Bushey St James Trust

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Last Reviewed	July 2026	**Next Review:**	July 2027
Approved by	Trust Board	**Date:**	9.7.26

Aims

All staff, students, and families share a collective responsibility to ensure regular and punctual attendance.

Our unified aims are to:

- Promote a Positive Culture: Create an ethos where students feel safe, valued, and "*Aspire to Achieve.*"
- Communicate Effectively: Work in partnership with parents, carers, and external agencies to provide mutual information, advice, and support.
- Monitor and Intervene: Use data effectively to identify patterns of absence early and provide proactive support, such as Families First Assessments or Nurture/Thrive programs, to remove barriers to learning.
- Celebrate Success: Recognise and reward students who achieve excellent or significantly improved attendance.

Rationale

Our schools believe that excellent attendance and punctuality are the essential foundations for student success. We are committed to providing a welcoming and safe learning environment where every student can realize their full potential. In accordance with our shared vision, decisions regarding school life are carefully considered to reflect students' current and future needs, balancing mental health with academic requirements to nurture the whole child.

Across our partnership, we recognize that:

a) There is a direct and proven correlation between regular attendance and academic attainment. For example, at the primary level, pupils with 95% attendance are 30% more likely to achieve targets in reading, writing, and maths than those with 90-95% attendance.
b) Excellent attendance encourages positive peer relationships and enables students to contribute actively to their school and the wider community.
c) Arriving on time and being 'ready to learn' are vital life skills that set students up for success and prepare them for their future roles in society.

Statutory Framework and the Law

This policy reflects the legal requirements set out in the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance, *"Working together to improve school attendance"* (effective August 2024).

Key Area	Legal Requirement / Responsibility
Parental Duty	Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives a full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude.
The Register	Schools are legally required to keep an accurate attendance register at the start of every morning and afternoon session.
Classification	Only the school can 'authorise' an absence. Unauthorised absences, including term-time holidays, may lead to legal intervention.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

In line with the National Framework and the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct, a penalty notice must be considered when a student reaches **10 sessions (5 school days)** of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-week period.

1. **First Offense:** £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days (rising to £160 if paid within 28 days).
2. **Second Offense:** £160 per parent, per child, payable within 28 days (no reduced rate available).
3. **Third Offense:** A Penalty Notice will NOT be issued; the case may be presented directly to the Magistrate's Court, potentially resulting in a criminal record and fine of up to £2,500.

School-Specific Appendices

While our vision and legal frameworks are unified, specific operational procedures (such as reporting lines and specific start times) are detailed in three appendices overleaf:

Appendix A (page 4) refers to school specific guidance for Bushey Meads School – a secondary school in the Bushey St James Trust.

Appendix B (page 9) and Appendix C (page 11) refers to school specific guidance for Hartsbourne Primary School and Little Reddings Primary School – primary schools in the Bushey St James Trust.

Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Trust Board evert two years or sooner should the DfE guidance change.

Appendix A: Bushey Meads School

1. Encouraging excellent attendance

Students with good and improved attendance receive letters of congratulations and/or a reward; these are often presented in assembly and at the annual end of year Rewards Assemblies. Students' attendance is included on all reports and school references and is also requested by prospective colleges and employers and used as part of their admissions and interview procedure.

2. Working with our Parents and Carers

Parents and carers risk prosecution if they fail in their duty to send their children to school regularly. We work in partnership with parents, the Local Authority Statutory Attendance and Participation Team (SAPT), Services for Young People and other relevant services to deal with any issues. We take a proactive approach to the promotion of good attendance by defining expectations with students and their parents and carers and providing an effective and efficient system for monitoring attendance. Pastoral Managers monitor students' attendance, working closely with the parents or carers and the Statutory Attendance and Participation Team (SATP) in cases of frequent non-attendance and/or poor punctuality. Various strategies are employed to help improve attendance such as creating bespoke or reduced timetables on a temporary basis to support reintegration, entering into an Attendance Contract, providing counselling and rewarding students who show an improvement in their attendance over time.

3. Governors

The Governors will monitor and review the school's attendance figures with the Executive Principal.

4. Senior Leadership Responsibility

Ms O de Groot (Deputy Headteacher) is responsible for Bushey Meads School strategic approach to Attendance and Procedures.

