ATTENDANCE

POLICY

Policy in effect from: **September 2024**

Review Date: **September 2025**

Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils

- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance

- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence

- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled

- Acting early to address patterns of absence

- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- 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

1. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Leader of Mighty Oaks Academy Trust

The Executive Leader is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:

  o Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority

  o Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources

- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs

- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance

- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:

  o The importance of good attendance

  o That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues

- The school's legal requirements for keeping registers

- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

- Holding the Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy

- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data

- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools

The Head of School for Buildwas Academy

The Head of School is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising School Administrator to be able to do so

- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers

- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs

- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader can be contacted via email admin.buildwas@taw.org.uk via 01952 387927

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis

- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance

- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff

- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed

- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues

- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers

- Leading targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The attendance officer

The school attendance officer can be contacted via email admin.buildwas@taw.org.uk or phone 01952 387827

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher

- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Class teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office by 9.10am each day and 1.30pm each day. They are often the first point of contact for parents/carers and encourage good attendance for all pupils in their classes.

Parents

When this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult whom the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not

- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person

- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.45am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence) and advise when they are expected to return.

- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

- Ensure that, where possible, **appointments for their child are made outside of the school day** and that **appointment cards are provided**.

- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the office who can be contacted via 01952 387827; admin.buildwas@taw.org.uk

Pupils

Pupils are expected to attend school every day, on time. They are encouraged to be an attendance HERO. **H**ere, **E**veryday, **R**eady, **O**n time.

2. ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY EXPECTATIONS OF PUPILS AND PARENTS:

- School begins at 8.40am and finishes at 3.15pm.

- All gates open by 8.40am and will be closed at 8.50am. The children can enter the school site through the main school gate or the gate at the top of the playground.

- Children will be marked late with U and L codes if they arrive after the gates are closed. Late children can enter school through the school office.

- Registers will be kept open until 9.30am. Pupils who have not arrived in school by this time will be marked with a U code.

- **Parents must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.40am or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office on 01952 387827.**

- We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

- Where the absence **is longer than 4 days**, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, we will ask parents for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

- If we are not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this, in advance.

3. INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS OF SCHOOL STAFF TO CONTACT ABOUT ATTENDANCE:

Attendance on a day-to-day basis
Please contact the office admin.buildwas@taw.org.uk 01952 387827

4. PLANNED ABSENCE

- If your child needs to attend a **medical or dental appointment**, **please try to arrange these during out of school hours where possible**. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

- If the appointment must take place during the school day, **please notify the school in advance** of the appointment. This will be considered as authorised absence, however, parents must provide the appointment card or other evidence, such as an email or text message.

- The Head of School will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

- To request leave of absence for pupils, please contact the school attendance officer for a *Leave In Term Time* form (LITT) at least four weeks prior to the absence.

- A leave of absence is granted at the **Head of School's** discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

- As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence **will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday** as these can take place during school holidays

- The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background behind the request.

- **Any request should be submitted at least 4 weeks before the absence**, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form available from the office. The Head of School will require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

- The Head of School will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

  - Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
  - Attending an interview
  - Study leave
  - A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
  - Exceptional circumstances

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- **Illness** and **medical/dental** appointments

- **Religious observance** – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body

- **Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes** – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- If the pupil is currently **suspended** or **excluded** from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved **educational activity**, **sporting activity** or **visit** or **trip arranged by the school.**

- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (**dual registration**).

- Attending **provision** arranged by the local authority.

- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

4. THE SCHOOL'S DAY-TO-DAY PROCESSES FOR MANAGING ATTENDANCE

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending without reason, by close of registration, the school will:

- Follow first day absence procedures where office staff will contact the parent by telephone as soon as is practicable. This will be logged on Bromcom.

- Staff will identify whether the absence is approved or not.

- Staff will use the appropriate attendance code on to Bromcom as soon as the reason for absence has been given

- If no response is received, a text message will be sent at 10am followed by a further text at 11am. These will be sent via Bromcom.

- If the absence continues without explanation, staff will continue to telephone the parents daily for the next 2 days to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. This will be logged on Bromcom.

- If, after 3 days (or sooner where there are safeguarding concerns) the Head of School will be informed. All contact will be logged on CPOMS.

- A safe and well home visit will be made by a member of the school's attendance/pastoral team and/or a member of the administration team if no contact is made to the school after 3 days.

- If on visiting the family home no one is present, a note will be left asking the parent to contact the school. This will be done for the next 3 days where no contact is made. This will be logged on CPOMS. School will also consider a referral to Family Connect.

- At 10 days of unauthorised absence, the child must be reported under Children Missing in Education Act to the Local Authority. This will be logged on CPOMS.

Issues With Child Attendance

When issues with a child's attendance persist and it falls to an unacceptable level, school will contact families for further support. The following strategies may be used:

- Attendance support meetings with the attendance officer, the attendance champion, and/or the pastoral lead to offer support to parents to improve attendance
- Support and advice from the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)
- An early help assessment with the pastoral lead and/or Strengthening Families.
- A referral to Family Connect

Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, legal intervention will be used: issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention, as appropriate. (See Section 9)

5. HOW THE SCHOOL IS PROMOTING AND INCENTIVISING GOOD ATTENDANCE.

Pupils are expected to attend school every day, on time. Being an attendance hero is encouraged by all staff in school. They are encouraged to be an attendance HERO. Here, Everyday, Ready, On time.

