The Blue Kite Academy Trust

Title of Policy/Procedure	Attendance Policy
Reviewer(s):	Dani Tomkins - Education Welfare Officer
To be read in conjunction with the following policies:	Safeguarding and Child Protection
Consultation Process	Gary Evans - CEO Emma Brown – Director of Education
Policy Date:	September 2026
Review Date:	May 2027
This policy has been ratified by:	Education, Standards and Strategy Committee

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ATTENDANCE

INTRODUCTION

We want all the children at Even Swindon Primary School to succeed and to achieve their full potential. For the children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly. Your child should be here on time every day our school is open, unless the reason for their absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly, and this policy sets out how we will achieve this in partnership.

The Senior Attendance Champion responsible for monitoring and reviewing attendance in our school is:

Name: Rachael Smith
Tel: 01793 523041
Email: head@evenswindon.bluekitetrust.org

If your child is absent on a day they are expected to attend, parents must contact the school office to notify them by 8.30am.

Tel: 01793 5230412 and leave a message on the absence line or
Email: admin@evenswindon.bluekitetrust.org

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) for our school is:

Name: Dani Tomkins
Tel: 07851195210
Email: dtomkins@bluekitetrust.org

Our Single Point of Contact (SPOC) from the local authority's Attendance & Inclusion Service is:

Name: Melissa Middlemass
Email: mmiddlemass@swindon.gov.uk

WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS SO IMPORTANT

The impact that poor attendance has upon a child's achievement is irrefutable. Poor attendance habits in a child's early stage of education follow through into secondary school and employment. Children's absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of your child and other children in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school

is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law. This may result in prosecution.

Regular attendance at school is essential for the effective education of all children; there is a clear link between good attendance and good progress. It is important that a high level of attendance is maintained. This is one of the ways in which we can continue to 'strive for the best' for every child.

REGULATIONS

Parents / carers of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act (1996) to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis; children reach statutory school age the term after their fifth birthday.

Children are required to attend school for 190/365 days per year. (In very exceptional circumstances, a temporary part-time timetable can be agreed to meet a pupil's individual needs.)

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, children and all members of school staff. To help us make sure that this happens, we will:

- inform you if your child's attendance or punctuality falls below the acceptable level.
- notify you about your child's attendance in his/her end of year report.
- ensure our curriculum is appropriate to the age and stage of the child and children are supported in school.
- regularly monitor punctuality.

Good attendance is expected and encouraged. Rewards for highest attendance are not given because we ask that children who are sick remain at home until they have been clear of sickness/diarrhoea for a full 24 hours (and in some instances 48 hours if it is Gastroenteritis). However, celebration for *improvements* in attendance is given on a class, year group or individual level.

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ATTENDANCE

School registers are completed, by law, every morning and afternoon. Each half day that your child is absent from school must be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. For this reason, we always need information about the cause of any absence so that we make the right decision.

Authorised Absence
Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a very good reason. These types of absence include: illness, emergency medical/dental appointments, visits to prospective secondary schools or family-related emergencies.

Unauthorised Absence
Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no agreement in advance of the absence has been given. This type of absence can lead to the local authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. These types of absence include:

- parents/carers keeping children away from school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark in the morning/afternoon register
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time
- visits to family which could take place during school holidays
- excessive illness without medical evidence
- attending a political protest
- illnesses which do not require children to stay at home / common illnesses which aren't contagious.

If your child is reluctant to attend school, it is always best to speak to us as soon as possible so that we can support your child. Covering up their absence or giving in to pressure to excuse them from attending gives them the impression that attendance does not matter.

Where a pupil reaches the threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-week period, the school will consider national guidance as to whether a Penalty Notice is appropriate in individual circumstances.

PARENTAL SUPPORT
You can support your child by:

- ensuring regular and early bedtimes
- following a routine
- limiting screen time before bed and in the mornings
- preparing uniform the night before
- sharing a healthy breakfast
- reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- communicating openly and honestly with a member of our staff team
- being positive about school

- if necessary, creating a star/reward chart that helps them to make good choices.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Clear communication between parents and school is essential in helping us to understand how we can support your child in accessing their right to a full-time education. We encourage all parents to contact us as early as possible if you have any worries regarding your child attending school. Early intervention is key to preventing worries and difficulties becoming more challenging.

Likewise, we will inform you regularly of your child's attendance rate. Conversations around attendance are part of daily life at school, starting with the class teacher and/or the school office, and including more senior members of staff where appropriate.