5. Procedures for parents and carers

It is the parents' and carers' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence by 8:30 am. We ask parents to inform the school on every further day of absence, again by 8:30am. The Parent/Carer should report their child's absence via Arbor or by calling 0208 950 3000 (option 1 - attendance) stating the child's full name, Character Development Group and reason for the absence in a clear voice. If there is any doubt about the reason for absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and the school will investigate the absence further. If we feel there is a genuine and reasonable doubt around the level of illness your child is experiencing. We will request supporting or medical evidence to consider authorising any future periods of absence.

All medical appointments should be arranged out of school hours where possible. In exceptional

circumstances, if a student has an unavoidable medical appointment during the school day, the parent or carer must inform the school in advance via Arbor or the school's attendance line. Students must ensure they sign out at the Attendance Office before leaving the school site and, if returning on the same day, must sign back in again on return to school. Parents and carers must collect their children from the school reception. Students will not be allowed to leave the school unless we have received notification from their parents or carers and have signed out at the Attendance Office.

Bushey Meads School follows the **Working together to improve school attendance**, which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent/carer to provide medical evidence such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily and in some instances, we may ask the parent/carer to obtain a letter from a GP, or seek parental permission to contact the pupil's GP directly.

Holidays may not be taken during term time. In very special circumstances, the Executive Principal may authorise absence from school, but this will only happen in exceptional circumstances and if the parent or carer makes a written request in advance, at least two weeks before the intended day/s of absence, by completing the "Application for Leave of Absence from School during Term Time", which can be found on the school website in the Parent/Carer/Attendance section. Parents and carers will be notified of the decision by email. As part of our ongoing commitment to improving student attendance, we will not authorise absence in the week before or after the school term holidays, except in cases where medical evidence is provided. Unauthorised absences of five or more school days during a ten-school week period may result in the Executive Principal applying to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued and may also authorise the Deputy Headteacher and/or Assistant Headteacher to do so.

6. Following up Unexplained Absences

If we do not receive a reason for children's absences, we will send an SMS alert to Parents/Carers before 10am requesting the reason for the absence. If no response is received by 13:00, we will also email Parents/Carers asking for the reason. If no reason is provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If we do not receive any communication from a parent/carer regarding a period of absence, we may visit your home address to check on the welfare of your child. In addition, if your child has not attended school for a period of 10 days, we will arrange a home visit, in line with our safeguarding duty, under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to investigate any unexplained absences.

7. Students taken ill during the school day

If a student becomes unwell or has an accident during the school day they should immediately inform a member of staff who will, if they think it is appropriate, send them to visit the Medical Room or a first aider. If the student is too ill to remain at school, or if further medical treatment is required, parents or carers will be contacted to collect the student. Students are not allowed to leave the school site by themselves, and must be collected by a parent/carer if they are deemed too unwell to remain at school. Students are not permitted

to leave the school site without permission or to contact home themselves without being assessed by the Healthcare Officer in the Medical Room or a first aider.

8. Lateness

When a student arrives late to school during Character Development Time they should go straight to their Character Development Room before 08:55 and be registered as late by the Character Development Coach, entering the time of arrival and reason for lateness. If the student arrives after Character Development Time they should sign in late at the Attendance Office. The Pastoral Team will record a C4 consequence on Arbor and issue a one hour after school detention to be served the following day, if there is no valid or reasonable explanation from their parent/carer. Parents/Carers and students will receive an email the same day confirming the late detention and the student will receive a detention reminder slip at school the following day.

Where a student misses the morning registration during CDC time (after 9:00am) the student will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for the morning session. If a student arrives late after the register closes on 10 or more occasions, the Executive Principal may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued and may also authorise the Deputy Headteacher and or/Assistant Headteacher to do so. When a student arrives late to class during the school day, the register will be updated to include the number of minutes late and a consequence will be issued. All such lateness must be recorded and dealt with by the subject teacher. These procedures must be adhered to in order to conform to Health and Safety Regulations.

9. Religious Observance

Bushey Meads 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 authorises one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/carer belongs. If necessary, we will seek advice from the parent/carer's religious body, about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. Parents should notify the school in advance that their child will be absent for religious observance.

