



# Absence Policy

Reviewed by (Headteacher/DSL):

Date: September 2018

Approved by Board of Trustees on:

Review Date: September 2020

*You are advised that a printed version may not be the latest available version. The latest version, which supersedes all previous versions, is available on the shared drive. Those to whom this policy applies, are responsible for familiarising themselves with the latest version and for complying with the policy requirements at all times.*

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## **Bristol Steiner School Absence Policy**

### **1. Rationale**

Bristol Steiner School (BSS) aims to provide a safe and consistent environment for children in which they can learn and grow through full access to our curriculum and to the life of our school. Management of school attendance is a legal requirement of the School. BSS recognizes that Children Missing from Education (CME) can sometimes be a sign or symptom of child abuse and therefore regards CME as an important safeguarding issue. We therefore have clear and rigorous policies regarding school attendance.

This Absence Policy will be a working document which will change and grow as our expertise and knowledge does.

Our Absence policy is an essential part of our Safeguarding practice. BSS is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults. We believe the welfare of the child is paramount and that no child should suffer harm of any form, either at home or at school. Everyone who works at or visits our School has the responsibility to make sure all our children are safe. All staff are required to read Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 1 and Annex A – Children Missing Education.

*For the purposes of this policy, 'staff' also includes agency staff, volunteers, and students working in our Schools, and 'parents' includes carers and legal guardians – unless this is clarified further within the text.*

### **2. Aims**

BSS aims:

- to maintain high levels of each child's attendance;
- to have clear procedure in case of falling attendance;
- to have an effective and consistent monitoring system in place to assess pupil attendance and notified absences; and
- to constantly assess each pupil's attendance and to notify parents of any concerns.

### **3. Implementation**

This policy is the responsibility of everyone who works at, volunteers for or visits BSS. The Headteacher, Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will ensure that arrangements will be made to bring this policy to the notice of all staff (including new, temporary, and part-time employees), agency and other contract staff, volunteers, visitors and students during Induction so that they fulfill their duties to co-operate with this policy. This policy and procedure will apply in all these contexts, including school activities taking place off site. This policy should appear on the School website. Parents will be informed of the Absence Policy by including a summary in the prospectus.

### **4. Monitoring and Review**

BSS will seek to continually improve all its related safeguarding policies, procedures and guidelines. BSS will review this policy on a regular basis to confirm that content and approach is still appropriate. The review will take place whenever there are significant changes and not later than 12 months from the previous review date.

## 5. Other related policies

This policy works with the School's following policies:

- *Behaviour*
- *Complaints*
- *Safeguarding and Child Protection*

## 6. Registers

Legally the School to maintain an accurate daily register. Government guidelines state that every child of school age (i.e. five years and over) should have an attendance rate of 95% or more. Playgroup and younger Kindergarten children are exempt from this requirement and children below Class 4 have a lower expected attendance and this will be taken into account when monitoring absences.

Leave of Absence forms for parents are available from the School office and should be completed giving at least two weeks' notice. Requests for holiday absences will not be authorised. Requests for leave for exceptional reasons may be considered if:

- the absence will **NOT** bring the child's attendance to below 95%;
- the leave does **NOT** compromise a key point in the child's education (e.g. Class 1 introduction to Primary school, plays/presentations, camps, exams/exam prep), with the consideration that the entire curriculum is key to the child's education;
- parents can support their child with any catch-up school work required.

School registers are completed at the start of the first session of each School day and once during the second session for classes 1-5. They are kept up to date use national codes to enable the School to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. Admin staff will enter dates for all term weeks and appropriate codes for school holidays and INSET days in each new register prior to the commencement of the academic year. Absence codes and explanations are listed clearly in the registers. The codes will include a means of positive identification of unauthorized absence, i.e. no absence rings will be left blank in any register.

Class teachers will complete the register at the following times for their class:

- 8.45am morning registration
- 1.45pm for afternoon registration

The register will be closed 15 minutes after the registration time and sent to the School office where it will be checked by Admin staff. Any notification already received from parents will be recorded in the register with the corresponding code. Admin staff will contact the parents of any absent children where no reason has been given.

The Headteacher will monitor attendance regularly but at least six times per year and respond appropriately paying particular attention to persistent absences. Staff should also report persistent pupil absences to the DSL and always if there are more than 10 days unauthorised absence or if the child is vulnerable in any way. Staff should be especially vigilant for children who are subject to a child protection plan and report the DSL the pupil absence the same day it is noted.

