



BATH & WELLS  
Multi Academy Trust

'That they may have life, life in all its fullness' John 10:10

## St Nicholas Church School



'Joyful is the person who finds wisdom' Proverbs 3:13-15

## Attendance policy

**Approved by:**

Bath & Wells Multi Academy Trust  
Board

**Date:**

**Last reviewed:**  
September 2023

**Next review due by: September 2024**

## **1 Aim of this policy**

- 1.1 To support excellent levels of attendance for all children to enable fulfilment of their potential at St Nicholas Church School. Regular attendance at school is essential to each child's academic success and life-chances. Research links attendance with achievement, indicating that even occasional broken weeks can have a negative effect. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. In promoting good attendance, it is also hoped that this will lead to the development of habits of good attendance and punctuality for the future. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.
- 1.2 It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age, therefore St Nicholas Church School encourage parents of Reception children who are not yet of compulsory school age, to send their children to every session available to them. If the child is unable to attend for any reason, the parents should inform the school in the same way as with children of compulsory school age.

## **2 Key principles**

- High levels of attendance and punctuality levels are promoted and rewarded.
- It is the responsibility of everybody in the academy to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Where attendance or punctuality is a cause for concern, steps will be taken to support an improvement.
- Some children find it harder than others to attend school. The Academy will work with children, parents and other local partners to remove any barriers to attendance.
- Subject to the terms of this policy, any day-to-day attendance issues that parents or children have should be discussed with the class teacher. Where more detailed support around attendance is required, parents and children should contact the attendance Leader (Will Low, Co-Head of School)
- We work in partnership with parents.

## **3 Roles and responsibilities**

### **3.1 The Academy**

The Academy will:

- develop and maintain a whole academy culture that promotes the benefit of high attendance
- work with children and their families, building strong relationships, to support high levels of attendance and punctuality and understand any barriers to attendance
- investigate unexplained or unjustified absence, applying support and, where necessary, sanctions where appropriate

- be aware that sudden or gradual changes in attendance may indicate safeguarding issues, and we work in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy available at: [Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies \(bwmat.org\)](https://www.bwmat.org)
- take into account individual needs when implementing this policy, including having regard to the Academy's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- share information and work collaboratively with the local authority, other schools in the area and other partners including, where required, making appropriate referrals in accordance with local procedures, legislation and guidance
- regularly monitor, review and analyse attendance and absence data including to identify pupils or cohorts that require attendance support and to set targets for the future
- ensure that all children can access full-time education, putting strategies in place where there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case
- ensure that the Local Governing Committee and the Academy's leadership team work together to monitor attendance levels and the effectiveness of this policy
- ensure that all legislation and guidance are complied with and reflected in our policies and procedures, including the non-statutory attendance guidance issued by the Department for Education, *Working together to improve school attendance (2022)*
- have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who are at risk of missing education, having regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education and our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy available at [Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies \(bwmat.org\)](https://www.bwmat.org).
- provide information requested by the Secretary of State, including termly absence data collected by the Department for Education
- regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels
- support children who are returning to education following long term absence
- ensure that effective systems to record and report attendance data are in place, including accurate completion of admission and attendance registers using an electronic management information system
- assign overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at the Academy to a designated senior leader
- observe and fulfil the responsibilities set out in guidance issued by the Department for Education ([Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summary-table-of-responsibilities-for-school-attendance)) to the extent not covered above or elsewhere in this policy.

### 3.2 Parents and carers

We expect parents and carers to:

- ensure that their child arrives at to school on time, in the correct uniform and with the necessary equipment

- promote the importance of regular attendance at home, where in law regular means “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”, so therefore, if an absence is not authorised by the academy, the pupil’s attendance is deemed to be irregular
- follow the correct procedure for reporting the absence of their child from the Academy (see section 6.1 below)
- avoid unnecessary absences
- provide an explanation as to why their child is absent from school as early in the school day as possible, so the academy knows the child is safe
- keep the academy informed of any circumstances which may affect their child’s attendance
- avoid taking their child out of education for holidays during term time (see section 6 below)
- inform the academy in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren), along with the name of the parent with whom the child shall live
- observe and fulfil their responsibilities set out in the guidance issued by the Department for Education: [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

### **3.3 Pupils**

We expect pupils to:

- attend the Academy regularly and on time
- be punctual to all lessons
- follow the correct procedure if they arrive to the Academy late (see sections 4 and 5 below).