10. Strategies for improving attendance

In order to improve levels of attendance and punctuality the school employs the following strategies:

- ensure that all electronic and telephone communications from parents or carers about non-attendance are recorded
- address non-attendance – we aim to contact home by SMS by 10:00 am on each day of absence' for all students
- analyse attendance data to assess patterns of absence and lateness. Once patterns have been established contact will be made with parents and carers to discuss concerns and support

strategies

- notify the Statutory Attendance and Participation Team (SATP) when prolonged absence is recorded, without notification of reason
- issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (subject to regulations)
- have clear supportive strategies to address persistent absentees with levels of attendance below 90% including meeting with parents and carers and creating an attendance improvement plan
- be aware of and fully support our persistent absentees
- engage with the Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Team when required
- regular recognition and rewards for students with 100% or otherwise excellent attendance

11. The Law, our Parents and Carers and Bushey Meads

Schools are legally required to notify the Local Authority if your child has missed 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. Bushey Meads School will work together with the Local Authority, families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every student. In addition, Bushey Meads School is required to inform the Local Authority of any students who are regularly absent from school (where absences amount to more than 10 or more days, either consecutively or irregularly and have been unauthorised). The school will also refer "Children Missing Education" to the Local Authority where appropriate.

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, (Amendment) Regulations 2013, parents and carers are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education. The parent or carer is guilty of an offence under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 if a registered pupil is absent without authorisation from school or alternative provision and if the parent or carer knows that their child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails to to cause them to do so. However, an offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that the:

- student was absent with the authorisation of the Executive Principal. Such authorised absences may be granted for a number of reasons e.g. family bereavement, interviews, approved study leave or work experience. The Executive Principal will not grant any leave of absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances
- parent or carer proves the child did not attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause
- absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent or carer belong
- local authority has failed to make suitable travel arrangements (where it is obliged to do so) to facilitate the child's attendance
- child is of no fixed abode and the parent or carer proves his/her trade or business requires them to travel from place to place

Students should not be absent from school because of a family holiday. Within the context of the law, only the school can approve absences, not parents. The law states that the school is not obliged to accept the

explanation for absence, provided by the parents, if there are doubts about it. Such an absence must be recorded as unauthorised. Schools may authorise absence retrospectively where they are satisfied as to the explanation offered. The decision whether or not to take legal action rests with the Local Authority. At the discretion of the Executive Principal, after intervention and support have proved unsuccessful, the school will notify the Local Authority, who will decide on legal action re: Fixed Penalty Notices and/or court proceedings.

12. Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice may be issued

Before issuing a FPN, the school, in liaison with Hertfordshire County Council and any external agencies, will ensure that:

- the key consideration in deciding whether to issue a FPN will be whether it can be effective in helping to get the student who is truanting back into school, or
- if we believe that a FPN is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy

The Executive Principal may apply to the Local Authority for a penalty notice to be issued and may also authorise the Deputy Headteacher and/or Assistant Headteachers to do so. Our usual response to the first offence will be a warning (series of emails or letters) rather than a penalty. We may also send a Notice to Improve letter, which can be referred to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice, if attendance does not improve. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a penalty notice, which is why we will warn the parents and carers of the possibility of a notice being issued to allow them to make whatever representations they wish. Good practice is to allow 15 school days for the parent/carer to improve the situation before issuing a notice or commencing proceedings.

Our penalty notices will only be issued within the terms of the Local Authority Code, which is as follows:

- the pupil's absence must have been unauthorised for at least 10 sessions within a rolling 10 school week period (this can span different terms or school years)

  AND

- the parent or carer is not willing to take responsibility for securing their child's attendance and has not co-operated with any proposed voluntary or supportive measures

The Local Authority may withdraw a penalty notice in any case that the authority determines:

- it ought not to have been issued, or
- it ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient, or
- the penalty notice has not been paid in full before the expiry of the period for payment but it is not appropriate to prosecute the recipient for the offence in connection with which the notice was issued

If the penalty is not paid in full before the expiry date it is the Local Authority named in the notice that shall either institute proceedings against the recipient for the offence or shall withdraw the notice.

Appendix B: Hartsbourne Primary School

Absence Procedures

The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day to day basis is Katy Allen

Email address or contact details: parents@hartsbourne.org.uk

We monitor and review all pupils' absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.15 am, preferably by sending an email to parents@hartsbourne.org.uk.

- The school also has an answer phone available to leave a message, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised.

- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before **9.15 am**

- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested *(where school have reasonable doubt as to the authenticity of the absences)* where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS Guidance on School Absence and Childhood Illness see Annex C.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone or email you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us.

- If we are unable to make contact with parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding.

