



Stowe Valley MAT Secondary Attendance Policy

2024/25

Reviewed and approved : September 2024

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Person responsible for overseeing the implementation: CEO and Director of Safeguarding

Chair of Trustees signature:

C. L. Chevassut

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1. Policy statement

Philosophy

Bilton is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance. It is the policy of our school to celebrate both.

All staff will work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually. We recognise that parents have a vital role and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems. We will provide effective and efficient communications with students, parents, and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support to meet our objectives.

This policy is based on current government guidance, 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024', and Statutory Regulations.

Objectives:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, students and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs/or disabilities and provide them with additional support

2. Definitions

In this policy there are some key definitions which will be used, we have referenced the meaning of these terms below for ease of understanding:

Persistent Absence - Where a student's attendance figure reaches 90% or below, they are deemed as 'persistently absent' from school.

Severe Absence - Where a student is absent from school more than they are present, therefore with an attendance figure of 50% or below, they are deemed as 'severely absent'.

Parents - For the purpose of this policy a parent means; All natural parents, whether they are married or not, any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person and any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

Vulnerable students - For the purpose of this policy vulnerable students are those who;

Have a social worker or previously had a social worker;

Is a Child looked after;

Are Children with an Educational health care plan;

Are Children who are severely absent (their attendance in school is 50% or below).

3. Statutory/Legal Guidance

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school¹.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 was amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations in 2013 only allowing Head Teachers to authorise leave of absence (for any purpose) in **exceptional circumstances. Holiday requests will not be granted.** Please see further details on page 12-13.

¹ The education Act 1996, part 1, section 7. Additional legal requirements may be found in *The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006*.

4. Key Staff and Contacts

School-based contacts

Role	Contact Details
Headteacher	Ms Jayne Delves delves.j@stowevalley.com
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mrs Gaynor Davy Davy.G@stowevalley.com
Attendance Champion (Senior Leader)	Ms Elizabeth Keell keell.e@stowevalley.com
Attendance Manager	Miss Cathy Dillon dillon.c@stowevalley.com
School Absence reporting line	Call: 01788 840600 Text: 01788 422354 Please log all absences using Class Charts
Nominated Attendance link Governor	
All of the above can be contacted via the School office on 01788 840600	

Other useful contacts

Agency / Contact	
Ranjit Samra- CEO Stowe Valley Multi-Academy Trust	01926 812560 Ranjit.Samra@stowevalley.com
Samantha Godfrey- Director of Safeguarding Stowe Valley Multi-Academy Trust	01926 812560 Godfrey.s@stowevalley.com
Warwickshire Attendance Service	was@warwickshure.gov.uk
Access to Education team	01926 736323
Children's Social Care – Integrated Front Door Warwickshire County Council	01926 414144

5. Safeguarding

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of safeguarding. Absence can be an indicator of abuse, neglect and exploitation and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children. As per Keeping children safe in Education 2024, children who are persistently absent from education or missing in education are more vulnerable to safeguarding concerns.

We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay.

We will always follow up with parents/carers when students are not at school. This means we need to have a least two up to date contact numbers for parents/carers. Parents should remember to update the school as soon as possible if their numbers change.

Bilton recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence as it will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm.

Bilton will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school and evidence of absences may be requested, such as medical evidence where applicable

5.2 Children missing education and Children absent from education

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) leaders have ensured that:

1. Staff understand what to do when children do not attend regularly, causing the child to be 'absent from education'.
2. Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for students who go missing from education or are absent from education (especially on repeat occasions) are in place.
3. Staff know that travelling to conflict zones could be an indicator of FGM and forced marriage.
4. Procedures are in place to ensure that we always inform the local authority when we plan to take students off-roll or when they:
 - a. leave the school to be home educated
 - b. move away from the school location
 - c. remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age

- d. are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to school afterwards); or are permanently excluded

We will ensure that students who are expected to attend the school but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority.

When a student leaves, we will record the name of the student's new School and their expected start date.

Staff will monitor unauthorised absence and take appropriate action including notifying the Local Authority, particularly where children are missing from education, are absent on repeated occasions and/or are absent for periods during the school day.

Bilton School is required to inform the local authority where a pupil is absent for **10 days and the reasons are not known and/or coded as unauthorised** (G, N, O, and/or U). The school attendance team will work with the family as per the attendance road map and flowchart below.

5.3 Vulnerable Students

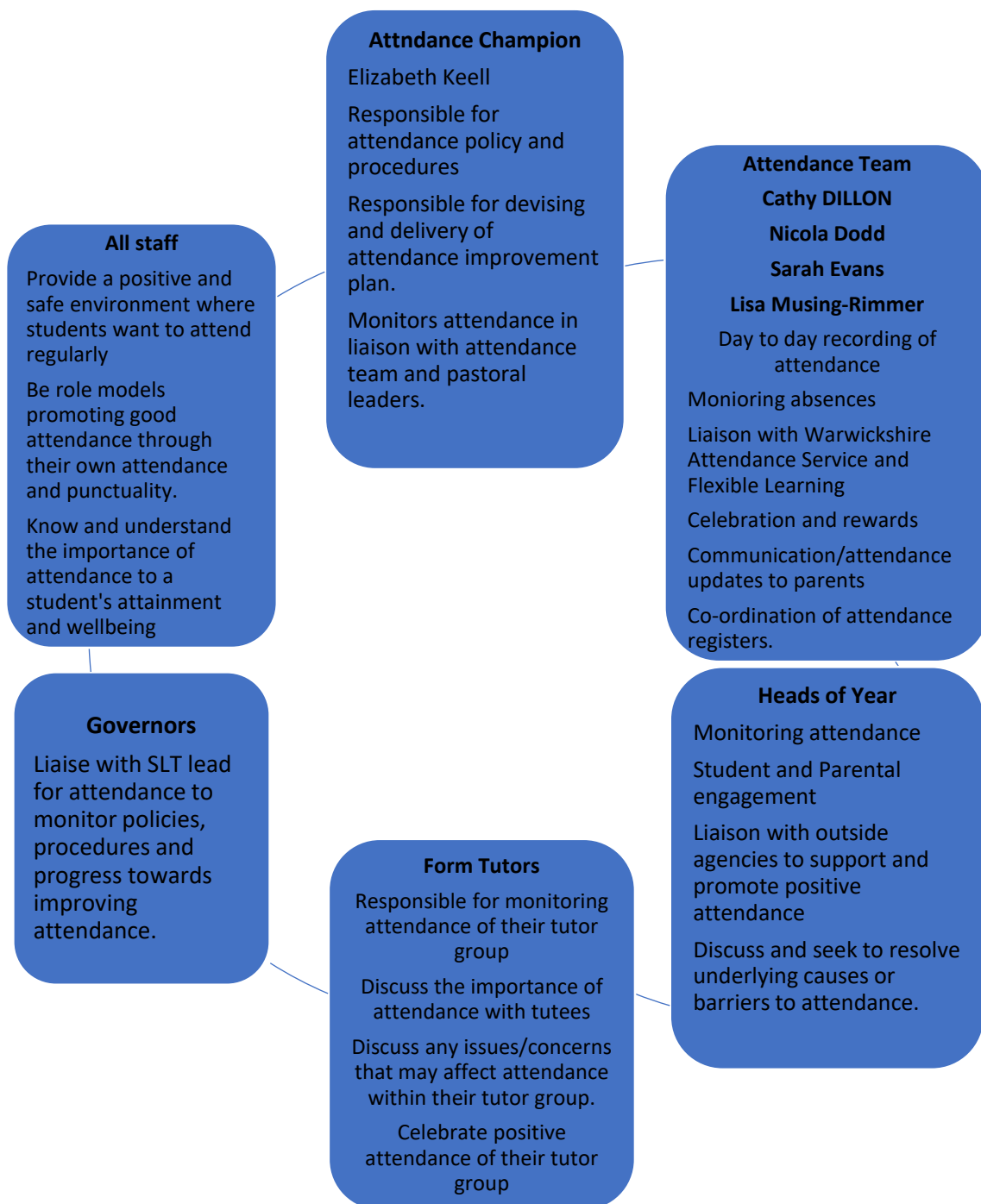
Bilton School routinely monitors the attendance of vulnerable students. If we have concerns about students, we work closely with outside agencies to ensure parents understand the importance of good attendance and attendance procedures. There are a number of ways we may² monitor the attendance of vulnerable students in addition to the universal daily process of monitoring attendance for all;

