



Burstow Park School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

Burstow Park School is an independent specialist provision for girls aged 11-18 years, with social, emotional and/or mental health needs (SEN Code of Practice 2014). The school is committed to providing good quality alternative full time education for all its pupils, many of whom may not have been in education for several years – or at best, have had numerous living and educational placements with gaps in learning. The school's aim of being dedicated to the welfare, holistic, educational and lifelong outcomes for the Looked After and 'at risk' client groups 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 and other wider curriculum opportunities and pastoral support here.

Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage, which adversely affect the young person's future: those pupils who have left with good national qualifications and have gone onto college, university or employment all have had a solid attendance record.

There is much evidence to show that children enjoy coming to Burstow Park School even when they have not been in school or attending a PRU or home tuition for some. This is evidenced by our very good attendance by most students.

We discuss the importance of good attendance from the initial stages with parents and their child. In our Home / School Agreement, we ask parents take responsibility for ensuring good attendance and the importance of us working together to ensure their child attends school regularly. If a child is not attending, home visits can be arranged where appropriate to encourage the child back into school.

The whole school community – led by the Head and Deputy Head, includes highly trained and skilled tutors and dedicated class teaching assistants/mentors, parents/ carers, pupils, and administrative staff. Collectively they all have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance for all pupils.

The purpose of this policy is to clarify everyone's part in this policy, procedure and the promotion of good habits of self-discipline, punctuality and attendance.

It has been drawn up based on current Surrey County Council local guidance and national DfE Guidance, incorporating statutory regulations.

School's roles and responsibilities

All staff at Burstow Park School have a key role to play in leading, supporting and promoting school attendance, and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community, and look forward to coming to school every day.

Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in relation to their own attendance and punctuality and to role model good time management within school.

To ensure good attendance remains a priority in the school, lead professionals for attendance are appointed:

Attendance Lead Professional:

David Wheatley

The School Office Manager ensures accurate recording and analysis of attendance data for all pupils. The Lead Attendance Professional liaises with relevant professionals both internally and externally to the school to ensure good attendance habits are formed and maintained.

The following sets out the school's processes for ensuring good attendance by all:

Expectations regarding attendance and punctuality at Burstow Park School

We recognise that when they first join us, many of our pupils may not have not been in school for some time. We therefore strive to promote the importance of good attendance from day one.

A formal student induction for every pupil is overseen by the school's Deputy Head, who is responsible for pastoral support. The induction both reassures and reinforces school expectations and routines, and typically includes:

- The importance of good attendance and attendance expectations
 - A discussion about the importance of punctuality
 - The importance of being appropriately prepared for the day
 - A discussion with child and parent/carer about any problems preventing them from attending regularly / punctually, so that measures can be put in place to minimise or eradicate these challenges from day 1
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- A discussion about the school behaviour points system and some simple, non-negotiable rules regarding smoking, uniform, and mobile phone use.
- There will also be a lot of liaison and discussion between school and parents/carers at this point to arrive at best fit for a suitable class group, and crucially Teaching Assistant.

Good attendance requires a joint approach between school and home. School provides a safe, welcoming environment and has a range of measures in place to support attendance. We also ask that parents/carers support good attendance, by:

- Encouraging regular school attendance and having an awareness of their legal responsibilities
- Settling the child to bed at a reasonable time, so they are alert and ready for the next day
- Ensuring that the child in their care arrives at the school punctually and prepared for the school day
- Ensuring that the school is contacted via email/ telephone whenever the student is unable to attend
- Contacting the school on the first day of the student's absence and advise their likely return date; contacting school again if the student does not return when expected so that their absence can be authorised
- Sending a medical certificate if the student's absence is for more than five school days or if a pattern of absence is apparent. A medical certificate is always required for absence from public examinations.
- Contacting the school whenever any problem occurs that may keep the student away from school
- Keeping medical appointments/therapy after school or on activity afternoons where possible
- Supporting the school term dates and keep holidays/contact visits out of school hours where possible.

Rewarding good attendance

Certificates are awarded to each student where attendance has been above the national average of 92%.

