

Benjamin Britten School



Whole School Attendance Policy

Introduction

For a child to reach their full educational achievement potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents, or carers, the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school Attendance Policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE).

The whole school community –students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of this policy is to clarify everyone’s part in this.

The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community have knowledge of the policy and have access to it.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

All staff (teaching and support) at Benjamin Britten School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all of our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day.

Members of the Leadership Team will co-ordinate the school’s work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

The school will also work with the Suffolk County Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) in striving to fulfil these aims.

Promoting attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/ carers and the child.

The Home-School Agreement contains details of how we work with parents as well as our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

We will ensure that our pupils are made aware of the importance of good attendance and how this will benefit them.

Intervention

The school recognises that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. We monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the year. We recognise that certain groups of students

may be at greater risk of poor attendance and we will provide support and assistance wherever possible. The school's attendance target is 98%.

It may become necessary for the pastoral team to become involved in a supportive capacity to promote improved attendance. If a student's attendance drops below 96%, the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) may be informed.

Once referred to the EWO, the EWO will attempt to resolve the situation by agreement. If the situation cannot be resolved and significant improvement is not made in their child's attendance, and there are further unauthorised absences, it is highly likely the EWO will complete the necessary court paperwork for submission to the ATP (Authority To Prosecute) panel, who will decide if the case is court appropriate, at which point it will be passed to the SJP (Single Justice Point).

When parents are referred to the Education Attendance Service, they will be invited to attend a meeting with the school's EWO, usually in school and usually with a school representative, which entails all parties present, agreeing and signing a legal attendance agreement to adhere to during the attendance monitoring period (typically 6-8 weeks).

Leave of absence in term time

At Benjamin Britten School we class attendance of 98%, or above, as regularly attending school.

The school will consider any application for leave of absence and parents must apply in advance for permission for their child to have any such leave of absence.

School Procedures

Any child who is absent from school during the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headmaster, or a member of staff acting on their behalf, can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department for Education.

Registers

Morning registers are taken by the Form Tutor and afternoon registers by the class teacher using the Bromcom management information system. Cover teachers will also use Bromcom, unless they do not have access to the system, in which case a hard copy of the class register will be completed and given to the year team.

Lateness

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.45 am. Any pupil arriving after the register is closed will be marked as late or unauthorised absence, unless there is an acceptable explanation, i.e. school transport was delayed. In cases, for example, where the

absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

The afternoon registration will be at 2.00 pm.

Pupils arriving after the start of school, but before the end of the registration period, will be coded as late before registers close.

First Day Absence

All parents are expected to contact the school if their child is absent for any reason. This can be completed using the 'My Child at School' app, emailing the year team or through the designated absence answerphone. These messages are accessed by the year teams each morning. The parent of any child who does not arrive at school, and with no notification for absence, is contacted by text message. If there is no contact made by the parent, then a phone call will be made on the numbers supplied to the school. This information is recorded on the registers via Bromcom.

If the school is unable to make contact, then the year team will continue to try to make contact that day using the other contact numbers available. If there is a safeguarding concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be contacted and actions may include a home visit, Police involvement, MARF referral or social care involvement. The school will ensure that they leave notice of the visit. If there is no contact from the parent or caregiver then the Local authority and or the police may be contacted.

Absence without explanation

Daily calls will be conducted by the school and the school will continue these calls for every day a pupil is absent without explanation.

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 6 sessions may result in a home visit. After 10 consecutive sessions of absence without explanation the school will submit a Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF)

After 20 sessions the Local Authority will be notified referral to the Children's Services Attendance Staff for the local area Children Missing in Education team (CME). The school will include details of the action that they have taken and the police may be notified.

Absence Notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence are kept for the remainder of the academic year. However, if there are attendance concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation, the notes will be retained for a longer period.

Frequent Absence

Within the school it is the responsibility of the year teams to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible.

Meetings between the year teams and the Family Support and Engagement Lead will occur fortnightly to look at individual patterns of pupil absence and discuss action to be taken.

Live lessons

Live lessons can be offered by the school if there is sufficient medical evidence, at a medical practitioner consultation level.

In this instance, the year teams will collate all medical evidence and a support meeting will be conducted with parents/ carers and the school. Actions and timescales will be agreed and revised in a timely manner.

Persistent Absence (PA)

All pupils whose attendance level falls below the expected level, may be subject to intervention from the year teams to support their return to full attendance.

Support meetings may be put in place. Action plans may be set up by the year teams or the Family Support and Engagement Lead. The action plan will include engagement with all parties who can support the pupil's attendance.

If the attendance does not improve then a referral to the EWO can be made. Actions taken by the EWO may include the 'Fast Track' process.

Fast Track

The **Fast Track** model promotes early intervention by schools, the LA and parents/carers in cases of persistent absence. It aims to ensure appropriate and time limited intervention is in place to tackle the underlying causes of poor or non-attendance as soon as it becomes apparent.

Where a student has an attendance rate below 95%, and some unauthorised absence, the school can make a referral to the EWO and a 'Fast Track' case may be opened. Please see Suffolk county website for details of this process.

Fixed Penalty Notice

If a pupil's attendance is below 96% an attendance letter will be sent from the school. If the pupil is absent without sufficient evidence, then all absences will be unauthorised. If a pupil receives 8 unauthorised absences, then a fixed penalty notice may be issued.

- £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice;
- £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the Notice

If payment is not made, the matter may proceed to court.

This is in conjunction with SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL ANTI- SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003 PENALTY NOTICE CODE OF CONDUCT policy.

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/anti-social-behaviour-act-2003-penalty-notice-code-of-conduct.pdf>

Record Preservation

We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for the retention periods detailed here: <https://irms.org.uk/page/AcademiesToolkit>

Parents'/Carers' responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Benjamin Britten School.

Parents will also be expected to:

- notify the school on every day of absence, using the My Child at School app, email or contacting the absence line;
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, correctly dressed and with the correct equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child's school life.

Benjamin Britten School will endeavour to support parents to address any concerns.

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

- Parents keeping children from attending the school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Arrival at the school after the register has closed
- Day trips and holidays during term time which have not been agreed with the school
- Leaving the school site for no reason during the day

The school defines persistent absenteeism (PA) as missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for whatever reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave

- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during the school day and for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off-site but with the approval of the school.

Note: pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off-site

If a pupil is receiving education off-site, or is attending at a school where they are dual registered, the school will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

Appointments

As far as possible, medical and dental appointments should be made outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to the school prior to the appointment. Wherever possible, a minimum of 24 hours' notice of the appointment should be given.

Students must attend the school before and after the appointment, wherever possible. If the appointment requires the student to leave during the day, an adult listed on the student's record must sign them out.

Should a student arrive late to the school following an appointment, they should report to the Main Reception.

The Registration System

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity

C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Un timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Complaints

All complaints are dealt with under the Benjamin Britten School Complaints Policy and Procedures, available on the school website. Complaints should be made in writing and will follow the complaints procedures and set timescales. The handling of complaints may be delegated to an appropriate person. The outcome of the complaint will be communicated in writing.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/ her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his/ her age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs he/she may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term 'parent' is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those who have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that pertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll Keeping

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Attendance Targets

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007

Guidance Documents on Attendance

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording:

- Absence and Attendance Codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)
- Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website.