- a. Watch List - Vulnerable students are included on the school internal 'Watch List', the attendance of these students is monitored on a lesson-by-lesson basis and absences are reported to the appropriate staff member immediately and contact is made with parents/carers as needed.
- b. Daily school contact from the attendance team to parents/carers (and any external professionals such as social workers) for absences of vulnerable students or those at risk of persistent or severe absence.
- c. Warwickshire Flexible Learning Team – Heads of Year are in regular communication with the flexible learning team to ensure Ill Health students are engaged and progressing. The attendance of these students is captured daily.
- d. Dual Registration – Bilton School maintains its responsibility to ensure that students who are dual registered are attending each day and progressing with their education.
- e. SEND – Students who have special education needs or disabilities who are poor attenders are monitored through the internal referral and monitoring panel (RAMP). At regular meetings, attendance is discussed and tracked and interventions are put into place by senior leaders.

² The way in which we monitor a vulnerable student will be on a case by case basis and these decisions are regularly reviewed between the attendance, safeguarding and pastoral teams in school.

- f. Severely Absent Students - Students who are severely absent are assigned an attendance case manager who makes regular contact with the child and family to support them in removing the barriers to attendance and engage them back in to school. All contact and agreed interventions are robustly recorded and the impact is monitored regularly.

6. School Responsibilities



7. Day to Day Attendance Procedures

7.1 Registers

Registers are taken each AM and PM session, within the first 10 minutes of the lesson. Non-attendance is identified each morning and afternoon as well as within every lesson.

In the morning if the child has not arrived in school and we have not been informed of a reason the following actions will be taken;

- A text message will be sent to the parent/carers

If no appropriate response is received

- A telephone call will be made on the second day of unexplained absence

If no appropriate response is received

- A home visit will be completed on the 3rd day of the unexplained absence.

The DSL notifies Children's Social Care if a child with a child protection plan is absent for more than two consecutive days without explanation.

7.2 Absence and Punctuality

Parents are required to contact the school as soon as possible to inform us if a child is to be absent or late on **EACH** day that the child is eligible to attend.

This should be done via the Class Charts App using the Report New Absence Button.

This is our preferred method but there are alternatives below:

1. **Telephone** 01788 840600 - press 1 for years 7-11, press 2 for sixth form
2. **Text** 01788 422354
3. **Email** bil_attendance@stowevalley.com

Students are late if they are not in their first session by 8.50am

The attendance team and tutors will monitor lateness and punctuality. Sanctions and parental contact will be used as appropriate.

Where parents are phoning in daily to report student absence the school will follow an 'Explained absence process'. An explanation from a student's parent does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If a student has an explained absence **from school for more than 5 consecutive days**, on the 6th day the absence will automatically be unauthorised and the school will arrange a meeting that day with parents to discuss the reason for absence and support them in overcoming any barriers to attendance. A home visit may also be conducted on the 6th day of an explained absence in order to ensure our safeguarding duties are fulfilled. Where applicable medical evidence for an ongoing absence may be requested.

Please note that Bilton is required to make a sickness absence return to the Local authority If a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as **absent using code I (unable to attend because of sickness/ill health) and there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness**, or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (**whether consecutive or cumulative**) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

7.3 Authorisation of Absence

We are advised by government legislation and Local Authority guidance that attendance can only be authorised if the following applies:

- Medical reasons
Medical evidence may be required for recording absences in some cases that are complex or long term. The school can seek the medical evidence to better understand the needs of the student and identify the most suitable provision.
- Religious celebration observation
- If transport provided by the school/Local Authority cannot bring the child to school.