Awards:

- **Attendance postcards**
  Attendance postcards are presented to those classes with the highest attendance each week. The postcards are displayed on the classroom windows and those classes with the most postcards at the end of each half term are given a class reward e.g. golden time.

- **Individuals**
  Children with high levels of attendance are awarded certificates at the end of each term.

- **Parent communication**
  Parents are informed of the school's weekly attendance in the Head of Schoolteacher's weekly letter. Parents are reminded of the importance of good attendance through termly letters, showing graphics of the impact of time away from school.

- **New pupils**
  In the new starter packs for reception, parents are informed of how important good attendance is and the impact that absence has on pupil welfare and academic performance.

6. SUPPORTING PUPILS WHO ARE ABSENT OR RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

We pride ourselves on our inclusivity and as a result, the approach to pupils and families who face complex barriers to attendance. Ultimately, we emphasise the importance of our school as a safe place, where pupils really want to be, with the right ethos, engaging curriculums and lessons that inspire each individual. We will:

o Gain a full and clear understanding of the pupil/family circumstances

o   Offer early help either through the academy offer or through the local authority pathways

   o   Consider and drive engagement of external agency support

   o   Monitor progress through effective action planning and provide opportunities to review impact and reassess.

Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Buildwas recognises the barriers and the link between mental or physical illness and/or SEND. We will:

   o Discuss the underlying reasons for absence with pupil and parents

   o Ascertain the support required for both home and school to improve attendance

   o Devise an action plan (with medical professionals if required) for all parties to drive accountability to ultimately improve attendance or ensure that the pupil has access to an appropriate education

   o Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

   o For pupils with 15 days recorded absence due to illness, our academies have a statutory duty to record this absence to the local authority. At this stage, academy staff and/or EWO teams will need to discuss the absence in more detail and may ask for medical evidence so that we can best support your child.

Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Buildwas recognises that reintegrating pupils back into education following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, is challenging. We will:

o   Gain a full understanding of the historical issues that have led to absence

o   Assess and understand the current barriers to reengaging in education

o   Conduct a high-quality induction based on the knowledge gained from initial meetings; this is to include baseline testing

o   Clear and concise action plan to reengage pupils into education with supportive interventions in

o   place as appropriate

o   Monitor and review the action plan at leadership level

7. THE SCHOOL'S STRATEGY FOR USING DATA TO TARGET ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

- All of our staff work together to promote good attendance and to remind parents and pupils that good attendance is everyone's responsibility. We remind them of the support in place if they are worried, and about the consequences of term-time holidays, including fines, as well as missing out on important lessons.

- School monitors attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

- We develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts identified via data analysis. School identifies pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence. We then provide targeted support to these pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern.

- The attendance officer and the attendance champion analyse absence from that week on a weekly basis. This is followed by pupil attendance and half-termly register reviews with the educational welfare officer, where we identify trends in pupil absence and the EWO can be involved in supporting families, if necessary.

- We use this information to focus our attention where it is most needed. School provides regular attendance reports to class teachers to support discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including the special educational needs coordinator and designated safeguarding leads).

- We prioritise vulnerable groups of children to minimise children missing from education. By supporting parents of pupils with special educational needs, those in receipt of pupil premium and those on child protection or child in need plans, we hope to prevent these pupils becoming persistent or severely absent.

- Specific pupil information may be shared with the DfE on request.

8. THE SCHOOL'S STRATEGY FOR REDUCING PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

Buildwas Academy will

- Use 'Working Together to Improve Attendance'. We have a support-first ethos of improving our pupils attendance.
- Consider safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
- Target our attendance resources on pupils with persistent absence (less than 90% attendance) and severe absence (less than 50% attendance).
- Identify barriers to attendance with families directly, we are able to plan our early help support together. This includes holding regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) to:
  - o Discuss attendance and engagement at school
  - o Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
  - o Explain the help that is available
  - o Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
  - o Review any existing actions or interventions
  - o Recognise that mental health may be affecting pupil attendance and support pupils and families if this is the case.

BUILDWAS' EARLY HELP SUPPORT

Buildwas' Early Help offer includes

  - o reward systems
  - o staff being available on the school gates
  - o support from teachers and support staff
  - o support with travel (if appropriate)
- School may also seek support from the educational welfare officer (EWO) to attend meetings and conduct safe and well home visits.
- When necessary, school may seek referrals to other agencies: educational psychology, strengthening families, BeeU, PODS, Children's Autism Hub etc.

When parents do not engage and/or attendance does not improve, we may implement sanctions, where necessary.

9. SANCTIONS

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

Buildwas Academy adopts the system used by the local authority. The Local Authority (LA) can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Please refer to https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/10364/fixed-penalty-code-of-conduct.pdf

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Buildwas Academy is committed to supporting our students and families through all aspects of their lives. Buildwas considers EHE to be the very last resort in the educational journey and as a result will request a Multi-Agency Meeting (MAM) with families along with a Local Authority representative to help to ensure that the correct decision is made in the best interests of the child.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 2 years. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full Trust Board.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

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
Attending a place other than the school		
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 registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
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

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
Absent – other authorised reasons		
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
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
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 closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • 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

Absent – unauthorised absence		
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
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

Administrative codes		
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