



'Let your light shine' Matthew 5:16

## Bilbrook CE Middle School

### Attendance Policy

#### Principles

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. Bilbrook CE Middle School works with VIP Education, to ensure excellent attendance and punctuality at school.

#### September 2021

From September 2021, Bilbrook CE Middle School will follow the guidance as set out by the government to reflect the country's current position with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic.

If any child is absent from school and the reason for absence refers to covid-19 concerns then the school will phone to find out the details. If the reason does not fit the guidance as outlined in the government document above, then the Education Welfare Worker will be instructed to make contact with the family to ascertain the details of the absence. The school will follow the penalty notice process stated in this document if a valid reason for absence is not provided.

#### School and the family

Bilbrook CE Middle School has a comprehensive rewards policy in place which ensures that excellent attendance is appropriately rewarded. All students must be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Some students are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it does not help to cover up absence or to give in to pressure and excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence.

The attendance policy includes referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of students. The school has a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to contact the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to VIP Education. There may be further referrals to the Local Authority if the situation does not improve. At Bilbrook CE Middle School a register is taken twice a day, in the morning and afternoon, to establish the whole school attendance figures. This shows whether the student is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. At Bilbrook CE Middle School a register is taken every lesson to monitor attendance, however the morning and afternoon registrations are used for all attendance figures for the Local Authority and census returns. If a student of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day of absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either authorised or unauthorised. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required. When the school reception has spoken to a parent / carer on the phone or received a text / email the reason is logged and indicated by a red flag on the register.

Authorised absences are defined as mornings or afternoons away from school for a valid reason like illness or other unavoidable causes. Unauthorised absences are defined as those absences which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences which have never been properly explained; and
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark. This is after 9.05am.

Parents whose child is experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is usually successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from VIP Education. An action plan may be drawn up using an Early Help Assessment Form. This is statutory as a referral may later be made to the Local authority. The EWO from attend VIP Ltd will try to resolve the situation with letters, phone calls, home visits and / or school-based meetings. If attendance does not improve then the Early Help Assessment Form will be sent to the Local Authority. The LA will work with the family but these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and / or 3 months imprisonment.

## **Procedures**

Bilbrook CE Middle School has a computerised system for recording and monitoring attendance. Lists are produced of any students who are late or absent for morning or afternoon registration.

Bilbrook CE Middle School applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

### **Parents/Carers of Bilbrook CE Middle School students must;**

Phone or email the school on each day of absence unless the school has permitted more than one day of absence due to severe conditions such as broken bones, an operation, etc. The school reception will advise on when to contact the school again with an update. The dedicated phone number is 01902 840910 the email is office@bilbrookmiddle.com

1. If there is no contact from parents about their child's absence then a text will be sent home asking for the reason.
2. If there is no response to the text then on the second day of absence a phone call will be made home. All emergency numbers in the computer system will be contacted until a reason has been supplied.
3. Where there is still no response from the parent/carers the assistant headteacher will inform the EWO from VIP Education to conduct a safe and well visit after 3 days of absence.
4. There may be further referrals to the Local Authority if the situation does not improve.
5. In instances where the school feel there has been deliberate avoidance to inform the school of an absence a letter will be sent home inviting the parents/carers to a meeting to resolve the situation.

### **Bilbrook CE Middle School will;**

1. Contact you via text message (or telephone) on each day of absence if the school has not been informed of the reason for non-attendance.
2. Let you know if your child's absence or lateness is giving cause for concern. Let you know of any changes or special dates for the term.
3. Include a record of your child's attendance on each school report.
4. Listen to your worries and concerns and work with you to find solutions to any problems that may arise.

5. Work in partnership with VIP Education, the Local Authority, and any other organisations that offer support to children and their families.
6. Welcome students back after any period of absence and help them to catch up with any missed work.
7. Praise and record excellent attendance and punctuality as well as any improvement that may have been shown.
8. Arrange meetings in school to resolve attendance issues with VIP Education, or provide a facility for VIP Education to hold meetings in school.

### **Late Arrival at School**

1. If a student arrives during the tutor registration, they must report to the tutor.
2. If a student arrives during curriculum time they must report to the school reception to sign in. A 'U' code will be used.
3. All medical reasons for lateness should be explained in a letter, or an appointment card can be given as proof of attendance.
4. Lateness is monitored by the form tutors and the Attendance Team and sanctions will be applied where appropriate. The Headteacher and VIP Education will periodically supervise 'late gates' and advise parents/carers and students of punctuality to school by letter or phone.
5. If persistent lateness continues, i.e. after the register has closed, the school may consider a penalty notice. Persistent means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding school holidays.
6. Registration in the morning at 8.40am is with the student's form tutor and registration in the afternoon is at 1.20pm (completed by the teacher who teaches during lesson 5).
7. In circumstances where lateness becomes an issue, meetings with the school and VIP Education have taken place and letters have been sent home, then a further letter will be sent indicating that all lateness after 8.40am will be deemed 'unauthorised'. The persistent lateness action mentioned in point 5 will then be actioned.