Absences may also be authorised for the following reasons, but this will be at the discretion of the attendance team and the Head Teacher:

- Where a Leave of Absence has been completed by parent/carer and is agreed by the Head Teacher
- Where a student has a medical appointment that cannot be changed e.g. a consultant appointment
- When the student has no fixed abode, their parent is engaged in a trade which requires them to travel, the student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and the student has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months
- Where a parent is travelling for occupational purposes
- Other exceptional circumstances e.g. family bereavement and for a limited period.

7.4 Medical Appointments

Where possible, appointments should be made out of school hours or in school holidays. However, we realise this is sometimes not possible. Students should come into school before and after appointments to ensure they miss as little lesson time as possible. Students should sign out and in at the attendance office before leaving/upon their return to school.

8 Leave of Absence During Term Time

Arranging holidays during term time causes issues for many reasons:

- the student's education suffers;
- lessons and extra-curricular activities are missed;
- there is often no opportunity for teachers to set additional work or to assist a child in catching up on their return from holiday; and
- Parents may be in breach of their legal obligation to send their child to school.

Leave of Absence

The regulations regarding Leave of Absence (The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.) advise:

- Head teachers **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.

The Supreme Court clarified has clarified the law on unauthorised leave, including holidays, during term time (Platt v Isle of Wright 2017). The Supreme Court has made clear that attending school 'regularly' means that the children must attend school on every day that they are required to do so. As such, the parents of any child who is absent from school without authorisation for any length of time are likely to be considered as committing an offence under s444 of the Education Act 1996.

- The law states a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if it considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
- Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.

- A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.
- Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school.
- When making an application for Leave of Absence parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify parents of their decision. The school may also request further information on the application and supporting documentation where appropriate.
- It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.
- The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the 'resident' parent i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.
- Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Where a leave of absence is requested, but additional days taken either prior to or after the request may be considered as part of the leave of absence.
- Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service, part of Warwickshire County Council. Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings.

Leave of Absence taken in the academic year 2024-25

The law relating to Penalty Notices is due to change with effect from 1 September 2024. Therefore, Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absences taken after this date will be issued in accordance with the updated legislation.

- Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices – 4 in total).
 - **First Leave of Absence offence:** The Penalty Notice amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.
 - **Second Leave of Absence offence** within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount.
- Payment plans will not be offered and/or payments received outside of the 28 day period will not be accepted. Where a penalty notice expires unpaid the

matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider criminal prosecution.

- **Third Leave of Absence offence** within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice) A penalty notices will be not be issued and the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.
- The Warwickshire Attendance Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council's Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>).
- **It is important to note**, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 each child if paid within 21 days).
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis and on its own merits.

9 Attendance Intervention

In line with the DfE statutory guidance we offer a supportive attendance process, which we also refer to as connection, based on a relational, needs led, stepped approach. Our school offers a welcoming ethos with high expectations for all. We will assess data to identify absence trends and use preventative meetings/discussions with families to listen, understand, support and remove barriers. Where needed we will formalise support to nurture improvement with strategies such as attendance contracts. As a last resort we will consider intensifying support and/or enforce legal sanctions.

Please see below examples of our attendance roadmap and attendance support procedures.

NB: This roadmap and flowchart is a guide and each case will be assessed and reviewed depending on each student's individual needs and which interventions will be most effective in supporting them to improve or maintain positive attendance. Early intervention will be sought so students can be supported meeting their attendance targets. The nature of student absence is crucial when applying this approach and individual circumstances will be considered.

9.1 Attendance Incentives

Bilton School promotes and incentivises good attendance on a continual cycle throughout the school year as we know it is vital to celebrate attendance on a regular basis. Examples of the way Bilton School promotes good attendance includes:

- Messages to parents and students on the school website
- Praise postcards sent home for improved attendance
- Assemblies celebrating individual, tutor or year group attendance

-Prizes given to individuals, tutor groups or houses based on attendance. This is not based solely on the highest attendance, but may include the most improved attendance over a set period of time.

-Stickers, stamps, postcards or other forms of recognition for excellent or improved attendance.