

Attendance policy

Bleakhouse Primary School



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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- › Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- › Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- › Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- › Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- › Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- › Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- › 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

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- › Leading attendance across the school
- › Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- › Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- › Having an oversight of data analysis
- › Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- › Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- › Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- › Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mrs. R.L. Soudani and can be contacted via the school telephone number 0121 422 2841 or generaladmin@bleakhouse.sandwell.sch.uk.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer with the designated senior leader responsible for attendance is responsible for:

- › Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- › Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- › Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- › Advising the headteacher/ designated senior leader responsible for attendance (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Miss A. Jones and can be contacted via the school telephone number 0121 422 2841 or generaladmin@bleakhouse.sandwell.sch.uk.

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

For morning sessions this is by 9a.m.

Afternoon sessions by:

Nursery 12:25p.m.

Reception and Key Stage 1 1:25p.m.

Key Stage 2 1:40p.m.

3.6 School Office staff

School officer 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 Family Support Worker in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- › Also see Section 5.1 for Leave of Absence Request procedure

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- › Make sure their child attends every day on time
- › Call the school to report their child's absence before 9:15a.m. on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence as necessary, and advise when they are expected to return
- › Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- › Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- ›

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- › Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- › Present
- › Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- › Absent
- › Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- › The original entry
- › The amended entry
- › The reason for the amendment
- › The date on which the amendment was made

- › The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- › For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- › The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- › The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50a.m. and will be kept open until 9:20a.m. (i.e. not longer than 30 minutes after the session begins. The register for the second session will be taken at:

Nursery 12:15p.m. and will be kept open until 12:25p.m.

Reception and Key Stage 1 1:15p.m. and will be kept open until 1:25p.m.

Key Stage 2 1:30p.m. and will be kept open until 1:40p.m.

4.2 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 by 9:30a.m. or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

Parents may inform school of the reason for unplanned absence by telephoning the school office on 0121 422 2841, speaking to a member of staff or in writing.

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.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We 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/carers will be notified of this in advance **verbally**.

4.3 Planned absence

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

It is requested that proof of any appointment is shared with a member of staff preferably in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage 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/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- › Before the register has closed at 9:20a.m. will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- › After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. Office staff will ask for the reasons for late arrival so the appropriate code can be identified.
- › Punctuality is monitored at least half termly.

- › Parents of children who are persistently late will be contacted by the Family Support Worker to offer support to identify and address specific barriers to punctuality. Plans will then put in place to work towards addressing these. This may include signposting, an Early Help Assessment or involving other agencies.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- › Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason using Truancy Call. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact Sandwell Attendance Service or the Police
- › Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- › Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- › Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary *(including making home visits)*. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels at Parents Evenings and attendance is reported Annually as part of each child's Annual School Report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be '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.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as family emergencies or unforeseen events.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least four weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Leave of Absence Request Procedures is:

1. Parent/Carer requests a meeting with Miss A. Jones, Family Support Worker, well in advance of the planned leave of absence (preferable a minimum of four weeks before the planned absence).
2. Parent/Carer completes a Leave of Absence form. The form is available from Miss Jones or the School Office. *This needs to be completed by the Parent/Carer the child usually resides with.*
3. Parent/Carer discusses the completed form with Miss A. Jones.
4. Request considered by the Headteacher.
5. Parent/Carer receive written notification of the Headteacher's decision.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- › Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- › Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. *As with all absence it remains the headteacher's discretion to authorize religious observance.*

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Where the headteacher may grant term-time leave of absence
- **Please see 5.2 below for information about actions taken regarding unauthorised absence.**

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or 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, or penalty notice, each parent/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular, punctual attendance:

- the Headteacher and class teachers will communicate regularly with parents on attendance matters;
- individual class attendance is included in Key Stage Assemblies each week;
- appropriate personal encouragement or congratulation will be offered to individual children, **including improved attendance;**
- clear attendance information will be entered in the school brochure;
- individual children will receive awards for annual 100% attendance;
- The class with the highest attendance over each half term has a non-uniform day in the last week of the half term.

7. Attendance monitoring

The Senior Deputy Head will regularly collect and analyse attendance data and will use this data during meetings including Full Governor Meetings,

Individual children's attendance is reviewed at least each half term. Individual children with persistent or severe absence are identified. Groups of children are also monitored against National and Local Authority data.

The school uses a bespoke approach to supporting individuals to attend school who have persistent or severe absence. It is understood that, for a small number of children, there may be specific medical reasons for a child being absent for a more prolonged/regular absence.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-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 compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- › Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- › Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- › Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- › Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 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.

The school will:

- › Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- › Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- › Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- › Conduct unannounced home visits when children have not been brought to school
- › Weekly monitoring of child's attendance
- › Invite parents/carers to meetings to discuss attendance, these may include staff from Sandwell Attendance Service
- › Referrals to external agencies including Attendance Service and Sandwell Children's Trust

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum three years by Senior Deputy Head. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- › Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- › Behaviour Management policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be

		absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2

Model Letters

Dear

Your request for Leave of Absence (in exceptional circumstances) has been considered and declined. Should you decide to take _____ out of school during term-time, then the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. This may result in a referral to the Attendance Support Service and a Penalty Notice being issued.

The Leave of Absence Request – Guidance Notes sent to you with the Leave of Absence Request Form explain that under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 absence that **head teachers may not grant any Leave of Absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Exceptional circumstances do not include family holidays, visiting relatives or friends, attending sporting or other events, looking after family members who are unwell, babysitting younger family members, birthdays or shopping etc.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. J.E. Bates
Head teacher

Dear

Your request for Leave of Absence (in exceptional circumstances) has been considered and agreed.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. J.E. Bates
Head teacher