### **3.4 Designated attendance lead**

The designated attendance lead (“DAL”) at the Academy is the Headteacher.

The DAL will be responsible for the strategic approach to attendance at the Academy and will:

- offer a clear vision for attendance improvement
- evaluate and monitor attendance expectations and processes
- oversee attendance and absence data analysis
- escalate urgent attendance issues ie. Children Missing Education
- ensure that key attendance messages are communicated to parents and pupils
- provide data and reports to support the work of the Local Governing Committee and Board of Trustees (see below).

### **3.5 Local Governing Committees**

The Local Governing Committee will:

- take an active role in attendance improvement, recognising the importance of school attendance and promote it across the Academy's ethos and policies
- ensure the leadership team fulfils expectations and statutory duties
- provide support and challenge to school leaders to improve attendance
- regularly monitor attendance data and trends, particularly in relation to particular cohorts of children and disadvantaged groups
- ensure staff receive adequate training on attendance, including dedicated training for staff with specific attendance responsibilities and any additional training that would help support pupils or cohorts overcome common barriers to attendance

### 3.6 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees will:

- take an active role in attendance improvement, recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the Trust
- ensure the Academies fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends and help the Trust's leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- ensure Trust staff receive adequate training on attendance, including dedicated training for staff with specific attendance responsibilities and any additional training that would help support pupils or cohorts overcome common barriers to attendance
- share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across its academies
- have a dedicated attendance lead (Tom Morrison - Assistant Director of Education) who will drive improvement across the trust and act as a central point for academies with attendance queries

## 4 Registration

- 4.1 Each Academy maintains an attendance register and uses this to record each child's attendance at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon.

Registration session	Start time	End time
Morning	8:45	9:15
Afternoon	KS1 1:00 KS2 1:15	KS1 1:10 KS2 1:25

- 4.2 Children who arrive after the start of a registration session but before the end of the registration session will be marked as late. Where children arrive after the end of a registration session, the process set out at section 5 applies. The registration session at St Nicholas Church School is 8:45 - 9:15 (am) and 10 minutes in the afternoon.

- 4.3 The register is marked using the national attendance and absence codes which can be found in the Department for Education's guidance on attendance - [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441211/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf).

## 5 Late arrival

- 5.1 If a child arrives at school after the relevant registration period has ended, the parent must immediately go to the school office to sign in and provide a reason for the lateness. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, the register will be marked as unauthorised absence.

## 6 Reasons for absence and how to report or request authorisation

- 6.1 **Authorised absence** - absence will only be authorised where the academy has given approval in advance for a child to not be in attendance or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for the absence. Only the academy can authorise absence. The main circumstances for authorising an absence include: illness, medical/dental appointments and religious observance.

- 6.2 **Unauthorised absence** - absence will be marked as unauthorised where the academy is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

### 6.3 Reporting absence from the School

- 6.3.1 Where a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, the parent/carer should inform the academy by 9:00am on the morning of the day of the first absence to ensure the school know the location and safety of the child. The parent should let the academy know when they expect the child to return to school. If the return date is not confirmed on the first day of absence, parents/carers must contact the academy on each day of absence by phoning in to the office (01761 432101)

- 6.3.2 On the day of return to school, parents must also provide written confirmation of the reason(s) for the full period of absence. In cases of prolonged absence due to illness, parents/carers may be asked to provide the academy with medical evidence, such as a note from the child's doctor. If this evidence is not provided, the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

### 6.4 Appointments

- 6.4.1 Medical, dental and other essential appointments for a child should take place outside of school hours where this is reasonably possible.

- 6.4.2 Where an appointment must take place during school time, the child should attend the Academy for as much of the day as possible and as much prior notice as possible should be given in writing to the school office.

- 6.4.3 For the time absent from the school to be marked as an authorised, confirmation of the appointment by way of an appointment card or letter must be provided.

