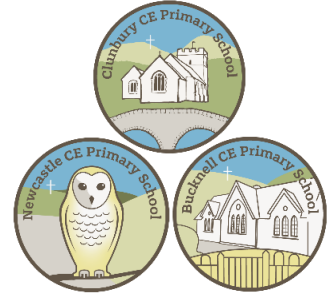# ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Blue Hills Federation

The Blue Hills Federation is a collective of three primary schools – Clunbury CE Primary School, Newcastle CE Primary School and St Mary's Bucknell CE Primary School. All three schools share one Executive Headteacher and one Governing Body. When using the term 'Blue Hills Federation' within this policy, it is in reference to all three schools. When policy only applies to one school that school will be named specifically. Newcastle CE Primary School does not have a nursery or a preschool, therefore any references to nursery or pre-school do not apply to Newcastle CE Primary School.

Our Vision

Proverbs 22:6 - Good News Bible
'Teach children how they should live, and they will remember it all their lives.'

We are a caring Church Federation bringing together and serving many communities.
We provide nurturing environments that facilitates learning for all. We encourage everybody to become confident, sociable and responsible citizens who achieve to the best of their ability in preparation for a fulfilling future.

Our Values

Trust and Truth; Joy and Happiness; Love and Respect; Thankfulness; Friendship and Family; Perseverance and Resilience

Review Date: Spring 2024

The Blue Hills Federation
Attendance Policy

Last reviewed	Spring 2024
Renewal due	Spring 2025

This policy was ratified by our Governors and shared with all staff.

Contents

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting 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 and reviewing regularly to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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, 2016 amendments)
- ➢ The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

The Federation uses the recommended DfE's Sign Up service for attendance data sharing.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the Federation's policies and ethos
- Making sure that school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the three schools
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Executive Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Executive Headteacher

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy in the Federation

- 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, working with the Local Authority
- Identifying children who are missing education and consideration of safeguarding issues

3.3 **The Designated Senior Leader responsible is Mrs Kathryn Jones at Clunbury, Mr Chris Richards at Newcastle and Mrs Rach Braybrooke at Bucknell.**

3.4 The Designated Senior Leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring high expectations and processes
- Promoting and visibly demonstrating the benefits of good attendance
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils, including those with medical conditions or SEND, and their families
- Holding regular meetings with parents of pupils who are considered to be vulnerable or those who are persistently or severely absent

The Designated Senior Leaders responsible for attendance is the Executive Headteacher and the Inclusion Lead and can be contacted via any of the school offices.

3.5 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes in the register before sending the registers to the school office at the end of the registration period for both the morning and afternoon sessions of school.

3.6 Administration Staff

Administration staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Contact parents on the first day of absence when a reason has not been provided and continue to do so where needed to ensure safeguarding
- Transfer and arrange phone calls from parents to the Inclusion Lead or the Executive Headteacher in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Review absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents to find out the reason why, and when the pupils will return

3.7 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure that their child attends every day, arriving on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.45am at Bucknell and Clunbury and by 9.00am at Newcastle on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise the school when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day that it is open arriving on time

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 Attendance register

An attendance register will be kept of all pupils.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and at the beginning of the second (afternoon) session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix One for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 7 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am at Bucknell and Clunbury and 9.00am at Newcastle on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at the beginning of the day and will be kept open for a 15 minute period. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm and will be kept open for a 5 minute period.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.45am or as soon as practically possible by phoning the school office (see also section 7).

Absence due to illness will be marked as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide 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 the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents/carers are encouraged to make medical and dental appointments 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.

Any requests for a leave of absence for a child must be made in writing by the parent/carer to the Executive Headteacher using the Request for Leave form which can be obtained for a school office or on the website.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

If the school identifies an ongoing punctuality issue for a child, the Designated School Leads for attendance will contact and support the family to arrive on time

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil does not attend school, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school will take appropriate safeguarding actions
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to

ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The Federation will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels.

5. Persistent and Severe Absence

5.1 Definitions
- Persistent absence refers to pupils who miss 10% or more of school
- Severe absence refers to pupils who miss 50% or more of school

5.2 Procedure
- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance and work with them to understand and address the reasons for absence
- Signpost and support pupils and parents to access any required services, where out-of-school barriers have been identified

Where a pupil is persistently absent:
- Put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers
- Work with the LA on legal intervention where support is not working or being engaged with
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care, where there are safeguarding concerns

Where a pupil is severely absent, there is an expectation from the DfE for the points above to be followed for persistently absent pupils **and** to agree a joint approach with the Local Authority.

5.3 Additional Support
The Federation working with other partners can provide:

- A whole family plan
- An education, health and care (EHC) plan
- Alternative provision

6. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Executive Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Executive Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

'Exceptional circumstances' are one off events which are unavoidable, examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

The Federation will consider each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least three weeks before the absence. The Executive Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

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

- Traveller pupils 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

Flexi-schooling arrangements:

- Newcastle CE Primary School offers flexi schooling. Please see attached policy

6.2 Legal sanctions

The Federation or Local Authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Local Authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance is celebrated throughout the school. The 'meet and greet' at the school gate each morning promotes to the school community the importance of attending school and arriving on time. Termly awards for 100% attendance are given.

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1   Monitoring attendance

The Federation will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level

- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may

be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The Federation will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

8.2 Analysing attendance

The Federation will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The Federation will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families identifying any persistent (10% of more of school) or severe (50% or more absence) absentee pupils.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

8.4 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.

The Federation will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Send letters to parents, from Autumn, where pupils' attendance is below 90%. Parents are invited to a meeting with the designated school lead for attendance where barriers to attendance and support can be discussed

9. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the designated school leads for attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix One: 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
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix Two: Summary Table of Responsibilities for School Attendance

(DfE document 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' September 2022)

All pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies. Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness). Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand. Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance. Accurately complete admission and attendance registers. Have robust daily processes to follow up absence. Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.	Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures. Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.	Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services. Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance. Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice. Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.	Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance. Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so. Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate. Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

Persistently absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention. Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care. Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders. Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).