

<i>Policy adopted by Governors</i>	<i>September 1994</i>
<i>Policy reviewed every two years by Learning & Development Team (Website)</i>	<i>October 2019</i>
<i>Policy to be reviewed</i>	<i>October 2021</i>

BOWER GROVE SCHOOL **ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Statement of Intent

Bower Grove School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils ready for school day changes in September. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Bower Grove School.

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 if they are to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging or exposure to anti-social behaviour.

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

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.50 am. All pupils that arrive late must report to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded. The vast majority of pupils are brought to school on KCC transport and their arrival time is beyond their control.

The Role of the School Staff

At Bower Grove there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Attendance team has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues. The Attendance team includes the Assistant Headteacher for secondary and primary behaviour, the Pupil Manager and the Lead DSL.

Class Teachers/Form Tutors complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Pupils are marked present or the Class Teacher/Form Tutor will make contact with parents to confirm a pupil's attendance. The Class Teacher will alert the attendance team of pupil's causing concern.

The school closely monitors pupil attendance through a weekly attendance meeting attended by the Leadership Team. For pupils whose attendance is below 90% (persistent absence) strategies are discussed and implemented to assist the pupils and their parents to improve the child's attendance.

It is the responsibility of the Pupil Manager 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 by phone call.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed termly of the child's attendance figure

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- 90 - 100% attendance – the Class Teacher/Form Tutor to monitor and notify the Attendance team for Behaviour and Attendance of concerns.
- Under 90% attendance – Weekly attendance meetings, school intervention letters, contact with home and meeting with parents/carers and/or pupils.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will 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.

Children Missing Education

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service should the circumstances above exist

Lateness

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.50 am. All pupils that arrive late must report to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

At Bower Grove School the register is taken at 8.50 am and 1.05 pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded.

The register will close at 9.30 am and 1.15 pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'L').

Where parents have responsibility for getting their child to school frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. A consistent approach to authorisation must be followed. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. 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.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/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's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (the identified need of some pupils may justify the need for a holiday at off peak times)

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies

- Fast Track to Prosecution

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteacher's can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

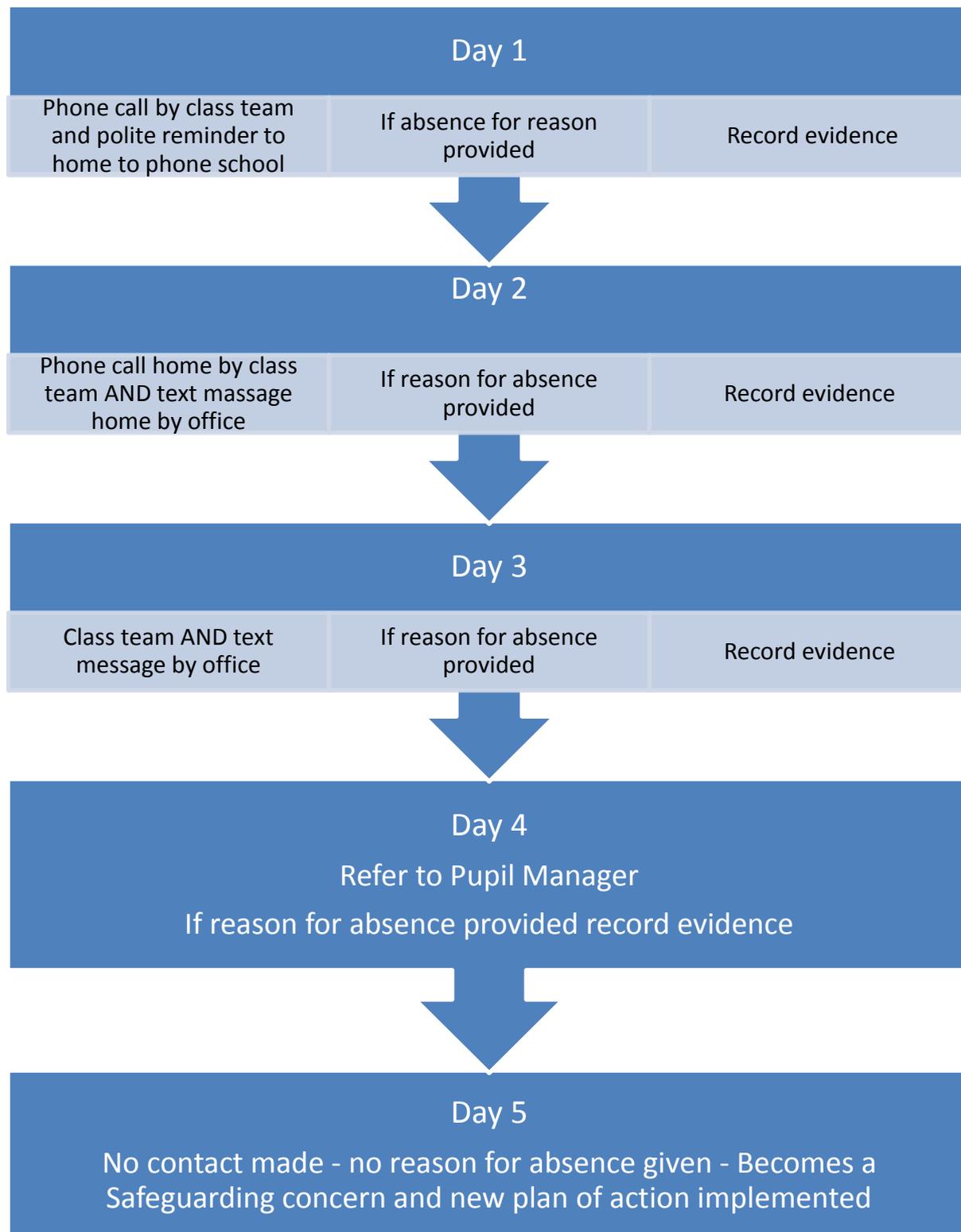
In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence 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 (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Appendix 1
Student Absence Protocol



Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