### 6.5 Children with Health Needs

- 6.5.1 Where illness is a clear reason for a pattern of absence, with supporting information, the academy will consider an Individual Health Care Plan. Parents and staff should refer to the Medical Conditions Policy for more information about medical needs, IHPs, and to children with health needs who cannot attend school available at: [Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies \(bwmat.org\)](https://www.bwmat.org/policies)

- 6.5.2 Where a pupil cannot attend school because of health needs, unless it is evident at the outset that the pupil will be absent for 15 or more days, the academy will initially follow the usual process around attendance and mark the pupil as ill for the purposes of the register.
- 6.5.3 The academy will provide support to pupils who are absent from school because of illness for a period shorter than 15 days. This may include providing pupils with relevant information, curriculum materials and resources.
- 6.5.4 In accordance with the Department for Education's statutory guidance<sup>1</sup>, where a pupil is unable to attend school for more than 15 days due to illness:
- (i) the local authority should be ready to take responsibility for arranging suitable full-time education for that pupil; and
  - (ii) the local authority should arrange for this provision to be in place as soon as it is clear that the absence will last for more than 15 days.

The academy will inform and work collaboratively with the local authority to support these responsibilities

- 6.5.5 Where a parent/ carer maintains that absences are regularly the result of ill-health, yet no evidence of this is provided, the academy may choose to not automatically authorise such absences unless there is medical evidence to do so.

## **6.6 Leave of absence (including holidays during term time)**

- 6.6.1 Parents and carers should make every effort to avoid taking children out of education for holidays or other extended leave during term time. The Trust will only authorise a leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances. The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.
- 6.6.2 To request a leave of absence, parents/carers must make the request in advance and in writing addressed to the Head Teacher and, wherever possible, at least 4 school weeks ahead of the planned leave.
- 6.6.3 Where a leave of absence is requested as above, the Head Teacher will consider the specific facts and circumstances relating to the request. The decision:
- will be confirmed in writing
  - is solely at the Headteacher's discretion and
  - is final.
- 6.6.4 Where permission is granted, the Head Teacher will confirm the number of days and dates of absence which are authorised.
- 6.6.5 If permission is not granted and the parents/carers proceed to take their child out of school, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that the academy knows you are intending to remove your child from school, and the child is safe, rather than missing.
- 6.6.6 Parents may be issued with a penalty notice or be subject to prosecution by the local authority (see section 7 below for unauthorised absence) for unauthorised leaves of absence.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ensuring a good education for pupils who cannot attend school because of health needs (January 2013)*

## **6.7 Religious observance**

6.7.1 We recognise that children of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance:

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child belongs,

the absence from school will be authorised.

6.7.2 We ask that parents/carers notify the academy by writing to the Heads of School (Will Low & Kirsty Biss) in advance where absence is required due to religious observance.

## **6.8 Children Missing from Education**

If no contact has been made with the academy on the first day of absence the academy will take steps to ascertain the location of the child and their safety. The academy will refer to Child Missing from Education section of the Child Protection Policy and the specific academy procedure.

## **6.9 Part-time timetables**

6.9.1 Pupils are entitled to a full-time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities that they may have.

6.9.2 If, for any reason, our school is unable to provide a pupil with a full-time education due to the pupil's needs, we will work with the pupil, parent and other agencies where appropriate, to come to a mutually convenient arrangement. Any part-time timetables will be applied for the shortest amount of time possible, whilst arrangements are made to support the pupil's return to a full-time timetable. Staff and parents should refer to the Reduced Timetables policy available at: [Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies \(bwmat.org\)](http://bwmat.org)

## **6.10 Approved Educational Activity (AEA) and Alternative Provision**

When pupils are attending educational activities off the school site that have been approved by the academy, the register will be marked to show this is the case. (See DfE 2022 School Attendance guidance for more information.) Common examples include an approved sporting activity or an Alternative Education Provider.

## **6.11 Traveller absence**

6.11.1 The academy will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The academy will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the academy know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

6.11.2 To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes, in which case the child will be dual registered at that school and this academy, which is their 'main' school.