### **Arrangements for leave of absence**

1. As from September 2013 no holidays can be authorised by schools.
2. If a parent / carer would like to request a leave of absence, then this must be put in writing to the Executive Headteacher four weeks before the leave of absence is requested.

3. All requests will be considered on their own merits.
4. The power to authorise/ not authorise a leave of absence is at the Executive Headteacher's discretion and is not an automatic right.
5. An absence for the bereavement of a close family member, a funeral or important religious observance could be counted as exceptional, and leave of absence granted. This would be a 'C' code on the register.

### **Penalty Notices**

Bilbrook CE Middle School will work closely with VIP Education Welfare Service and the Local Authority to ensure regular attendance at school. The Local Authority can take legal action against a parent/carer if the student does not attend school regularly and there is not a medical reason for the absence.

This action might take one or two forms, either issuing a penalty notice or prosecution in the magistrate's court.

### **Penalty Notice Procedure**

1. The Local Authority may issue Penalty Notices for Bilbrook CE Middle School as part of their ongoing casework or following a referral from the school.
2. A formal written warning will be issued to each parent or carer detailing that they may be issued with a Penalty Notice.
3. If there are unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) owing to a leave of absence (inc. holiday related) in term time not agreed by the Executive Headteacher.
4. A Penalty Notice will be issued through the post at the end of the 5 school day period if the required level of improvement has not been achieved.
5. If persistent lateness continues, i.e. after the register has closed (or in some circumstances at 8.40am where a letter has been sent home informing of this), the school may consider a penalty notice. Persistent means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding school holidays.
6. If an excluded student is in a public place at any time during school hours in that student's first five days of exclusion. An 'excluded student is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspection act 2006. If the excluded student is present in a public place during school hours on a school day then the parent has committed an offence under section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine.

**A penalty notice can only be issued by the Local Authority. An early Help Assessment form will be completed by the school's Education Welfare Officer which will detail ongoing concerns and action taken. This will be done by VIP Education in conjunction with the school.**

The Local Authority will respond to a request from Bilbrook CE Middle School within 10 school days of receipt and where the criteria are met, the following will ensue;

1. A penalty notice can be issued in the case of unauthorised absences, including lateness.
2. In cases where there is more than one poor-attending student in a family multiple notices may be issued.
3. Parents will only receive one warning notice period for improvement in attendance in a single academic year. If attendance deteriorates again then no further formal warning notice will be issued and the Local Authority can automatically consider other statutory actions in un-authorised absence re-occurs.
4. If there are 20 unauthorised sessions (10 school days) in a twelve-week period lost to unauthorised absence by the student during the previous three terms, then a referral to the Local Authority can be made.
5. Where parents fail to comply with the procedures contained within the protocol for a family holiday a Penalty Notice may be considered.

## **Changes to the Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices Commencing 1st January 2018**

### **Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time**

Any period of unauthorised leave may result in you as a parent/carer receiving a penalty notice fine. The head teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence will be referred by the Attendance Team to VIP Education EWO.

### **Penalty Notice for persistent lateness**

Previously a pupil had to achieve 20 unauthorised late marks before a penalty notice warning could be issued. This has now changed to 10 marks, and late marks do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued.

### **Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness**

If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence or is late 10 times over a twelve-week period, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

## **Payment of Penalty Notices**

1. Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.
2. Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parent or carer's liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.
3. Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days is £60 and payment after this time but within 28 days is £120.
4. The council retains the revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs.
5. Payments are not accepted in part or by instalments.

## **Non-Payment of Penalty Notices**

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the Notice and will trigger the fast-track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1), of the Education Act 1996. Prosecution will be actioned by the Local Authority. This could result in a fine of up to £1,000 for each student whose attendance is causing concern and for each parent/carer involved in the prosecution.

## **Attendance data**

Attendance trends are analysed on a daily basis. Form Tutors, pastoral leaders and the Attendance Team will take action to improve a student's attendance.

Parents are contacted by letter (or a phone call) if the school has concerns about attendance issues.

When an individual student's attendance level falls below 90% in any term without good reason, The VIP Education Welfare Officer will be contacted. Following investigation any unresolved issues or a continuing drop in attendance could result in the Early Help Assessment form being completed and the involvement of the Local Authority. This will then be an open case for the Local Authority and may result in a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 section 444.

Bilbrook CE Middle School will not authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which need to be in school time.

## **Bilbrook CE Middle School does the following to promote good attendance:**

1. There is information in the student planner about attendance % and how time off school relates to potential lower achievement

2. Students record their half term % attendance in the planner (KS2) or notes section of their knowledge bank (KS3).
3. The tutor will set a target for the following half term
4. If the whole school target of 97% attendance is achieved, additional 15mins of break time is awarded.
5. Certificates are sent home for any student who achieves 100% in a full term.
6. Vouchers or seasonal prizes are awarded to students with 100% for the year. Names are drawn from a raffle.
7. Every week attendance is shared in assembly.

**The staff responsible for attendance at Bilbrook CE Middle School are the following:**

Headteacher

Pastoral Lead – Attendance Team

Receptionist – Attendance Team

All form tutors

School reception for first day response

**Summary**

Bilbrook CE Middle School has a legal duty to publish the attendance figures to parents, this is done through pupil reports. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.