



23rd November 2023

Dear Parent / Carer,

New School Attendance Policy

With the school year still in its infancy, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight to all families the new Attendance Policy the School has adopted and the recent study carried out by the Children's Commissioner, along with its findings.

The new Attendance Policy can now be found on our website under the 'Key Information' tab and then 'Policies'. You can also access it by clicking on this link:

<https://www.buckinghamschool.org/site/data/files/files/admission-form/Attendance%20for%20Learning%20%20Next%20Review%20Sept%202025%201.pdf>

I wanted to draw your attention to some key changes, but most importantly highlight that the School remains committed to supporting all families who are experiencing barriers to their child regularly attending school.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a national increase in students identified as persistent absentees (students with under 90% attendance) and therefore an increased focus on school attendance for young people across the country. Our Policy has had to adapt to these changes, whilst maintaining regular attendance to school at its core.

Below are some of the key additions to the Policy that the School feels families should be made aware of.

Parents should:

- Work with the School and not against, in supporting their child's attendance
- Do their utmost to fulfil their legal responsibilities and ensure their children attend school
- Ensure any work is completed at home during an enforced period of absence.
- Provide evidence for the absence to be authorised in the event of long-term absence or repeated school time appointments
- Inform the Attendance Director, Form Tutor or Head of Year, of any reason or barrier that may hinder their child from attending school

The School:

- Will make home visits if there are safeguarding concerns and welfare checks on those families whose child has not attended school, but have made the School aware.
- Will communicate with families effectively and implements the appropriate interventions in accordance to the student's attendance levels.

The Children's Commissioner published the report 'Missing Children, Missing Grades' at the start of November 2023. The findings were bleak and identified that there is still a long way to go before attendance levels begin to match those pre-pandemic and that attitudes of families towards attending school have become more relaxed.

The Buckingham School is concerned that every student should have the opportunity to attend school activities/obtain equipment, regardless of their financial circumstances. As such, it may be possible to subsidise those students who would otherwise be unable to attend trips/purchase items. Please feel free to write in confidence to finance@buckinghamschool.org, if you wish to seek assistance, or obtain more information about Pupil Premium funding.

Some of the key findings are outlined below in the report:

- *School absence has become endemic in Key Stage 4. Over the last couple of years, over a third of all pupils in Key Stage 4 were either persistently or severely absent for at least one year.*
- *Poor attendance has a dramatic relationship with GCSE results. While 78% of all children who were rarely absent in both years passed at least 5 GCSEs including English and Maths, only 36% of children who were persistently absent in both years and just 5% of children who were severely absent in both years reached this same standard.*
- *When pupils' attendance improves, the likelihood of achieving qualifications at the end of school massively increases. More than half (54%) of pupils who were persistently absent in Year 10 and then rarely absent in Year 11 passed at least 5 GCSEs including English and maths, compared to 36% of pupils who were persistently absent in both years*

These statistics are descriptive only – they do not prove that poor attendance causes poor attainment. The numbers in this report should not be used to claim that an improvement in attendance will guarantee an improvement in attainment, nor to claim how big that improvement would be. However, we do know that once barriers to attendance are removed, there is no doubt that increased student attainment is more likely.

As a school, we are doing all we can to encourage and improve attendance and we are really aware that post-pandemic, for some families, it has been difficult. However, we have various strategies available to support families and their children in removing barriers to attendance. If there is any support we can offer, please do not hesitate in contacting the Student Office where the appropriate assistance can be offered.

In the meantime, we are encouraging all students to attend school despite any ailments or mild illness, to ensure they don't become a persistent absentee. We want to see an upward trend in attendance and in turn, student progress. We value our partnership with parents and carers and believe strong communication between both school and home will help raise attendance and improve standards.

Thank you for your continued support and please contact our Attendance Team, if you have any concerns regarding your child.

Yours faithfully,

Mr M Wardle

Lead Deputy Headteacher