6.11.2 Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are



subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

## **6.12 Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances**

6.12.1 The academy will record pupils as unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances in accordance with the DfE attendance guidance, if for instance:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable closure;
- The transport provided by the academy or the local authority is not available and the pupil's home is not within statutory walking distance. (See the DfE's ['Home to school travel and transport'](#) guidance document;
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

## **6.13 Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Parents who have concerns about their child's wellbeing can contact the academy's Designated Safeguarding Leads (Will Low & Kirsty Biss DSLs; Helen Crossen & Joe Beament Deputy DSL's)

## **6.14 Coronavirus (Covid-19)**

There may be circumstances in which children cannot attend school due to Covid-19. The Academy will adhere to any current guidance issued by the Department for Education relating to the recording of attendance in relation to Covid-19. If a child tests positive for coronavirus, their absence will be recorded as illness.

# **7 Addressing poor attendance and punctuality**

7.1 The Academy will use data to target attendance improvement efforts to the children or groups of children who need it most. In doing so, the academy will:

- monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns, proactively using data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance
- provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and relevant leaders
- identify children who need support from wider partners as soon as possible and deliver this support in a targeted manner
- conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full year data to identify patterns and trends
- benchmark school attendance data at each level against Trust, regional and national level
- monitor the impact of academy strategies and actions to improve attendance on particular pupils and particular groups
- work with the local authority and other local partners to identify groups
- hold regular meetings with the parents or carers of children who the Trust and/or local authority consider to be vulnerable

Our procedures for managing unexplained absences can be found here in section 6.8 above and further information is available in the Appendices.

7.2 Where absence or punctuality is a cause for concern, for example because there is:

- a pattern of unauthorised absence
- a question over the reasons provided for a particular absence or late arrival
- persistent absence, truancy or lateness
- a safeguarding concern

the Academy will make contact with the parents/carers with a view to working together to support improved attendance and/or punctuality, with reference to the Trust Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, as appropriate.

7.3 Absence will be classed as persistent where it falls below 90% across the academic year. Absence at this level is very likely to hinder educational prospects and we expect full parental co-operation and support to urgently address these cases. Intervention steps may include implementation of an attendance action plan, referral to other agencies and support services and/or seeking to put in place a parenting contract.

7.4 Where out of school barriers to attendance are identified, the Academy will signpost and support access to any additional services.

7.5 Sometimes pupils can be reluctant to attend school. Our Trust encourages parents and pupils to be open and honest with the Academy about the reason for the pupil's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. The Academy needs to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way.

7.6 When the Academy has concerns about the attendance of a pupil, it will make every effort to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this.

7.7 If parents have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age is regularly attending school and wider support in accordance with this policy is not appropriate, effective, or has not been made use of, the Academy may consider issuing a penalty notice and legal sanctions via a referral to the local authority. A penalty notice is a fine (£60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid within 28 days) imposed on parents by the local authority.

7.8 If the Academy refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions, it will show it has warned parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a penalty notice or other legal sanction.

7.9 When considering whether to issue a penalty notice, the Academy will have regard to:

- section 6 of the Department for Education's guidance, Working together to improve school attendance: [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- the local authority's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.

- 7.10 In the event that a penalty notice is issued but is not paid within 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to proceed to prosecution. The local authority also has separate powers to prosecute parents if their child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly.

## **8 Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions**

- 8.1 If the academy decides to suspend or exclude a pupil, this will be recorded using the appropriate registration codes and the academy will follow the Trust policy available at; [Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies \(bwmat.org\)](http://bwmat.org)

## **9 Removal from Roll**

- 9.1 There are strict legal grounds on as to when schools may remove pupils from the admissions register, and when the Academy decides to delete a pupil from their admission roll it must immediately notify the local authority.
- 9.2 If the Academy is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure will establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Once the Academy has confirmation that the child has started at the new school, its records will be updated.
- 9.3 If a child has 'disappeared' from school, the Academy must refer to the Child Missing Education Policy from the local authority and the Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **10 Links to other policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies where necessary:

- Reduced Timetables
- Alternative Provision
- Children with Medical Needs Who Can't Attend School
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Exclusions
- Separated parents policy

## **Appendix 1- St Nicholas Church School's Approach to promoting good attendance and punctuality**

At times, the school may choose to reward good attendance or support children with rewards for improving attendance (for example, stickers, certificates). This will be reviewed regularly by the Heads of School to ensure any rewards for individuals, groups, classes or whole school are supporting and having a positive effect on attendance.