Our attendance policy is available to read on our website. Reminders about holidays in term time, absence due to illness and term dates are published in monthly newsletters.

The Blue Kite Academy Trust schools publish term dates in advance, which can be found on our school website. Please note our term dates may differ from those set out by local councils. The Blue Kite Academy Trust selects one Trust wide development day and the school selects an additional 5 days for training, called Teacher Development Days, totalling 6 training days. The school notifies families of term dates and the training days during terms 5 or 6 of the preceding academic year. Regular reminders of term dates, TD days and the importance of regular attendance are given via school newsletters.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance falls below 90%.

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Missing 10% of the school year is the equivalent to missing at least half a day per week.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark - or is at risk of moving towards that mark - is given priority and you will be informed of this promptly. Parents may be invited to attend an informal meeting/conversation to discuss patterns of absence early on to prevent them from becoming worse. We will always do our best to work with you and may be able to offer support such as breakfast

clubs, regular check-ins with pupils and referrals to other services where required.

If a child has not been at school and no contact has been made with parents, then a home visit by the Head Teacher and/or Education Welfare Officer (EWO) may be carried out, particularly if there are any additional safeguarding concerns. Persistent absence will also be monitored by our Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Children who have an attendance rate of less than 90% or children who have developed a pattern of persistent lateness - defined as 10 unauthorised absences due to lateness in any rolling 10-week period – are classed as persistent absentees.

Children classed as persistent absentees will be tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. The children and their families will be required to attend a meeting with a member of the senior leadership team and/or the EWO to devise an action plan to improve the child's attendance. The plan may include individual incentive programmes or participation in group activities around raising attendance.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

If your child will be absent unexpectedly, you must always:

- contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence to notify us of the reason for your child's absence
- contact us on each subsequent day of absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- email or call you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- invite you to a meeting with the Senior Attendance Champion or Head Teacher to discuss your situation if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if attendance drops below 90% for reasons other than illness. (Support from the EWO may be sought earlier and will be considered on a case-by-case basis).
- initiate and review an Attendance Action Plan, or offer an Early Help Conversation/Assessment
- issue a formal Notice to Improve where absences persist despite the offer of support
- closely monitor attendance of all children with a social worker, or who have been known to social care services within the last six years
- refer matters of severe absence (below 50%) to the local authority's Attendance & Inclusion Service for more formal proceedings

REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Illness

- Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide the reason for the absence and to give an update on each subsequent day of absence.
- In the case of gastric illnesses, parents are asked to keep their child away from school until they have been clear of sickness/ diarrhoea for at least 24 hours and often the full 48 hours if it is Gastroenteritis.
- Parents are encouraged to communicate with school regarding matters of mental ill-health. The school will make use of inclusion services, school nursing services and mental health support teams where they are available.
- If there are significant concerns about a child's attendance through persistent illness then the school reserves the right to request medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. This is to better understand the needs of the child and identify the most suitable provision where reasonable adjustments or support may be needed.
- If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.
- The school must notify the local authority of pupils who may be absent for 15 days or more because of sickness.

Medical Appointments

Parents have been advised to book medical appointments outside of school hours where possible. If an appointment is unavoidable, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. We ask parents to provide proof of all medical appointments to ensure the authorisation of the pupil's absence from school.

Other Absences

Other requests for absence from school will be considered on an individual basis and a decision will be made as to whether the absence can be authorised and which absence code is appropriate. A request for absence form, available from the school office, should be completed. Other absences which may be authorised, in cases where the school is notified in advance by the parent/ carer, include:

- Days for religious observance
- External examinations e.g. music

- Educational events e.g. swimming in a gala
- Mobile Traveller pupils travelling for their parent's occupational purposes
- Child performers
- Visiting a new school
- Significant family events such as a funeral of a close family member

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that leave has been granted before taking a child out of school.

EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE

Exceptional leave is a national term that is used for a request to authorise your child's absence from school in cases such as to attend a wedding/funeral or visit a sick relative.

There is no entitlement for the school to agree your child's absence from school per academic year and the right for your child to be granted exceptional leave cannot be earned through good attendance. The 1996 Education Act, Section 444 states that parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly and punctually.

In an academic year, the terms are planned so that there are 190 teaching days in total. This leaves 13 weeks (Monday to Friday) and 52 weekends (Saturday to Sunday) where leave can be taken with no interruption to the teaching and learning for your child.