## 7. Authorised Absences

The following actions will be taken in response to persistent Authorised Absences:

Bristol Steiner School, Redland Hill House, Redland Hill, Redland, Bristol. BS6 6UX

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E-mail: [reception@bristolsteinerschool.org](mailto:reception@bristolsteinerschool.org) Website: [www.bristolsteinerschool.org](http://www.bristolsteinerschool.org)

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- The child's parent will be notified by the class teacher of falling attendance and informed that this could impact on the child's ability to access the curriculum.
- If the child's absence continues to fall below 95% the parents will be contacted and requested to attend a meeting with the Class Teacher.
- The parents will be reminded that they have a legal obligation to facilitate their child's attendance, and that each child should have an attendance of 95% or above.
- The parents will be informed that poor attendance means that the School will be unable to meet the child's needs adequately.
- If there is no improvement in attendance the parents will be informed by the Headteacher that further absences will only be authorised if accompanied by a doctor's note. Unauthorised absences will then be monitored as below (Unauthorised Absences).
- If the child has continuous absences as a result of medical problems accompanied by a doctor's note, the School will offer information and support to look at possible causes, treatments.
- If the child is reluctant to attend School, reasons will be investigated and the Headteacher should attempt to meet with the family to discuss possible reasons and solutions.
- The Class Teacher/admin staff will continue to monitor attendance, and if there is no improvement a meeting with the parents, the Headteacher will consider further discipline, involvement of the Education Welfare Service (EWS), Exclusion (see below), referral to Bristol City Council Social Care and or prosecution.

### **8. Unauthorised Absences**

The following actions will be taken in response to persistent Unauthorised Absences:

- The parents of the child will be contacted and informed immediately of this.
- If the child has been absent with parent's knowledge, the parent can complete a Leave of Absence Form available from the office.
- If the child has been absent without the parent's knowledge a meeting will be called between the parent, Class Teacher and the Headteacher to discuss the seriousness of this. The meeting will be convened as soon as possible (within one week of the absence). The child will meet with the Headteacher to discuss their absence.
- If the child has another unauthorised absence, then another meeting will be called with parents, child, Class Teacher and Headteacher. The seriousness of the situation will be explained (i.e. safety of child when unsupervised, School responsibility).
- The School will attempt to work alongside the family, to facilitate the child's attendance.
- The child's attendance will be closely monitored in all lessons throughout the day, and any absences immediately investigated.
- Any further absences will be noted, and if found to be unauthorised a meeting will be convened again (as above), and disciplinary action taken. The parents will be involved at all times and their agreement will be needed, if they are unwilling to co-operate in facilitating their child's attendance then they may be in breach of the School Agreement. The Headteacher will consider further discipline, further involvement of the EWS, Exclusion (see below), referral to Bristol City Council Social Care, and/or prosecution.

A prosecution can only be set in place if all absences are unauthorised. The EWS exists to support schools and children with attendance problems, and the School will contact the EWS if a child is not attending school. If a family is to be prosecuted for failing to get a child to School regularly enough, we could expect the following situation/requirements:-

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## Policies and procedures: Absence Policy

1. Headteacher oversees the case and do the paperwork;
2. EWS supports the Headteacher in the above;
3. Headteacher writes a 'witness statement';
4. a court officer would support the Headteacher through the court process and it is expected that there would be a charge for this.

### 9. Training

Teacher training in register completion and absence recording and management will be included in the School's Teacher Induction training.

### 10. Safeguarding

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. Staff should follow the School's procedures for unauthorised absence in the Absence Policy for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future. BSS must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority – please see Education Welfare Service – Bristol City Council <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/schools-learning-early-years/education-welfare>

When a child goes missing or runs away they are at risk. Safeguarding children therefore includes protecting them from this risk. Local authorities are responsible for protecting children whether they go missing from their family home or from local authority care. Children may run away from a problem, such as abuse or neglect at home, or to somewhere they want to be. They may have been coerced to run away by someone else. Whatever the reason, it is thought that approximately 25 per cent of children and young people that go missing are at risk of serious harm. There are particular concerns about the links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation. Missing children may also be vulnerable to other forms of exploitation, to violent crime, gang exploitation, or to drug and alcohol misuse. Looked after children missing from their placements are particularly vulnerable. The police will prioritise all incidents of children categorised as 'missing' from home or care as medium or high risk, depending on the circumstances and the vulnerability of the child. When a child is found, the attitude of professionals towards a child who has been missing can have a big impact on how they will engage with subsequent investigations and protection planning. However "streetwise" they may appear, they are children and may be extremely vulnerable to multiple risks. A supportive approach, actively listening and responding to a child's needs, will have a greater chance of preventing the child from going missing again and safeguarding them against other risks. Current Government Guidance available from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

