

# Attendance Policy

## Policy Data Sheet

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| <b>Document Reference:</b>                    | BLSMAT004          |
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## 1. Introduction

Big Life Schools (BLS) recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to pupils realising their full. Pupils should enjoy learning, experience success and realise their full potential. BLS

BLS believes that attendance and punctuality is a whole school community responsibility. This policy sets out our commitment to meeting obligations with regards to school attendance and those laid out by the Department for Education (DFE) in addition to:

- Promoting children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled (Article 28).
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.
- Raise pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Build strong relationships with families to support pupils to attend school. Provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers, pupils and staff

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school 100% of the time. We recognise there are times when attendance is not possible, and these are identified as exceptional mitigating circumstances and may include the following.

- They are medically unfit to attend school. If they are unwell, we expect medical evidence to be provided.
- Sudden family bereavement.

This attendance policy should be viewed with other policies referenced in section 15, below.

## 2. Legal Framework

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance (effective from 19th August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures.

The guidance is based on the following legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

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- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School Census Guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

### 3. Role and responsibilities

Big Life Schools Trust Board are responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across policies and procedures and the school ethos.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data and offer CPD to relevant leaders focusing on cohorts and subgroups.
- Making sure the schools attendance management system is delivered effectively.
- Continue to hold high aspirations for all pupils adapting where required to meet individual pupil needs.

The Local Governing Committee

- The LGC is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school every term.
- Holds the Headteacher and senior leaders to account for the implementation of the attendance policy.

The Headteacher

- The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the LGC.
- The Headteacher supports all staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and requests penalty notices, where necessary.
- Ensuring effective communication between statutory agencies and their families where pupils have an identified SEND where barriers to attendance are related to their needs.

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## Attendance Team

- The Attendance Team meet weekly, to monitor and review attendance across the school – for individual pupils, vulnerable groups and the whole school.
- During their meetings, the Attendance Team will identify pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern and put attendance interventions in place as necessary.
- Depending on the level of concern, the Attendance Team will involve class teachers and other relevant staff and coordinate meetings with parents/carers.
- Where considered necessary a formal action plan will be produced.

## Family Support Worker

- The Family Support Worker (FSW) will focus on safeguarding and how attendance links to wider safeguarding concerns.
- As Deputy DSL, the FSW will take any attendance concerns to the school's half termly Safeguarding Team meetings.
- The FSW will be the point of contact for parents/carer who have their own concerns about their child's attendance and will meet with parents/carers as and when necessary, share attendance concerns and draw up attendance plans or contracts as necessary.
- The FSW will also liaise with external agencies and make referrals as required.

## Class Teachers

- Class teachers are responsible for recording their pupils' attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information onto the school's management information system (Arbor).
- Where there are attendance concerns, either raised by the class teachers themselves or by the Attendance Team, they will 'check-in' with the pupil to find out about any reasons for absence as part of their responsibilities under the Trust's Safeguarding Policy.
- Class teachers will also be asked to join the FSW to meet with parents/carers whose child has a falling level of attendance and is flagged as a concern by the Attendance Team, to support the set-up of an attendance plan.

## Office/Admin staff

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the [head of year/pastoral lead] to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

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#### 4. Effects of non-attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning.

The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason. The DfE defines a pupil as a ‘severe absentee’ when they miss 50% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason.

The table below indicates how what might seem like just a few days of absence can result in children missing a significant number of lessons.

| Attendance during school year | Days lost in a year | Which is approximately |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 95%                           | 9.5 Days            | 2 Weeks                |
| 90%                           | 19 Days             | 4 Weeks                |
| 50%                           | 95 Days             | 20 Weeks               |

#### 5. Safeguarding and Attendance

The school will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of its standard procedures. However, it is recognised that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil’s attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues.

In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, Local Procedures and the School’s Safeguarding Policy, staff will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities.

As part of the school’s safeguarding duty and standard procedures, staff will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when they cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil’s welfare.

If a pupil is not attending as required, where the school deems it appropriate, staff may make home visits to see and speak to the pupil and parents/carers as part of the school’s safeguarding and attendance processes.