- The Local Authority will be informed if no contact has been made with parent/carers by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate) as The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 Section 13 requires schools to inform the local authority of any pupils absent from school and where absences amount to more than 10 or more **days**, either consecutively or irregularly and have been unauthorised. This means school will have unauthorised 20 am/pm sessions of absences. Schools are also under a safeguarding duty, under **section 175 of the Education Act 2002** to investigate any unexplained/unauthorised absences. At this point your child will be considered to be "absent from education".

If absence continues, we will:

- Contact you if your child's attendance is causing concern, and/or where punctuality is a concern..
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with our Attendance Lead
- Consider and offer reasonable adjustments.
- Offer a Families First Assessment to ensure appropriate support is considered.
- Create a personalised robust support plan, such as an attendance contract, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate.
- Seek advice, guidance and support from the Local Authority Statutory Attendance Support Team and consider appropriate legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

Lateness

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Hartsbourne School are:

Gates open: 8.30am

Registration starts: 8.45am

Registration closes: 8:55am

End of the school day: 3.15pm

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.45am** when children can begin to come into school;

Registers are taken at **8.55am;**

Children arriving after **8.55am** are required to come into school via the school office and provide a reason for their lateness.

At **9:00am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence;

The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns;

If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with our family liaison officer or the Headteacher but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we celebrate good class and individual punctuality. Unauthorised lateness could result in the school seeking advice and guidance from the Local Authority.

Appendix B: Little Reddings Primary School

Our attendance target is set at 96%, parents and carers are key to helping us achieve this.

Registration

- Children must arrive at school at 8.40am
- Registers will be taken at 8.50am and close at 9:00am.
- Pupils arriving after the start time for school, but while the register is still open, can be marked as 'late' but present for the morning session.
- Any pupil arriving at school after these times will be marked as unauthorised.
- The register also indicates whether an absence is authorised (valid reason given by parents) or unauthorised (no reason given).

Sickness

Sickness happens and sometimes your child needs to stay at home. When this occurs, please let us know before 9am on the first day of illness by:

- calling the school on 02089505388 or
- emailing absence@littlereddings.org.uk or
- sending us a message on Arbor

Medical/dental appointments

Every effort should be made to arrange for medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. If that's not possible, then you must provide us with proof of the appointment in advance and make sure your child is only out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Requesting leave for holiday during term time

Local and national government authorities are getting even tougher on leave during term time. If you take your child out of school during term time for holiday they will be marked as an unauthorised absence. If a child has five days of unauthorised absences both parents will receive a Fixed Penalty Notice for £80 (per parent, per child) from Hertfordshire County Council.

Requesting leave for exceptional reasons

In very exceptional circumstances, parents may need to request leave during term time for their children. Please complete the Leave during term time request form (available from the school office). Decisions are made at the discretion of the Headteacher.

When the unexpected happens

Sometimes unexpected things happen which make it impossible for a family member to bring a child to school.

Please let us know so that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register.

If you are struggling to get your child to school.

Most children have the odd day when they do not want to be in school but if you are struggling to get your child to school on a regular basis, then please talk to us. We run programmes like Nurture and Thrive which are designed to support children with social, emotional and other challenges.

Unauthorised absences and fines

When a child is absent and we have not heard from the parents and they have not responded to our calls or messages, the child's absence will be marked as unauthorised.

- If a child reaches 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (5 school days) within a rolling 10-week period, all parents/carers will receive a Notice to Improve letter. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can span different terms or school years.
- If attendance has not improved within 6 weeks, this could result in a penalty notice from Hertfordshire County Council.
- First offence: The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, the fine amount will be:
    - £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days
    - If not paid within 21 days, the fine will increase to £160 per parent, per child, payable between the 22nd and 28th day.
    - If not paid within 28 days, this could result in prosecution through court.
- Second offence (within 3 years): The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, a reduced rate is not available. The amount therefore will be:
    - £160 per parent, per child - payable within 28 days.
    - If not paid within 28 days, this could result in prosecution through court.

Safeguarding issues

In cases where a child is absent from school without valid reason for a number of days, the school may decide to complete a home visit in line with our safeguarding procedures.

Leaving school

- Parents who are intending to take their child off-roll due to relocation in the UK or abroad must complete a Removal from roll form (available from the office) with details of the new address and school.
- Parents intending to educate their children from home must first meet with the school so they can fully understand the implications of their decision.