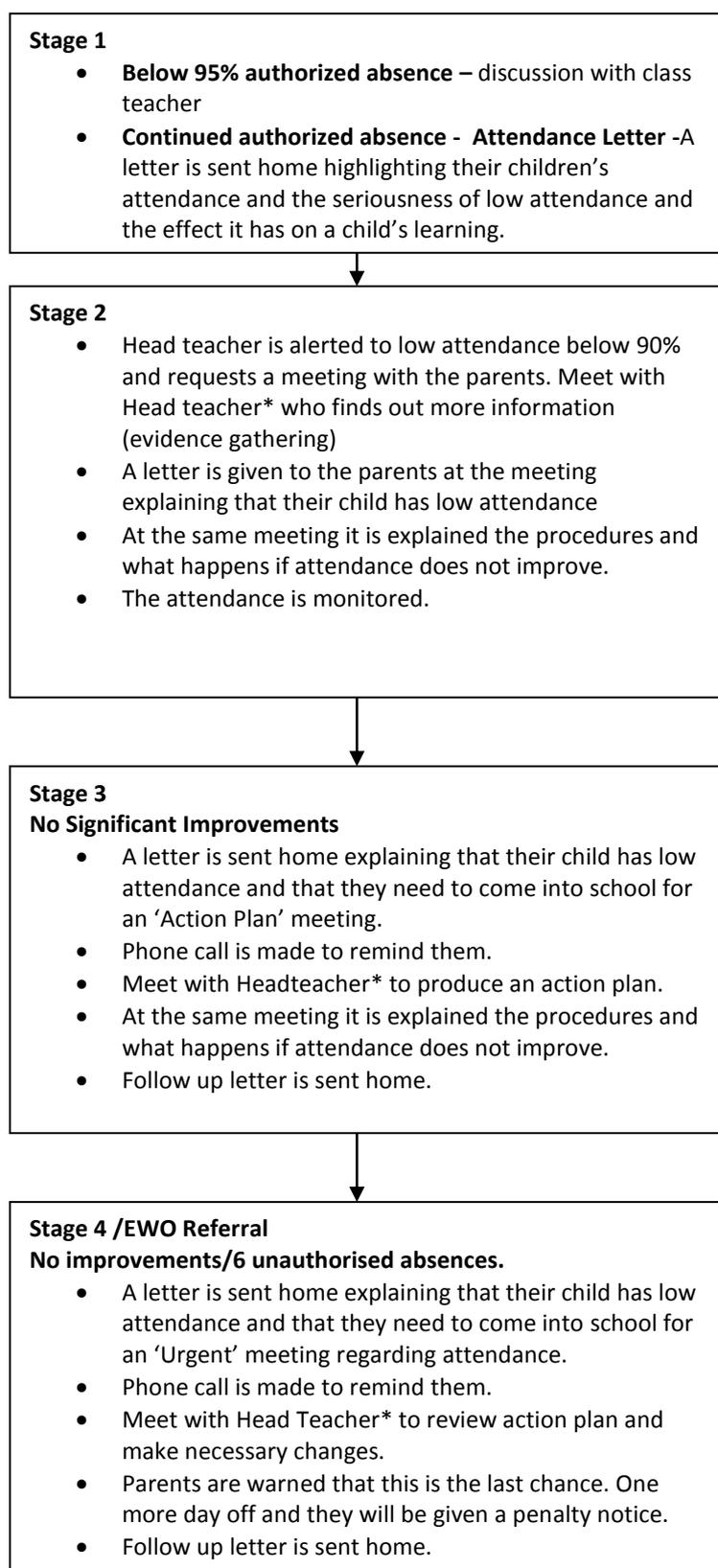
If staff become aware for whatever reason about a child who doesn't appear to be on a school roll at all (BSS or any other school), they should make the DSL aware of this and the EWS should be advised.