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If staff are unable to see and speak to the pupil and parents/carers, they may contact the pupil's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family, who they reasonably expect may be able to provide the school with relevant information.

## **6. Understanding types of absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

Other authorised circumstances: This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

**Illness:** In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised.

- The school will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily, however if a child has been off for more than three days with an illness then school may ask the parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence.
- In some instances, the school may ask the parent/carer to obtain a letter from a GP or seek parental permission to contact the pupil's GP directly.
- If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require suitable evidence to authorise any future absence where illness has been given as the reason. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/carer/s aware of this expectation in advance.
- The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent/carer. Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the parent/carer on the first and any subsequent days of absence may not be authorised.

## **Pupils taken ill during the school day**

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- If a pupil needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with a member of the Attendance Team or SLT.

### **Medical/Dental Appointments**

- Parents/carers should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during the school day are unavoidable, the pupil should only be absent for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a pupil to miss a whole day for an appointment, unless necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.
- The school recognises that pupils with a health condition may have a higher number of medical appointments than other pupils and it is therefore possible that at least some of these appointments may be during the school day.
- Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it is an emergency appointment. Parents/carers should also provide the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter.

### **Religious Observance**

- The school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that religious festivals sometimes fall outside of school holidays or weekends.
- In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/carer belongs – this will be marked with the R code.
- In line with the DfE school attendance guidance, if necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent/carer's religious body, about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.
- Parents/carers should notify the school in advance that their child will be absent for religious observance, so that the school knows whether to expect the pupil into school or not.
- If a parent/carer would like their child to be absent for an additional day, around a religious observance, they should contact the school.
  - The school will consider each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.
  - If additional absence is authorised, this would be marked with the C code.
- The school will ensure a pupil is not penalised for absence due to days of Religious Observance, for example if using attendance rewards.

Unauthorised Absence: is where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for the absence, or where no reason has been provided. Unauthorised absences

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may result in Legal Sanctions, usually Penalty Notices or Prosecutions. See 'Penalty Notices and Prosecutions' section for more information.

Unauthorised absence includes (but is not limited to) absences due to:

- Reasons which have never been properly explained to the school
- Arriving at the school after the register has closed.
- Parent/carer's or sibling's illness (unless very exceptional circumstances apply and have been agreed in writing by the school).
- Holidays in term time (unless exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing).

Where the school has cause for concern about the actual reason for a pupil's absence, staff may seek additional information or evidence from parents/carers regarding the absence, and/or make a home visit to verify the reason.

If the reason cannot be verified and the school has cause to believe the reason given for absence may not be genuine, parents/carers may be asked to provide satisfactory proof of the reason before the school authorises the absence. If satisfactory proof is not provided, the school may record the absence as unauthorised.

## **7. Present at School (and Lateness)**

Pupils are marked present if they are in the school when the register is taken. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration, they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

- Our pupils must arrive by **8.35am** on each school day.
- Pupils arriving after **8:35am** will be marked as late (L) – which still counts as present.
- If a pupil arrives after the close of registration at **9:00am**, they will be marked with the unauthorised absence code 'Late after registers close' (U) for the morning session.
- If a pupil arrives late after the registers close due to a valid reason, such as an unavoidable medical appointment, their absence will be marked with the appropriate authorised absence code.

It is the duty of parents/carers to ensure that children attend school on time. However, it is also recognised that pupils are sometimes late due to reasons such as caring for parents/carers or siblings, or transport difficulties.

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If a pupil starts arriving late to the school on a regular basis, the school will work with the pupil and family to find out why the pupil is late and whether any support is needed for the pupil or family, to support the pupil to attend on time.

The Family Support Worker will meet with parents/carers of pupils who are frequently late, to further investigate reasons for lateness and discuss solutions to enable more punctual attendance.

## **8. Absence Reporting and Response**

### **First Day of Absence Reporting**

- Parents/carers are expected to notify the school of the reason for their child's absence on each day of absence.
  - If a pupil is absent due to illness which lasts more than one day, the parent/carer should contact the school each day to provide an update, unless otherwise agreed by the school.
- If a pupil is absent due to illness or any other reason, parents/carers should notify the school of the absence as early as possible. This should be before 8.30am on the day of absence and include the specific reason ('unwell' is not sufficient).
- Parents/carers can notify the school by phone. There is an answerphone service, for parents to leave a message detailing the reason of the absence. If necessary, a member of school staff will follow up on this with a phone call.
- Parents/carers can also notify the school by personal visit to the School Office.
- The school may contact parents/carers to discuss a pupil's absence in more detail.

