

# BRENTWOOD URSULINE CONVENT HIGH SCHOOL



## Student Attendance

Authorised by Resolution of the Governing Body of the Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Signature: .....

Effective date of the policy: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Review date of policy: November 2026 or earlier as required

**This policy is written in the light of the school mission statement.**

Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School aims to provide excellence in education. To achieve this aim our students need to attend school regularly. We recognise that good understanding and practices of attendance, punctuality and being prepared for work, are skills that everyone will need throughout their life and will aid success in the wider world.

As Christians we have a responsibility to develop and use our talents to the best of our ability; in terms of our school attendance, we want students to engage in their lessons and grow in personality, skills, knowledge and relationships.

Good school attendance starts with close and productive relationships between parents, pupils and professionals, so it's important schools and families work together. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school and arrive punctually. The school, working in partnership with them, aims to achieve an attendance record of above 95%.

### **Aims**

Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School is committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We are also committed to promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons.

### **Legislation and guidance**

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to: [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

### **Roles and responsibilities**

**Governors** are responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole

The **headteacher** is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels

The **designated senior leader for attendance** (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Organising for the issue of letters, as outlined in Appendix 1, and/or sanctions.

**Form tutors** are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information onto SIMS in a timely manner.

**Pastoral support assistants** and admin/office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Head of Year, where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

**Parents/Carers** are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence between 8am and 8.30am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the relevant pastoral staff (Form tutor, Head of Year and/or Pastoral Support Assistant).

**Students** are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time
- Attend every timetabled session, on time

### **Recording attendance**

The school will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. Teachers will take an attendance register at the start of the school day and during every subsequent timetabled lesson.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### **Reporting to parents**

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels via half-termly reports on the SIMS ParentApp.

### **Attendance monitoring**

Student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the school governors.

### **Reducing persistent and severe absence**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
  - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
  - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
  - Explain the help that is available
  - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
  - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see Appendix 1).

### **Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated. At every review, the policy will be approved by the School Governors.

### **Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour and Discipline policy

## **Appendix 1**

### **School Day**

The school day starts at 8.45am and ends at 3.10pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day.

### **School Absence**

#### **Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence between 8am and 8.30am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school administrative staff, who can be contacted via 01277 227156.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, a prescription, an appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. The school will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

#### **Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

The school encourages parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent must apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Please note that there is no entitlement for parents/carers to take a child out of school during term time; however, you may be able to apply to the school for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Go to Appendix 2 for the application form for a term-time absence.

#### **Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent.

#### **Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Send InTouch messages through SIMS to contact the parent/carer for an explanation
- Call the parent on each day of the period of absence without explanation to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer or make a referral to the relevant MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) team
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance

### **Sanctions**

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

### **Attendance letters**

The school will issue attendance letters to students whose attendance falls below expectation. There is a First, Second and Third Attendance letter. These letters will be issued in sequence, outlined below, and will outline the student's current attendance rate, the school's expectations and also explain how improvements should be made.

### **Penalty notices**

The school or the local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine and/or a penalty notice, each parent must pay £60.00 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

### **Notices to improve**

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

<b>Schedule of response to student non-attendance</b>
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**1.** Parents contacted on first day if student absent from school unexpectedly.

**2.** First Attendance Letter: Shortly after the first half term of the year, parents of students with less than 90% attendance will be sent a letter pointing out that attendance is not satisfactory and requesting an improvement. Regular attendance reviews will be carried out thereafter at approximately four-weekly intervals for the rest of the year.

At each attendance review thereafter, First Attendance Letters will be sent to parents of students who fall below 95% attendance for the first time.

**3.** Second Attendance Letter: At the attendance review points, Second Attendance Letters will be sent to the parents of students whose overall attendance has remained below 95% since they received the First Attendance Letter. Parents will be invited to meet with the Head of Year to discuss the reason for unsatisfactory attendance and a timetable of steps to bring about improvement before the next review.

**4.** Third Attendance Letter: At the attendance review points, Third Attendance Letters will be sent to the parents of students whose overall attendance has remained below 95% since

they met with the Head of Year following the Second Attendance Letter. Parents will be invited to meet with the Senior Attendance Champion to agree steps to bring about improvement within a timescale of up to 4 weeks, set by the Senior Attendance Champion.

**5.** If the school judges that sufficient improvement has not occurred within the stipulated timescale, parents will be invited to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the matter.

It should be borne in mind that the schedule set out above could potentially cover as much as half of an academic year. Whilst the school will always try to be understanding about the causes of persistent absence and try to support individual student needs, where attendance falls far short of our expectations despite repeated interventions, it may be necessary to refer to the Local Authority Attendance Compliance Service for consideration of legal action on the grounds of non-attendance.

## Appendix 2

### Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time in **exceptional circumstances**.

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible below. The Headteacher may request evidence to support any request made for leave of absence.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a student to take part in protest activity during school hours. Similarly, family holidays will not be classed as exceptional circumstances, so it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for this purpose.



**Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School**  
**Application for Leave of Absence from School during term time**  
**(This form consists of two pages)**

Taking your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to their educational progress. **THERE IS NO ENTITLEMENT** to parents / carers to take a child out of school during term time, however you may apply to the school for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Head Teacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013). If the absence is not authorised and the leave is taken, the matter will be referred to the Local Authority who may issue a Penalty Notice for £120 (or £60 if paid within 21 days) to each parent / carer for each child taken out of school. Failure to submit a leave of absence request will result in the absence being unauthorised and a referral to the Local Authority who may again issue a Penalty Notice as above.

**Please note: If you have previously received a Penalty Notice for an offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance or been the subject of a prosecution for any child in relation to irregular school attendance, you may not be given the opportunity to pay a further Penalty Notice; your case may proceed directly to court.**

Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school.

I would like to request permission for leave of absence for my child a pupil registered at your school for the reasons detailed below (further information can be attached if required).

**Child's full name:**

**Child's Date of Birth:**

**Form/Reg Group:**

**Child's full address and postcode:**

**First date of absence:**

**Last date of absence:**

**Date of return to school:**

**Number of school days absent:**

**Reason for request** (please give full details, further details can be attached to this form):

**FULL name of person making request:**

**Relationship to child:**

**Full address and postcode (if different from child's above):**

**If child above does not reside with you, does the resident parent agree with this application: YES/ NO**

**Signature of parent/carer with whom child resides:**

**Date of signature:**

**Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School**



## Application for Leave of Absence from School during term time

Childs Forename and Surname:

Child's Date of Birth:

Child's Year Group:

Child's Form / Reg:

Dear (insert parents Title, full forename, and surname):

**Re: Application for Leave of Absence from School during term time**

Date of application received:

Date of response from school:

Percentage attendance year to date:

Number of sessions absent this academic year:

Number of which are authorised:

Number of which are unauthorised:

Have the family of this child been issued with a Penalty Notice in the previous twelve calendar months, YES / NO (please circle) If YES please state how many:

Total in previous twelve calendar months (please note if applicable):

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Your application for leave of absence as detailed above has been:

Authorised (number of sessions absent authorised):

Unauthorised (number of sessions absent unauthorised):

This is for the reason stated below:

Headteacher Name:

Headteacher signature:

Date: