



Bryony School

Attendance Policy

Please note that start/end times are temporarily amended to ensure the separation of our 'bubbles' during the COVID Pandemic. Full details are in our Return to School Plan in September 2020 and subsequent communications to parents and staff in line with our COVID-19 Risk Assessment. We are currently using the August 2020 DfE Guidance for Recording Attendance during COVID-19.

Statement of Intent

Bryony School will ensure that all children are greeted warmly and made to feel welcome upon arrival and staff will ensure that they depart safely.

Bryony School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance and punctuality is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time.

The role of the school is to make sure:

- School starts promptly
- We provide an exciting and stimulating learning environment.
- Parents understand our school policy on attendance.
- You know how to let us know if your child is absent and why.
- All our attendance records are accurate and up to date.
- We work in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and other agencies to resolve attendance problems.

Parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure:

- Your child arrives on time
- She/he is suitably dressed
- She/he is ready to learn (i.e. not unwell)
- You understand our policy on attendance and know how to notify us about any absences.

- Provide at least two up to date emergency contact numbers for your child and ensure the school is informed of any changes to contact details immediately in writing.

Registration

Registration is valued by all staff as an important part of the school day. Staff acknowledge attendance registers as legal documents and all staff undertake to mark them accurately. Staff involve the children in our school in the registration process by confirming verbally that they are present and by allowing the respective class leaders to collect and return their class register to the central register trays.

Role of the Teacher

The teacher or Teaching Assistant records attendance in the official register at **08.45 a.m.** and **13:30 a.m.** after lunch.

School staff should identify unauthorised absences and bring them to the attention of the School Office as soon as possible or at least by break time.

Staff in the Upper and Lower Pre-School should also record absences on their lunch records at **12:10 p.m.** to confirm those staying (in addition to the morning and afternoon registers).

Parental responsibility

Under *Section 444 of the Education Act 1996*, parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he or she is a registered pupil. Failure to discharge this duty may result in the Local Authority prosecuting the parents. If found guilty of the offence, each parent may be fined.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent and by 9.30 a.m. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that your child is safe. We request that notification is given by telephone, email (office@bryonyschool.org.uk) ParentMail or letter.

If no acceptable explanation is provided regarding a child's absence within two days of a child's return to school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Please avoid medical/dental appointments during the school day if at all possible. However, if an appointment during the school day is unavoidable, please send a letter or email in advance to request authorisation.

The School Office

The School Secretary will record any messages of absence taken by phone or email in the message book and pass these on to the relevant teacher to record officially in the class registers.

Arriving late to school

At Bryony School, pupils are expected to **arrive by 8.45 a.m.**

Any pupils arriving after **9.00 a.m. but before 9.15 a.m. are regarded as late**. This will show in the register as 'code **L**'. If the school has been notified in advance of a valid reason for late arrival e.g. medical appointment, the late arrival will be recorded instead as an authorised absence.

In the Infant Department, all pupils arriving after this time should report to the school office where their parents should sign the late book. In the Junior Department, parents are asked to sign a late book kept in the Staff room.

Pupils who arrive after 9.15am will receive an unauthorised late mark. This will show in the register as 'code **U**'. This mark counts as an unauthorised absence.

Parents/carers of pupils arriving late to school on a regular basis will be asked to come and meet the Head teacher to discuss reasons behind being late and the impact on the child and the rest of the class.

The afternoon session for the pre-school begins promptly at 1.30 p.m. Pre-School children attending the afternoon session must wait at the gate with their parents where they will be met by a member of staff who will take them to the classroom. Pupils arriving after 1.30 p.m. will receive a late mark. This will show in the register as '**code L**'.

Frequent or patterns of lateness (e.g. more than 10 lates in any term, or a specific day of the week when child is always late) will be referred to the Head teacher by the class teacher and may result in a meeting with the Head teacher and formal letter requesting improvement.

Authorised absence

Absence is authorised by the school if the school has given approval in advance for a pupil's absence or has subsequently received a satisfactory explanation for absence. Authorised absence may be granted for:

- Sickness
- A specific event of religious observance
- A family holiday in certain circumstances (see holiday leave below)
- Attending a medical or dental appointment
- A child who is excluded from school
- A child receiving education off site

Unauthorised absence

If a parent provides no explanation, or the school is not satisfied with the explanation given, then the absence is not authorised. The Head teacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised parents will be notified in writing.

Departure during school hours

Children are not allowed to leave the school during the course of the day unless notification in writing has been received and approved by the school.

Parents/carers of children leaving outside the normal departure times must sign the 'child in/out record' (located in the School Office for Infants and Pre-school and by the registers in the Juniors). This record should also be signed by school staff.

Parents/ carers and a member of staff must also sign the child back into school if they are returning to school the same day e.g. for a medical appointment.

The child in/out record is to ensure that in the event of a fire or other emergency we have a record of who is in the building.

Leave of absence

'Leave of Absence' forms are available from the School office for parents/carers to complete. The Head teacher will discuss proposed absence in term time with the parents/carers before deciding whether to confirm the absences is authorised or unauthorised.

Amendments to regulation 7 of the Education Regulations 2006 on leave of absence that came into force on 1st September 2013 have removed the option of granting authorised leave for the purpose of a holiday in term-time. The Regulations now specify that schools **'may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances'**. **Leave is unlikely to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm.** It will be up to the Head teacher to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Each application for any type of leave will be looked at on an individual basis, taking into account the circumstances of the request, including:

- The nature of the event for which leave is being requested
- The frequency of any such requests
- Whether a parent has given sufficient advance notice (usually 1 month)
- Pupil's attainment, attendance to date and the ability to catch up on missed schooling (including absence during statutory assessment periods)
- The time of the requested holiday dates do not clash with annual assessments carried out in May and June or other statutory tests

Applications not meeting the above criteria will result in the absence being **unauthorised**. Where children have already missed a lot of school time and the holiday is still taken, the school will contact Kim McGrane, Medway Council's Attendance Advisory Service.

Children from the Nursery and Pre-school classes do not officially need to complete 'Leave of Absence' forms as they are not formally of school age. However, we encourage this as good practice.

Absences / persistent lateness as a cause for concern

A child will be considered as being 'Persistently Absent' when school attendance falls below **90%**.

In line with our Child Protection and other safeguarding policies, staff are required to report any causes for concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Mrs Gee or

the Deputy DSLs Mrs Atkins and Mrs Notley. Any concerns will be shared with parents/carers as early as possible as more often than not there are extremely reasonable explanations for the concern.

If the school feels that your child isn't attending properly and there has been no improvement since speaking with the parents/carers, the school are required to ask the Medway Council's to investigate. Similarly, the Head teacher will refer a child's parents to the Children Missing in Education team (cme@medway.gov.uk) if a child has been withdrawn from Bryony School without notification of a child's next school (and subsequent confirmation by that next school of their attendance).

Bryony School will notify Medway Council authority within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register (onoffroll@medway.gov.uk). Bryony School will also notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, as soon as the ground for deletion is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply where the pupil has completed the school's final year, unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided.

Inspection of registers

The admission and attendance registers are available for inspection by authorised personnel during school hours.

Policy adopted by Head teacher	September 2020
Date of next review	September 2021

Key Contacts

Kim McGrane

cme@medway.gov.uk

Attendance Advisory Practitioner (Children Missing Education), Medway Council

Tel: 01634 337310 / 337308

Further Information

School Attendance, Departmental Guidance, August 2020

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf

Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>

Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2020

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912592/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_Sep_2020.pdf