When we have concerns about the attendance of a pupil, we will do our best to make the parent/s or carers aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in a referral being made to the Attendance & Welfare Support Service.

Any attendance under 95% is regarded by St Nicholas Church School as Poor Attendance. A letter will be sent to parents termly when a child's attendance drops below 95%. Attendance will then be monitored until it returns above 95%. The parents of any child whose attendance does not improve will be expected to meet with the designated attendance leader. Parents of children who are persistently ill will also be asked to attend a meeting with the attendance leader, even when valid medical evidence has been given.

When a child's attendance falls below 90% without valid reason, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with the attendance leader and an action plan will be created with the aim of supporting the family to improve attendance. If the child continues to have unauthorised absences after this point, a referral will be made to the Attendance and Welfare Support Service and a penalty notice may be issued.

Lateness and poor punctuality is also monitored by the school. After four episodes of lateness in a term, the designated attendance staff will speak directly to parents/carers. If the situation does not improve the parents will be invited to a formal meeting. If following this there is no improvement, a referral will be made to the Attendance and Welfare Support Service.

For more information, please refer to section 2 of **Working together to improve school attendance**: Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)):

## **Appendix 2- School system for reporting absence**

If any child has not been registered or the school has not been notified about a child's absence, the office will contact the parent carer on the first morning either by a phone call in the first instance and then by any means including text and email. If the parent notifies the school of a child's reason for absence, but the child continues to be absent for more than a week then an update check will be made by the school in the form of a phone call. If the child continues to be absent then details will be passed to the Co-Heads of School who will make an attempt to contact the parent and will consider a referral to the Attendance and Welfare Support Service Officer or the school nurse. If an absence is unexplained, the school will phone parents for an explanation. If no reason is forthcoming the Co-Heads will contact the parents and consider if a referral to the Attendance and Welfare Support Service is necessary. Any absence considered not to be a justified reason will remain unauthorised. A series of unauthorised absences will trigger a meeting with the attendance lead. Where children have persistent attendance problems the attendance leader will invite parents/ carers into school to a formal meeting and possible referral to the Attendance and Welfare Support Service.

## **Appendix 3 - Steps for dealing with Children Missing Education**

Children being absent from education for a prolonged period and/or on repeat occasions, and children missing education can be an indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation, child criminal exploitation, mental health problems, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Our staff are alert to these risks.

We closely monitor attendance, absence and exclusions and our DSL will take appropriate action including notifying the local authority, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions and/or are missing for periods during the school day where this becomes a pattern.

Where a child is absent, the school has a responsibility on the first date of absence to contact the parent or carer to locate the child. The school must refer to the local authority's reporting process for a child missing education and requirements on reasonable efforts to locate the child and assess safety, and should take the following steps:

1. Discuss with the DSL and undertake a risk assessment on the vulnerability of the child:
2. Follow up phone calls and contact in writing (including email) with parents and emergency contacts if the child continues to be missing;
3. Make a home visit and undertake risk assessment;
4. Advise the parent to contact the Police if they are unable to locate the child or are concerned about their safety.

All schools should notify the local authority of any pupil who has missed 10 consecutive school days and where no explanation has been received and no contact with parent/carer, or sooner if the school has safety concerns. Should a child go missing from school during the school day, the school will follow the Missing Child Protocol, alert all staff, carry out a sweep of the school and if the child is not found, contact the police.

#### **Appendix 4 - Examples of absence which would not be authorised**

Not informing the school of a reason for absence

Giving illness as a reason for absence when a child is actually elsewhere

Having a day off for birthdays

Leaving school early to go on holiday

Shopping

Swimming Lessons

Going to the appointment of a sibling

Visiting relatives

Buying school shoes

Going for a haircut

Parent/s unwell

Attending football matches