## Appendix A

Attendance at Bristol Steiner SchoolTERMLY PROCEDURE

Procedure	Where is it recorded?
1. Meet at the beginning of each half term (in the first week back) for an <b>Attendance Progress Meeting during SMT</b>	SMT minutes
2. The first part of the ' <b>Attendance Progress Meeting</b> ' the ' <i>Overall Monitoring for the Whole School</i> ' is analysed and discussed.	
3. The second part of the ' <b>Attendance Progress Meeting</b> ' is to go through each child whose attendance is 95% or below and decide on intervention: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90 – 95% - intervention by teacher, monitoring by Headteacher</li> <li>• under 90% - letter by Headteacher</li> <li>• Stage 1/2/3 Meeting – persistent absence or lateness</li> <li>• EWS Referral</li> <li>• Penalty Notice</li> </ul>	
4. The outcome of ' <b>Attendance Progress Meeting</b> ' (including intervention) is recorded on a class by class ' <i>Attendance Progress Meeting Outcome Sheet</i> '	<i>Attendance Progress Meeting Outcome Sheet</i> (X:\2.2 - SMT and College Files Confidential\Attendance Monitoring
5. Interventions are carried out and the date recorded on the child's record and on a termly tracker	<i>Child's record</i> <i>Termly attendance tracker</i>
<b><i>If any children become concerns throughout the term then interventions are put in place earlier.</i></b>	

FLOW DIAGRAM TO SCHOOL PROCEDURE & INTERVENTIONS FOR LOW ATTENDANCE



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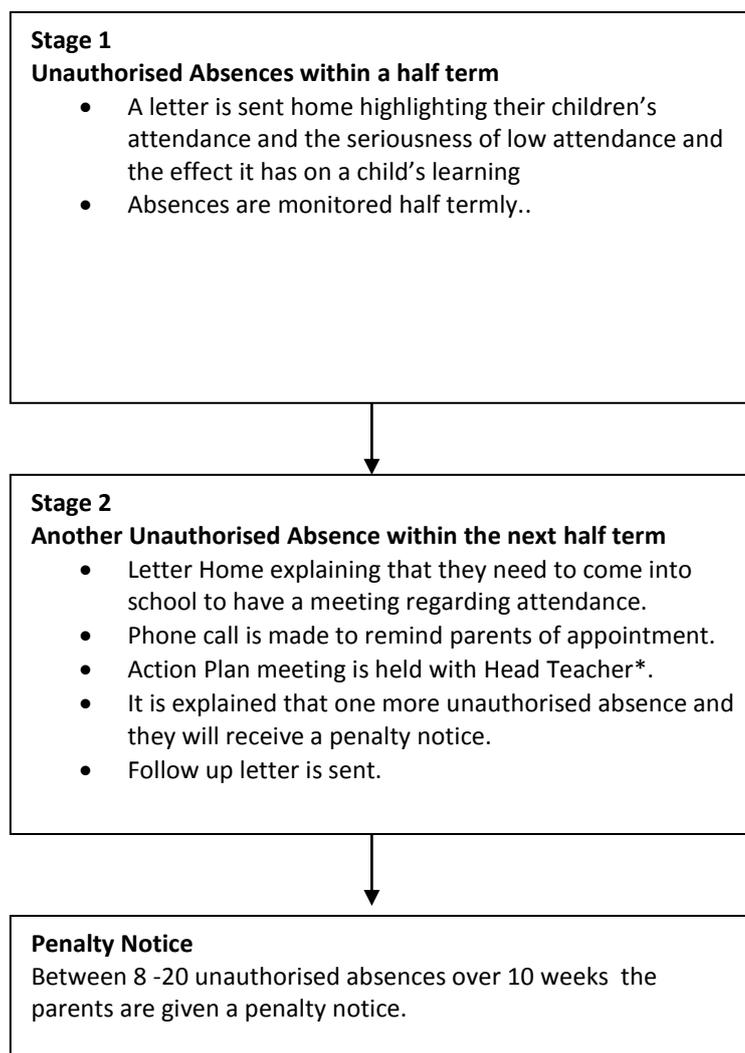
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**Penalty Notices**

Between 8 -20 unauthorised absences over 10 weeks the parents are given a penalty notice.

FLOW DIAGRAM TO SHOW SCHOOL PROCEDURE FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES



\*in Head Teacher's absence refer to SMT