### **First Day of Absence Response**

- If no contact has been made with the school by **8.35am** on the first day of absence, the school office will follow up the absence by phoning the parents/carers.
- If the parents/carers cannot be contacted by phone, the school will phone the pupil's emergency contacts, in priority order. Parents/carers will be asked to supply details of at least two other adults who can be contacted in an emergency. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to keep these contact details up to date by communicating with the school office.
- Priority will be given where there is additional support in place, or where pupils are considered more vulnerable. e.g. Children in Care; children on Child in Need or Child Protection Plans; children who have previously been reported missing; and children where there are, or have been, concerns regarding attendance.

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- If the school is unable to establish why the pupil is absent and/or is concerned for the welfare of the pupil, staff may do a home visit that day or request a Welfare Check from the police.

### **Pre-agreed absence**

Parents/carers are not required to contact the school on the day of an absence if the parent/carer has already formally notified the school prior to the day of absence and the absence has been agreed in advance. For example, a planned hospital appointment or an exceptional term time leave of absence which has already been agreed by the Headteacher in writing.

## **9. Following up Unexplained Absences**

The school will follow up any absences where the parent/carer has not made contact to explain the reason.

Following up on unexplained absences can take up a considerable amount of school resources, therefore, the school expects parents/carers to report all absences.

If a parent/carer does not contact the school on the morning of each absence, the absence may not be authorised, unless the school is satisfied there is a good reason why the pupil is unable to attend and why the parent/carer was not able to contact the school by the required time on the day of absence.

When the school establishes the reason for the absence, it will be marked as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason.

If the school is unable to establish the reason for absence, having followed the school's attendance procedures, the absence will be marked as unauthorised, using the O code.

If a pupil is not attending and the school is unable to establish the reason why and/or confirm the pupil's whereabouts, the school will take appropriate action which will depend on the circumstances of each case.

## **10. Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance**

The school recognises that rewarding good and improved attendance should be carefully considered in order to ensure it does not make pupils who have poor attendance, feel marginalised, worried or guilty about their low attendance rate; its impact on the pupil's own learning or the learning or rewards for the class as a whole.

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The school will regularly review any reward systems to ensure they are not negatively impacting on individual pupils or groups of pupils.

## **11. Support for School Attendance**

Communicating with parents/carers where attendance is a concern

- When the school has concerns about the attendance of a pupil, staff contact parents/carers aware of the concerns about their child's and arrange a meeting to discuss this.
- The school's aim is to work in partnership with parents and carers to remove barriers to good school attendance.
- Staff strive to establish good working relationships with the families of our pupils through good communication and regular meetings to address on-going attendance concerns. If necessary, staff signpost our families to specialist support services who can work with the family and school in a multi-agency approach.

## **12. Attendance plans**

The Family Support Worker will meet with parents/ carers of children who need support to improve their attendance.

- Teaching staff will join this process, to put a plan together that supports both the parent and pupil.
- The child will be tracked at a weekly attendance meeting, to see the impact of the support.
- A review of the process will take place every four weeks, until it is felt that the pupil's attendance is no longer an issue.
- If this level of support does not help to improve attendance, then more formal support will be taken. This could include a meeting with a school governor or support from Manchester City Council attendance team.

## **13. Leave of Absence – leave requests and sanctions for unauthorised absence**

The law does not grant parents/carers the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time for holidays or other absence such as trips and visits.

The school will not authorise any leave of absence in term-time unless satisfied the reason for absence is exceptional. The school will consider each application individually.

Parents/carers wishing to request leave for their child should complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. The request should

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be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and, wherever possible, at least four weeks before the absence.

