

Mission Statement

At Bond Primary School we aim to create a happy and caring learning environment where children are challenged and inspired to reach their maximum potential through high standards of teaching, learning and leadership.

This policy meets the requirements of the Working Together to Improve School Attendance from the Department for Education (DfE). Legislation sets out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that "The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".
- Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that "if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his parent is guilty of an offence".

Aims of pupil attendance policy

1. To improve pupil attendance and punctuality
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school
3. To raise educational achievement of all pupils
4. To monitor attendance and apply appropriate strategies to minimize absence
To provide support and guidance to parents and pupils
5. To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance data

To promote and reward regular school attendance at whole school, class and individual level

Roles and Responsibilities

The school governors with the Headteacher will, at the beginning of each school year set an attendance target for the school.

The school governing body is also responsible for ensuring that pupil's names are recorded on the school admissions and daily register.

The Headteacher has a responsibility to ensure the daily register of pupils attending the school is taken and designates a member of the senior leadership team to monitor and report on attendance matters.

Parents have a responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly and on time.

The Education Welfare Service has a duty to ensure that parents meet this responsibility and the service can seek legal redress, in agreement with the School, to secure a pupil's attendance if a parent fails in their duty.

Working with the Local Authority

Bond Primary School works with the Education Welfare Service to help improve the attendance and punctuality of all our pupils. The Attendance Officer meets with our link Education Welfare Officer (EWO) frequently to monitor and review progress. Our EWO visits school regularly to advise the school on managing absences, making appropriate referrals and to meet parents.

How Our School Manages Pupil Absence

At Bond Primary School the attendance of pupils is recorded electronically. This helps us to produce termly data through the School Census for the Department for Education (DfE) and the London Borough of Merton.

Each reason for pupil absence has a special code, which assists the school to monitor persistent absentees.

In our school we expect pupils to have 96% and above attendance (national average is 95.8%). Through data analysis the school can track which pupils fall below this threshold and take action.

The school will contact parents of children whose attendance falls below 95%. Parents may be invited in to meet with the Headteacher or the Local Authority EWO.

A Parenting Contract may be offered to support an improvement in attendance. And is a written agreement between the relevant parties, that may include the School, Parent(s), Pupil(s), and School's Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Parenting Contracts should be in place for a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 12 months. The aim is to offer support by listening to the reasons for absence and difficulties that prevent regular school attendance during a meeting with the Parents, Child, School staff and EWO where realistic achievable targets can be set. If there is no improvement against the targets set after 4 weeks the Parenting Contract can close.

It is important to ensure that regular attendance at school takes place as poor attendance can be evidence of neglect and this could lead to a referral to Children's' Social Care.

Reporting Absences

At Bond Primary School we have an expectation that parents will notify the school as soon as possible on the first day of any absence before 9:30am by phone, email or speaking to a member of the school office. Any child who is

absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity.

Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as 'no reason given' and a phone call or email sent to the parents, followed by a letter if a reason is still not obtained. For each day of absence, parents must telephone or email to inform the school why their child is unable to attend. The school is then able to mark the register using the appropriate code as either an authorised or unauthorised absence. The decision to authorise or unauthorise absences rests with the school.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

The school will not authorise absences if it is deemed they are unreasonable or unjustified and may ask for further proof such as medical evidence in order to authorise such absence, otherwise it will remain unauthorised.

Regular unauthorised absence (where a parent has not provided a valid reason for absence) may lead to a parent/parents being:

- Referred to the school's EWO
- Issued with a Penalty Notice which carries a fine of £120 per parent per child, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice fine will usually lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 and if convicted, a fine not exceeding £1000 per offence and a criminal record.
- Prosecuted under section 444(1a) of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty parent/s could face a fine not exceeding £2500 per offence and/or up to 3 months imprisonment and a criminal record.

Because school attendance is a very serious matter, we aim to have good communication about attendance matters with parents through our newsletters, structured conversations and regular reviews and reports. If there is a problem it is better if a parent speaks with a member of staff rather than allow a situation to escalate.

Frequent absence

If a pupil is regularly absent due to sickness, a parent may be invited to school to discuss their child's absence. This discussion may be with the EWO or School Nurse.

The School may also request that the parent provides appropriate medical evidence (and will give guidance on what is acceptable evidence) for subsequent absences attributed to ill health to be authorised.

The School will also consider referring the pupil to the School Nurse or Specialist Nurse in the Education Welfare Service if there is a high level of

absence for medical reasons. For pupils with appropriately evidenced illness, the school will follow appropriate protocols to offer support.

