The Bicester School

Attendance Procedure

Reviewed: March 2023

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INTRODUCTION

Attendance Legislation

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that the child may have. This can be regular attendance at school or by education otherwise.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

"School have a responsibility to engage pupils in learning and to promote attendance" DFES Publication –Tackling it together

Regular attendance at school is a prerequisite for student achievement. Absence whether it is long term, frequent or occasional leads to missed experiences and may cause fractured social relationships which encourage an increased pattern of non- attendance.

As an educationally inclusive school we constantly monitor and evaluate the progress each of our students make. The Bicester School is keen to work in partnership with students, parents and outside agencies to support all families and ensure students make progress with their education and life beyond education. We recognise that students who are absent will miss important educational opportunity which will affect their grades.

AIM

- The Bicester School seeks to ensure that all students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for achieving their potential.

- The Bicester School will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, so that each member of our community feels safe and valued.

- All The Bicester School staff will work with students and their families to ensure each student attends regularly and punctually.

- The Bicester School will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and punctuality and will challenge those students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives The Bicester School will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate external agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

The Bicester School and Parents

Securing a high level of attendance requires The Bicester School and home to work closely together. To achieve this, it is essential that parents/carers:

- Ensure their child arrives on time for morning and afternoon registration.
- If their child is ill to notify the school on the day before 9.00am and every following day of absence, including an estimation of the likely length of absence.
- Respond to any text sent daily, indicating why their child is absent
- Contact the school at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attendance.
- Recognise that the school will be concerned when any child fails to meet the attendance target and work with us to improve their child's attendance

School Systems and Procedures to promote good Attendance and Punctuality Registration

The accuracy of the register is of paramount importance both to provide a solid foundation for analysis of absence and to support any statutory interventions that may be required.

Start of Sessions: AM registration is 8.35am PM registration is at 2pm

It is imperative that the data entered is accurate and that there is a mark for EVERY student. Every student must fall into one of three categories of present, absent, or late. We all have a duty of care and are responsible for safeguarding students; therefore, it is vital that the information is accurate.

The member of staff responsible for maintaining the system of recording accurate reasons for non-attendance is the Attendance Manager. The Attendance Manager works with a team of other staff to ensure a rigorous system of liaising with parents to ensure the correct codes are used to record authorised or unauthorised absences. Any letters passed to form tutors must be given to the Attendance Manager without delay.

All registers **must** be completed on PROGRESSO and where there is a problem completing an electronic register a paper copy should be completed by the member of staff and sent to the Attendance Manager ASAP.

Students arriving late to school must sign in at Reception.

Students leaving site during the day must sign out at Reception.

Staff Roles and responsibilities:

During Lesson

All staff are responsible for completing electronic registers for every lesson. If a student is present mark with / if they are absent mark with N if they arrive late mark with L and record minutes late.

NB. When a student arrives after the electronic register has been "saved and sent", staff MUST remember to resend the amended register as soon as possible.

Use of Data

The efficient and speedy collection of the data is essential to the development of effective strategies for action. At The Bicester School we have a Red (External Agencies) / Amber (Attendance Manager) / Green (Pastoral Manager, Head of Year) system of identifying those students whose attendance is falling below an acceptable level. This information is used by Form Tutor/Head of Year weekly to ensure intervention takes place and should be used by all form tutors to inform their discussions with children.

Data is required to monitor:

- Individual absence and lateness to both school and lessons
- Patterns of lateness and absence and the identification of trends by:
    - Year groups
    - Seasonal patterns
    - Patterns and nature of unauthorised absence
    - Vulnerable groups e.g., Special Educational Needs, English as an Alternative Language, Looked After Children, Free School Meals

All staff members need to be sensitive to changes in attendance patterns and raise any concerns with the Form Tutor, Head of Year or Pastoral Support Manager who will investigate.

Attendance Target

Whole school Targets agreed with the Governing Body each year. The school's current Overall Attendance Target is **95%+**

All staff have a role to play in encouraging students to attend regularly.

