have made reasonable enquiries but cannot locate the student. This applies to leaves of absence that are both authorised and unauthorised by the school.

## **Persistent absenteeism**

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of students whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. Students with attendance below 90% may fall into the 'Persistent Absentee' category. This is particularly relevant if any of the child's absences are unauthorised.

According to the DFE guidance (March 2013); 'If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority'. In addition 'Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996)'.

When a student's attendance falls below 90% (at any stage of the year) a referral will be made to Stockport Council who may carry out home visits when the student is absent and may put a Parent Contract in place. The school attempts to minimise persistent absenteeism by following a series of stages triggered by falling attendance:



**Stage 1**

<97% a Stage 1 letter may be sent. This letter highlights the student's current % attendance and informs parents/carers of the impact of this.

**Stage 2**

Still falling <95% a Stage 2 letter may be sent. This letter states that absence as a result of illness will not be authorised unless medical evidence is provided.

**Stage 3**

Where unauthorised absence continues, the parent/carer will be invited into school to discuss barriers to attending and the impact the absence has had on the student's learning and academic progress. An attendance action plan will be formalised to secure an improvement in attendance. An Education Penalty Notice (EPN) may be issued.

**Stage 4**

Where a student is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee (P.A), parents/carers will be invited in for a P.A meeting with members of the Senior Leadership Team. School governors may also be present. An EPN may also be issued.

**Stage 5**

P.A students will be referred to Stockport Council. The implementation of a Parent Contract may be considered. A Parent Contract is a voluntary agreement between Stockport Council and the parent, and will contain improvement targets with set timescales and an overview of the support provided by the school to support the student/family. Parental failure to comply with the contract may be used as evidence if the Local Authority decides to prosecute parents.

Under the 1989 Children Act the Local Authority has the power to issue an **Education Supervision Order** (ESO) and place a child under their supervision on the grounds that the child is not being 'properly educated' and is in danger of 'significant harm'. The Local Authority can issue an order if the child is persistently absent from school. The Local Authority appointed 'Supervisor' can give 'directions' to the parents on how the child should be educated and work with the parent to ensure the child attends school regularly. The Local Authority may use an ESO as an interim measure before moving directly to prosecution.

Under the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act, if a student continues to have attendance issues after a parent has been convicted, the courts can also issue a **Parenting Order**. This legally requires the parents to participate in a programme of parenting support and counselling. If unauthorised absence continues, a new case will be brought against the parent/s but previous parental failure to engage with the school and local authority can be cited.

**Snow closure /adverse weather conditions**

As a school we will only close in the event of snow if we feel it to be necessary to ensure the safety of all members of our school community. If we do close then messages will be posted on the school web site as early as is possible. The following radio station will also be contacted by the school in the event of closure and will broadcast information on air and through its web sites: **Hits Radio, Manchester.**

## Punctuality

The 1996 Education Act requires that every student should attend school and be on time. It is better to be late than not to be in school at all **BUT**, when students arrive late it makes it difficult for everyone. The teacher has to stop and wait for the latecomer to settle down, the rest of the class is disrupted and the latecomer misses the, often vital, first part of the lesson. The late student will also receive an after school detention as a consequence.

Latecomers should arrive via main reception. **It is important to note that any student who arrives to school after 9.15 will be marked with a letter 'U' in the register. This means that, despite being in school, they will be marked absent from school for the morning session. It will be recorded on the register as an unauthorised absence.** If you are aware your child will be arriving late, please send in a note explaining the circumstances or contact the school by telephone, e.g. unplanned appointment at the doctors.

Young people form habits very readily and the habit of regular and punctual attendance at school will stand them in good stead. It will be entered onto their leavers' testimonials and will certainly impress both colleges and prospective employers. When students are applying for jobs / further education or other placements their attendance and punctuality will form part of the reference. This will have a direct impact upon their success.

Students will receive a 20 minute detention for arriving late. Repeated lateness will result in the student being placed on Core Tutor report. Our senior staff and Stockport Council school-linked worker may also meet with the student and their parents / carers where lateness persists.

## Incentives

Students are rewarded for excellent attendance in many different ways. Attendance of individuals is celebrated in regular reward assemblies. Year group attendance is also celebrated in assemblies and is displayed around school. Students with the most improved attendance rates are also rewarded as a further incentive.

## Improving attendance

### PARENTS WILL:

- 1.** Telephone the Absence Line, preferably before 8am, on **EACH day of absence**. Leave a message with: child's name and form group, reason for absence, your name and telephone number.
- 2.** Inform our Attendance Officer of any planned medical absences in advance. **Ask your child to collect a Medical Authorisation Card in advance. Have this card stamped and signed at your GP's reception. Return the card to school.**
- 3.** Try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time. Obviously, this may not always be possible so, in such cases, try to secure an appointment outside the legal registration periods: session 1 - 8.45-9.15am, session 2 – 2pm.
- 4.** Submit all requests for leave (even for partial days and for visits to Post 16 provision) on a Leave of Absence form and submit this to your child's Head of Year in advance. Leave of absence during term time is not a parental right. The Headteacher will make a decision whether to authorise the absence.
- 5.** Encourage your child to take responsibility for being on time for school. Try to make sure s/he has an alarm clock that is reliable. Make sure s/he has a realistic bedtime and will not be too tired to get up in the morning for school. Bags, books and other equipment should be prepared the night before. Regularly checking your child's timetable can help you to do this.
- 6.** Discourage your child from staying overnight with friends during the week. This sometimes leads to them both being late (or not attending at all) the next day.
- 7.** Check with your child's Head of Year if you have any concerns about whether your child is present in school.
- 8.** Encourage your child to come to school even if s/he is feeling slightly unwell. Many aches and pains are forgotten when they are with friends and the school will contact you if it becomes necessary.
- 9.** Take any worries seriously but do not show that you are unduly concerned. Believe that they will be sorted out. Contact your child's Head of Year or Core Tutor before the concerns escalate.

## Improving attendance

### SCHOOL WILL:

1. Mark the registers in accordance with the law.
2. Inform any parents / carers who have not contacted the school, of the absence of their child on a particular day.
3. Maintain records and monitors attendance of students on a regular basis.
4. Authorise absences in accordance with the government guidelines. Please note that **only** the school can authorise absence.
5. Contact parents / carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and / or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
6. Provide access to staff with whom attendance related issues can be discussed.
7. Work with external agencies to maintain good attendance and to support the student / family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality to school.
8. Work with relevant external agencies if a students' attendance becomes a concern.
9. Maintain a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
10. Provide reintegration support for students returning from absence.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Whole school attendance data will be produced on a monthly basis.  
Progress towards targets will be reviewed at the end of the academic year.

## Key Roles

Headteacher  
Attendance Officer  
Heads of Year  
Designated Safeguarding Lead/Attendance Lead  
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Agreed:

Review date: September, annually.

Senior member of staff responsible

- Ms Janet Kennedy