Attendance is reported in each school report (Autumn and Summer)

Fostering good attendance

The school adopts a nurturing ethos where positive, healthy attachments between adults and pupils are made. We continually monitor and proactively devise a bespoke curriculum to encourage attendance from individuals and provide 1-1 teaching with the 'best fit' teacher with ongoing



open pupil feedback – in order to motivate and sustain these emerging and improving habits, liking of school and attendance.

School staff will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for pupils
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice a day
- Monitor all pupils' attendance and punctuality
- Encourage good attendance and reward with agreed systems.

The school works closely with each placing Local Authority, and has a duty to report pupil attendance (and absence) rates where a pupil is funded by a LA. We are required that for pupils where weekly attendance rates fall below 91% a referral to the LA Educational Welfare Officer is made.

Absenteeism

By law, it is the school who is the authority to sanction, disapprove or categorise any non-attendance into authorised and unauthorised:

Examples of **Authorised** Absence:

- Pupil is ill (however, the school has a duty to monitor such absence to ensure that a pupil is not being kept away for minor ailments)
- A medical appointment
- A special day set aside for religious observance
- The funeral of a near relative
- The death of a near relative
- Contact visits pre-arranged with family members*
- Emotionally unfit for school.

* But, where possible, these should be after school hours.

Examples of **Unauthorised** Absence Can Include

- Absconding from school
 - Going shopping
 - A birthday treat
 - A day out or an extended weekend
 - Oversleeping
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Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend the school we will respond in the following manner:

- The school office manager contacts parents/carers by 10.00 am on first day of absence when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has arrived to explain the absence
- Make initial enquiries to parents/carers of pupils who are attending irregularly, to express concern and to clarify the school's expectations with regard to regular school attendance
- If it becomes apparent that there is a problem with school attendance (attendance falls below 91%), a strategy meeting will be set up with appropriate school staff and parent/carer at the earliest opportunity
- A pupil's social worker/placing authority will be informed and the Educational Welfare Officer, as described earlier. The school is required to alert the Education Welfare Officer / Inclusion Officer where a pupils weekly attendance falls below 91%
- When there has been an absence of 24 hours from a day student who is a Child in Need without any communication by parent or child, or where the taxi may report that there is no evidence of activity within the home, the school through the Designated Safeguarding Lead or her Deputy will report concerns on to social workers or the Local Authority.

Late Arrival

To encourage good habits, students need to arrive at school between 8.50 am and 9.10 am at the latest. Students who arrive after this time will be marked as late in the register. In order to minimise disruption late students will be encouraged to arrive during morning break.

Students who have attended essential morning medical appointments or other meetings and reviews are admitted any time and encouraged to attend for the rest of the school day.

Marking Registers

Registration times: 9:20 and 2.50pm (at each tutor time)

A computerised register is completed within our Management Information System, Integris. Tutors also currently complete paper registers for emergency evacuation roll call.

If a student is known to be on site but does not attend registration, they are still marked present in the register for Fire Regulation purposes. However, they will not receive their point for attending Tutor Time.

APPENDIX I

Absence Procedures

Parents are required to ring/email by 9.00 am to advise if child not in school.

For unexplained absences:

1. check whether call/email received from parent
 2. if not, contact taxi company to see if child is on their way
 3. if not, ring parent by 10.00 am
 4. if no response, email if parent has email address
 5. if no response by end of morning, ring again
 6. if CIN and no response from parent/carer within 24 hours, contact social worker
 7. if absence continues, phone calls and emails will continue to be sent to parent, keeping social worker advised where relevant
 8. if non attendance is out of character, a home visit may be arranged to identify possible reasons
 9. a record of all phone calls/visits will be made
 10. if no information after 10 school days, a letter will be sent to parent "Signed For", copying the LA case worker, inviting parent to attend a meeting at school to discuss the absence
 11. if no response to letter and child continues to be absent, after a further 10 school days and with LA agreement a referral form will be sent to the Surrey EWO
 12. an EWO referral will also be triggered by sporadic attendance falling below 91% in the academic year
 13. if social worker and LA think absence is due to school not meeting the child's needs, an Emergency Annual Review will be called to discuss strategies to make the placement work, or to recommend that an alternative placement be found
 14. any further actions taken will be as advised by EWO
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