Exceptional leave is only granted in extenuating circumstances at the discretion of the Head Teacher, in line with current Department for Education guidance.

Parents or carers must complete a leave of absence request form, in advance, outlining the specific reasons for the request. Each application will be considered individually by the Head Teacher, taking into account the nature of the request, the child's overall attendance, and any potential impact on their education. Exceptional circumstances may include, but are not limited to, bereavement, religious observance, or a significant family event. Family holidays, regardless of timing or cost, are not considered exceptional and will not be authorised. Unauthorised absences may result in a penalty notice being issued in accordance with local authority procedures.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer considered an exceptional circumstance for granting leave during term time. Therefore, parents should not expect leave to be authorised for reasons related to COVID-19.

If a child becomes unwell while on an unauthorised holiday, the absence will still be recorded as unauthorised and will not be retrospectively authorised due to illness occurring during the period of leave.

Where a leave request is not authorised, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the register; each day will record two sessions of absence.

Schools keep strict records of requests for exceptional leave in term time across all year groups and log the dates and reasons for each request. Patterns of absence over previous years are carefully scrutinized.

If you wish to apply for a period of exceptional leave, you must do so by completing a request for absence form from the school office, explaining the reasons for your request. You will be informed of the decision in due course.

Where the leave is unauthorised the letter will explain the implications if the leave is taken anyway with the possibility of the parent/carer being issued with a Penalty Notice by the local authority's Attendance & Inclusion Service.

Where leave is authorised, the Head Teacher will notify you in writing of the decision and will confirm the number of days which have been authorised.

Details of the child and parent/carer who take unauthorised exceptional leave can be notified to the Attendance & Inclusion Team within the local authority who may issue a Penalty Notice of £80 (rising to £160 if not paid within 21 days) per child per parent/carer. An attendance panel may also be convened. In the result of a second period of unauthorised leave, a Penalty Notice of £160 may be requested with no option to pay an early reduced fee. Three periods of unauthorised leave within a 3-year period is likely to result in summonses to the Magistrates Court for prosecution, which may result in a criminal record.

In exceptional circumstances, and with agreement from the local authority, the school reserves the right to delete a pupil from the admissions register where they have not returned following a leave of absence or have been continually absent for 20 days or more, even if they have been located and their circumstances discovered.

THE EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER (EWO)

If a child has poor attendance, parents/carers are expected to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) for further advice and support. Our school has an allocated EWO who is employed by The Blue Kite Academy

Trust as part of the Lighthouse Early Intervention Team. Support from the EWO will be tailored to each child's/family's situation and may include visits to the home, facilitating meetings between parents and the school, direct work with the child, or a combination of all three. The EWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the case can be referred to the local authority's Attendance & Inclusion Service for further investigation.

''If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.''

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. The EWO is employed by the Trust and is therefore independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

LATENESS

We recognize that there may be extenuating circumstances which means a child is unavoidably late to school. These will be exceptional circumstances rather than the norm.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they will miss valuable learning opportunities and experiences. They will miss the class welcome and vital information about the day. Children who arrive late also disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage further absence.

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 8.45am when the register is taken, and we expect your child to be at school ready to join their class by that time.
- The gates are open from 8.35am and are locked by 8.45am; entry to the school after this time will be through the main school office. Each day, at 9.15am the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after the register has been taken but before 9.15am, they will receive a late recorded (L). If your child arrives after 9.15am when the register is officially closed, they will receive an unauthorised absence mark (U), which equates to a half day's absence.
- 10 sessions of lateness after the register closes within a rolling 10-week period may result in a Penalty Notice being issued

CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

We understand that children absent from education may be at risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation, and we work together to help prevent the risks of their going missing in the future. We follow

procedures set out in the DfE guidelines *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* and understand the school's responsibilities set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.

We fulfil our duty to inform the local authority of any pupil who has been admitted to another school and is going to be deleted from our admission register, who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent for a period of 10 school days or more.

If a Looked After Child or a child subject to a Child Protection Plan goes missing, we will refer them to the local authority's children's safeguarding team within 48 hours.

We also consider making a referral for any children being withdrawn from school with the intent to be electively home educated where there are safeguarding concerns.

We recognise that 'Child missing from education' and 'Child missing from home or care' have been added to the list of specific safeguarding issues schools must be vigilant about.

MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE

- Internal monitoring will take place weekly, and attendance data will be analysed termly (six times a year) to identify patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with: unusual patterns of absence, Monday and/or Friday absences, lateness, periods of extended absence, unauthorised absences, persistent absence.
- The circumstances of all children with attendance below 95% will be considered.
- Children with attendance below 90% may be discussed with either the EWO or Lighthouse team as part of our on-going partnership working – this will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- In cases of Persistent Absence, senior staff will monitor children on a daily basis.
- Schools will meet with their allocated Single Point of Contact from the local authority's Attendance and Inclusion Service three times per year to review statutory processes and discuss pupils with attendance below 90%.
- The school will upload daily attendance figures to the Department for Education. This data will not include identifying features of individual pupils.

Attendance Monitoring 3 stage process

In order to ensure parents are aware of any cumulative absence which is becoming concerning, school will operate a 3-stage process for informing families.

- Stage 1 – when attendance is below 95%. An end of term communication will be sent to make parents aware that their child's attendance is below that expected. This may be in the form of an email, text, ClassDojo, or letter. School will monitor attendance over the next term to ensure that attendance is improved.
- Stage 2 – when attendance is below 92%. An end of term letter will be sent to warn parents that their child's attendance is nearing Persistent Absence and to offer support to help improve this. Medical evidence may be requested for any future absences.
- Stage 3 – when attendance is below 90%. A letter will be sent to invite parents to a meeting to discuss how to improve attendance. During this meeting, minutes will be taken and actions for home and for school agreed. At this point, a period of 6 weeks will be given to demonstrate improvement. If no improvement is seen, there may be a resultant referral to the EWO for further intervention. Earlier intervention from the EWO may be required and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. A notice to improve may be issued where attendance remains a concern despite support being offered.

Throughout this process, school will look at additional support we can offer (e.g. family support, reward charts, referrals to other services) and we will ensure parents understand the impact and possible consequences of further absence. Parents may be contacted at any point throughout the term if attendance becomes a concern.

SUMMARY

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance.

School attendance data must be available to the Department for Education and will be uploaded daily for statistical purposes and to identify patterns and trends.

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. We expect all members of our school community to be absolutely committed to working together to ensure that attendance is the best it can be.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBLITIES

The following people have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

Governors

- To set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy.

Senior Attendance Champion

- To monitor individual pupil, group and whole school attendance and punctuality.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of policy and practice.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to agree annual attendance targets.
- To communicate with parents/carers regarding significant concerns about their child's attendance.
- To arrange meetings with parents/carers whose children have poor attendance to discuss support and set attendance targets.
- To work in partnership with outside agencies, as appropriate, when attendance and/or punctuality is an issue.

Class Teacher

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class.
- To record the reasons for absence given to them on the appropriate recording sheet.
- To communicate with parents regarding their child's absences.
- To raise any concerns about a child's absence with admin staff or the Head Teacher.
- To respond promptly to any query raised following analysis of registers by admin staff.
- To organise work to be sent home for children in their class who are expected to be absent for an extended period through sickness.

Attendance Officer / Admin Staff

- To input attendance data using the Attendance Manager System.
- To monitor and track attendance patterns for all children and prepare relevant attendance reports for the Head Teacher and Education Welfare Officer as appropriate.
- To contact any parent who has not informed the school as to why their child is absent on the first day of absence.
- To ensure that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child at the end of each week.

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

- Following a referral from the school, to work with families to improve pupils' attendance rates.
- Where appropriate, to directly support individual children in overcoming barriers to attendance, either on a 1-1 basis or in small groups.
- To offer impartial advice to parents upon request.
- To facilitate meetings with parents and the school around improving pupils' attendance.
- To support the school in securing good attendance through regular contact and monitoring individual pupil's attendance.
- To meet with the local authority's Attendance and Inclusion Service to ensure collaborative working.

Legal Lead for Attendance (local authority)
To enforce the law regarding school attendance.

Medical personnel
Specialist staff and the school nurse may be involved in ensuring the best possible attendance by a child with a severe medical condition. A 'Care Plan' is likely to be needed and on-going communication between the family, school and appropriate medical personnel is essential.

ADMINISTRATION
The school uses the IT based Attendance Manager to store and monitor data in relationship to attendance.

Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Registers are returned to the School Office after the closure of the registration period. Children who arrive at school after registration has closed are recorded as 'U' and this is classified as an unauthorised absence.

Children who arrive late before registration closes are recorded as 'L'. This is not classed as an absence.

Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Failure to complete a register accurately leaves the school vulnerable to complaint from parents or carers and creates a risk if an emergency evacuation has to take place. All registers are completed electronically and records kept for six years.