

BOUGHTON-UNDER-BLEAN & DUNKIRK METHODIST PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Reviewed: September 2022

Review Date: September 2023

Ratified by the FGB:

Signed.....Chair of Governors

Doing all the good that we can

We aspire for all our children to become confident, happy and caring individuals who achieve personal success and develop a love of learning and a life built upon our school values.

Boughton-under-Blean & Dunkirk is a Methodist Primary School and our Methodist values are at the heart of everything we do.

- Forgiveness
- Friendship
- Trust
- Justice
- Perseverance

These are then underpinned by our learning values.

- Communication
- Independence
- Aspiration
- Engagement

Our whole school ethos is built upon and guided by them. Every school policy is written with this in mind and implemented in way that reflects our vision of doing all the good that we can and developing children as life long learners.

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it

Proverbs 22:6

Statement of Intent

Boughton-under-Blean and Dunkirk Methodist Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. This policy represents our commitment to expect a consistently high attendance from all our pupils. It sets out our expectations and the strategies that the school will undertake to achieve this.

In accordance with Department for Education (DfE) advice to schools, Boughton under Blean and Dunkirk Methodist Primary will:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every child has access to full-time education.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

The Governors, Headteacher and school staff will work in partnership with parents and carers to achieve excellent attendance at Boughton under Blean and Dunkirk Methodist Primary.

The term 'parent' includes all natural parents, any person who has parental responsibility and any person who has day to day care of the child.

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement - it is a parent's/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children while they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is irregular will be considered vulnerable.

Aims

- To ensure that all children attend school regularly and punctually, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development. Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%.
- To safeguard pupils to the best of the school's ability.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and Governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence. Any pupil with attendance below 90% is classed by the DfE as a Persistent Absentee (PA). Schools are required to identify all PA pupils and report to the DfE at regular intervals during the academic year.
- To improve the life chances of the children attending school and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood. Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training.

Promoting Attendance

Boughton under Blean and Dunkirk Methodist Primary will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include newsletters, praise and a weekly class award for good or significantly improving attendance. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and children.

The School will:

- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality using newsletters and other forms of communications with parents making attendance a high priority.

- Employ a key member of staff with responsibility for monitoring, improving and evaluating school attendance. At Boughton under Blean and Dunkirk Methodist Primary, this role is fulfilled by Laura Jakob; Family Liaison Officer and her contact details are available on the school website.
- Follow a structured process for managing poor attendance. This may include writing to parents, inviting them to attend meetings and making arrangements in school to support their child to attend school more regularly.
- Encourage our children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored using our electronic registration system and that absences are followed up promptly.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies (GPs, Kent County Council Integrated Children's Services, School Health etc) to support children with any issues there might be.
- Meet the legal requirements for recording pupil absence using the correct registration procedures and codes with reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence. It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This will include ensuring that the pupil is supported to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils.
- Make arrangements to meet the requirements of pupils with additional educational needs or an Education Health Care Plan.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and sometimes puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know your child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Parents should regularly update the school during any period of absence from school and inform the school when their child is returning.

We expect parents to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality, with their child aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Keep absences to a minimum.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.

- Telephone the School when their child is unable to attend on the first day of the absence and each day thereafter with the reason for this. Parents should also let the School know if their child is going to be late eg if a car breaks down or an urgent appointment has been made.
- Provide a written explanation for the absence when their child returns to school.
- Parents should provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician, if asked to do so. Whenever possible all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours unless an emergency has arisen.
- Contact the school at the earliest opportunity if their child is experiencing any difficulties and the school will do everything possible to resolve the issues.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility under **Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act** and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school may create an offence in law.

We expect pupils to:

- Attend every day unless they are too ill, or the absence has been authorised by the school.
- Arrive at school on time.

The Role of School Staff

At Boughton under Blean and Dunkirk Methodist Primary School there is a whole school approach to ensuring excellent school attendance with some staff having specific responsibilities.

The Headteacher, Simon Way, has overall responsibility for school attendance.

Class teachers will keep accurate registers, completing the register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance register twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers will mark pupils present, absent or late.

It is the responsibility of Laura Jakob; Family Liaison Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date.
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence.
- Where there has been no communication from parents, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered on the register.
- Parents are informed twice yearly of their child's attendance.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance – the class teacher or form tutor to investigate and notify Laura Jakob of concerns. Laura Jakob to contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents

- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school may make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

Lateness

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.40am; registers are taken at 8.45am. All pupils who arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late; 'L' in the register.

The register will close at 9am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration and this will count as an unauthorised absence; code U.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for further action.

Absence

A child's absence will be authorised if approval has been given by the school in advance or an acceptable reason has been given afterwards. Term time holidays will not be authorised.

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. 'poorly' or 'unwell'
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

The Headteacher may authorise other absences in 'exceptional circumstances' but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. The principles for defining 'exceptional' are: rare, significant, unavoidable and short. An absence might be considered unavoidable if the event

could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. Once a child has been absent without permission, the absence cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in statutory referral to the Local Authority. The school will follow the appropriate procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the pupil's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings will be attached to the completed referral form with any other relevant information.

Children Missing Education

Parents must inform the school in writing if they are planning to remove their child from the school roll. This must include the details of the arrangements that will be put in place for the child's education.

The school will follow the Department for Education guidance relating to Children Missing Education (CME). If after ten day's continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will make a referral to the Local Authority.

Penalty Notices

Boughton under Blean and Dunkirk Methodist Primary School may make use of Penalty Notices to address poor school attendance in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

A penalty notice can be issued as a result of the following:

- Parentally condoned absence
- Unauthorised leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term-time
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion.

A Penalty Notice may be issued when a pupil has been absent for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 school days – these absences do not need to be consecutive.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28-day period may result in prosecution by the local authority.

Boughton under Blean and Dunkirk Methodist Primary School asks that parents fully support this policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education.