Classroom Teachers

- Accurately and promptly maintain registers

Form Tutors

- Accurately and promptly maintain registers
- Speak to students who have missed lessons
- Inform Head of Year, Pastoral Support Manager and Attendance Manager of students causing concern

- Celebrate and reward good attendance by issuing House Points as appropriate

Pastoral Support Manager

- Liaise with Form Tutors and HoY
- Raise concerns over attendance dropping
- Liaise with Attendance Manager about students causing concern

Head of Year

- Highlight/update attendance at team meetings/assemblies
- Identify students causing concern
- Organise interventions
- Organise celebration events/rewards for good/improved attenders in their year group

Attendance Manager

- Identify key students for interventions.
- Implement Individual Attendance Plans for those students who become persistent non-attenders
- Work with parents/carers and other external agencies as appropriate to raise attendance percentage
- Monitor all students whose absence is persistent or severe and implement escalation process as appropriate
- Parent Contract
- Fixed penalty notice
- Refer to County Attendance and Engagement Team

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is where The Bicester School accepts there is good reason for absence. An authorised absence requires a written/verbal communication from the parent/carer. Any student whose parent does not provide a reason for absence will be deemed to have truanted, a sanction given, and the absence recorded as unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence is any absence which does not fall into the following categories:

- Absence due to illness or other unavoidable cause
- An absence for religious observance sanctioned by the religious body to which the parents belong
- There is no acceptable transport, and the school is not within walking distance
- Situations where the school authorises absence
- Annual holidays: *this will only be authorised if it is judged to be an exceptional circumstance.*

Only The Bicester School can authorise a student's absence, not the parents, and the school is not obliged to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason.

First Day Absence system

If a child is unavoidably absent from The Bicester School, parents are asked to contact the school before 9.00am if possible, giving the reason for the absence. The parents of any student not marked present during morning registration i.e., not in registration will be sent a text message. Parents are asked to respond by text explaining why their child is absent.

Leave for medical or dental appointments may be given where confirmation has been provided by the parent/carer (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or by the production of an appointment card. Students leaving the school site must sign out at Student Reception and must sign in at Student Reception on their return if this is during lesson time.

Parents should not take a child on holiday in term time - it can be disruptive both to the child's learning and to the school. The request for any absence in term time should be completed using the Request for Leave absence form and are unlikely to be authorised.

The Bicester School will judge each request individually, taking into consideration whether the circumstances can be deemed exceptional.

How The Bicester School manages attendance

All students whose attendance is below 90% over a 6-week period will be monitored weekly and the escalation system will be implemented. Each week parents will be contacted asking for reason for absence where we have not received an explanation.

If there has been no reasonable explanation for the absence the absence will be coded as unauthorised.

Stage 1

Parent/carer and student informed by way of letter from the Attendance Manager termly, that attendance is below 90% a target is set and monitored over 4 weeks.

Stage 2

If the target is not achieved parent/carer and student informed again of concerns and an Individual Attendance Plan is set up and monitored over 2 weeks. At this stage absences may not be authorised.

Stage 3

If target is not achieved parent/carer and student invited into The Bicester School for a meeting with the Attendance Manager to establish reasons for absence and appropriate support offered and a Parent Contract will be put in place. Targets agreed and monitored over 4 weeks and medical evidence may be asked to support illness.

Stage 4

Should there be no improvement, and attendance remains a concern, there will be a consultation with an Attendance and Engagement Officer from Oxfordshire County Council and a referral will be made to the Attendance and Engagement service if appropriate. In extreme cases prosecution for lack of attendance will be pursued.

Punctuality

A student arriving late not only disrupts his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. Persistent lateness is often a significant indicator of underachievement. Students arriving after 8.35am must sign in at Student Reception.

At The Bicester School, students are expected to be punctual to registrations and lessons. Lateness is not accepted, and parents are expected to support us where students are regularly late without reason. Poor punctuality will be addressed through detentions and in the cases of persistent offenders more stringent sanctions may be applied.

Rewards

The importance of good attendance and punctuality is regularly promoted through the tutorial programme and assemblies. To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance The Bicester School rewards good attendance and punctuality as part of its House Points and rewards system.

Return to school after long term absence/integration

The Bicester School is committed to ensuring that all students achieve their potential. Any barriers to learning are considered on an individual basis and we therefore make flexible arrangements to integrate students back into lessons after prolonged absence, whatever the reason for the absence.

A staged approach:

A meeting will take place with the student, parent/carer, Head of Year, Special Education Needs Co-ordinator and any other relevant staff and/or outside agencies. A plan will be drawn up which will acknowledge the reasons for student's absence and may involve a reduced timetable in the first instance and temporary additional support arranged by the Special Education Needs Co-ordinator. All teaching staff and form tutor will be advised in advance of an anticipated return so they can plan how to re-introduce the student successfully.

Any barriers to re-engagement will be discussed and possible solutions explored. A key member of staff may be appointed to act as a mentor to support the student and family.

External Agencies and Engagement and Attendance Service

The Bicester School works effectively with a variety of external agencies to ensure students who are experiencing difficulties are well supported. All options available to support students in improving attendance levels will be considered.

Attendance has a direct relationship with attainment of individuals and groups of students and the standards thereby achieved by the school. Attendance also contributes to Every Child Matters outcomes.