Ten Days Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 days in a term will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Education Welfare Officer. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Absence/exceptional leave in term time

The Governors of Bond Primary School believe that leave of absence during term time should be avoided as it can have a damaging effect on a student's education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that on occasions there may be extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify such leave. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Amendment Regulations 2013 state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. With regard to the regulation outlined above, the school policy is as follows:

- Parents must request leave for exceptional circumstances as far in advance as possible.
- The request should be made in writing using the leave of absence form. (Available from the school office) Verbal applications will be recorded in writing.
- This must include the reason why a parent feels that it is necessary to take a leave of absence. This may include any extenuating or compassionate reasons, and evidence should be provided of circumstances such as medical certificate or letter from employers.

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. A letter outlining the decision of the school will be sent to the parent within 7 days.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised is very likely to result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £120 per parent per child, reducing to £60 if paid within 21 days.

Religious Leave of absence

Parents may absent their child from school to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals. It would be appreciated if parents could inform the school in advance that they wish their children to observe a specific religious festival. In most instances only one day will be authorised.

Punctuality

Pupils in reception to year 6 are expected to arrive at school promptly ready to start lessons at 8:50am. The register is taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late (L), whereas pupils arriving after 9.30am will be entered as having an unauthorised absence (U). Punctuality is monitored regularly and you may be asked to provide reasons for your child's lateness to be added to the register. For cases of persistent lateness, you will receive a letter and/or be invited to meet with the headteacher. For unauthorised absences, you may be referred to the Local Authority EWO for further action. Pupils in Nursery are expected to arrive in school ready to start at 8:30am (for am sessions and all day sessions) and should arrive by 12:30pm (for pm sessions). As well as recording that a child has arrived at school, the register is necessary for health and safety reasons should the building need to be evacuated. Pupils should be collected from school promptly at 11.30am (Morning Nursery), 3.15pm (Reception-Year 6) and 3.30pm (Afternoon Nursery). If a parent is going to be late collecting their child, the school office should be notified as soon as possible. Any parent who regularly collects their child late will be invited to meet with the headteacher. Where a pupil is regularly being left at school after the end of the school day, the pupil may be deemed abandoned and Bond Primary will follow the London Borough of Merton's policy and contact the Metropolitan Police.

Promoting Excellent Attendance

Children are encouraged to attend school regularly and on time during weekly assemblies. Rewards are given for the class with the best attendance (mufti day). Classes with the best attendance are highlighted in our school's newsletters. Children who achieve 100% attendance in a term receive a certificate during a special assembly.

Children who achieve 100% attendance for the academic year receive a certificate and a prize.

School Census Data

The school must submit data to the DFE on the number of pupils that are persistently absent, for whatever the reason. Currently the DFE threshold for persistent absence is 90% or below attendance. It is well researched that pupil attainment and progress is directly linked to pupil attendance. The school message is that 'every lesson counts'.

Dental and Medical appointments

Wherever possible, parents should make every effort to avoid medical or dental appointments during the school day. It is preferable to try and arrange routine check-ups during leave of absence periods or at the beginning/end of the school day.

Most medical appointments do not necessitate a full day's absence and it is the parent's responsibility to collect their child from school to take them to appointments and bring them back to school once the appointment is over. Medical appointments should not normally result in a whole day absent from school. A medical appointment card / letter will be required as evidence of appointment. Absence due to medical appointments that are not specifically for the child will not be authorised.

Vomiting and diarrhoea

Children should not come to school if they are vomiting or have diarrhoea. Children can return to school if symptom free 48 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea.

School Governors

The headteacher has a responsibility to report on attendance matters at every full governing body meeting. One of the governors' responsibilities is making sure that each pupils details are recorded, including address and telephone number which are very important in case of emergency. Parents should always ensure the school has up to date contact details.

The governors support the headteacher in managing any requests for leave of absence and take the position that families have no lawful entitlement to such leave other than in exceptional circumstances.

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states: The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable- [a] To his/her age, ability and aptitude and [b] To any special needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act. Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Working Together to Improve Attendance

Register and Admission roll keeping. The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006 8 2.

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories. 1. Unauthorised Absence 2. Authorised Absence 3. Approved Educational Activity 1. Unauthorised absence This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. 2. Authorised absence This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996. 3. Approved Educational Activity This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site

Leaving the School

If a pupil moves from the area/leaves the Country and it is too far to travel to Bond Primary school their Parent/Carer should complete a leavers form, available from the School Office providing details of the new home address and where possible the name and contact details for the new school. Children who leave without these details being provided will be referred to the Local Authority as Children Missing from Education. The Local Authority will then make appropriate searches in order to locate them.