Parents may be required to provide the school with additional evidence to support a leave of absence request. The school will consider the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. The absence should be for the shortest time possible – if an absence is agreed, the Headteacher will decide how many days of absence will be authorised. If the pupil is absent for more days than were authorised by the school, the remaining days absent will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Any holidays and other absence such as trips and visits which have not been agreed by the school will be recorded as unauthorised. Parents/carers should be aware unauthorised absence may result in a Penalty Notice or Prosecution. See 'Unauthorised Absence' section for more information.

If the school has any concerns about possible safeguarding risks, staff will follow the necessary protocols.

#### **14. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions**

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent but may have day to day care of the child. If an absence is not authorised by the school, the pupil's attendance is deemed to be irregular.

Penalty Notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent/carer with responsibility for the child and are issued for each child with unauthorised absence. For example, in the case of Penalty Notices, if two siblings have unauthorised absence, and there are two parents/carers with responsibility for the children, four Penalty Notices would be issued.

The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold for a Penalty Notice to the Local Authority for legal action, unless there are reasonable grounds for not doing so. This will include unauthorised absence due to term time holiday or other trips/visits, and other types of unauthorised absence.

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When referring for legal sanctions, the school will show that the parent/carer has been warned they are at risk of a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a Penalty Notice or Prosecution.

The threshold for referring for a penalty notice is currently 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. Each parent may be issued with a penalty notice of £80 per parent/carer, which must be paid within 21 days, or this rises to £160 per parent/carer.

The link below provides more information on the Local Authority's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, including thresholds, [What the Law Says | Absence from School | Manchester City Council](#).

## **15. Associated Policies**

Safeguarding Policy

Positive relationships and behaviour policy

Admissions policy

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## 16. Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance. These codes are provided in our information management system (Arbor)

| Code   | Definition  | Scenario   |
|--|---|--|
| /  | Present (am)  | Pupil is present at morning registration   |
| \  | Present (pm)  | Pupil is present at afternoon registration   |
| L  | Late arrival  | Pupil arrives late before register has closed  |
| <b>Attending at a place other than at school</b> |   |  |
| K  | Attending education provision arranged by the local authority                       | Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority |
| V  | Attending an educational visit or trip  | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school  |
| P  | Participating in a sporting activity  | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school  |
| W  | Attending work experience   | Pupil is on an approved work experience placement  |
| B  | Attending any other approved educational activity                                   | Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience                     |
| D  | Dual registration   | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered   |
| <b>Absent – approved leave of absence</b>        |   |  |
| C1   | Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad | Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school   |
| M  | Medical/dental appointment  | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment  |
| J1   | Interview   | Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment   |
| S  | Study leave   | Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination  |
| X  | Not required to be in school  | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend   |

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| C2   | Part-time timetable                         | Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable   |
| C  | Exceptional circumstances                   | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances   |
| <b>Absent – other authorised reasons</b>                             |   |  |
| T  | Parent travelling for occupational purposes | Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes  |
| R  | Religious observance                        | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance  |
| I  | Illness (not medical or dental appointment) | Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)   |
| E  | Suspended or excluded                       | Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made  |
| <b>Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause</b> |   |  |
| Q  | Lack of access arrangements                 | Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school   |
| Y1   | Transport not available                     | Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available                                     |
| Y2   | Widespread disruption to travel             | Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency  |
| Y3   | Part of school premises closed              | Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open  |
| Y4   | Whole school site unexpectedly              | Every pupil absent as the school is closed closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)   |
| Y5   | Criminal justice detention                  | Pupil is unable to attend as they are:<br>- In police detention<br>- Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or<br>- Detained under a sentence of detention |
| Y6   | Public health guidance or law               | Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law  |
| Y7   | Any other unavoidable cause                 | To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes  |
| <b>Absent – unauthorised absence</b>                                 |   |  |

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|                             |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| G                           | Holiday not granted by the school           | Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school  |
| N                           | Reason for absence not yet established      | Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes (must be cleared at least weekly)  |
| O                           | Absent in other or unknown circumstances    | No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence |
| U                           | Arrived in school after registration closed | Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session   |
| <b>Administrative codes</b> |   |   |
| Z                           | Prospective pupil not on admission register | Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered   |
| #                           | Planned whole-school closure                | Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays  |

**ADVICE: Before using this document you should ensure that you have the most up-to-date version. If you are referring to a printed version it may be out-of-date. If in any doubt please check with Human Resources.**

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