



Attendance Policy

Balfour Primary School

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Attendance Policy

1. Aims

Balfour Primary School is dedicated to supporting parents and children by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Safeguarding every child and protecting their right to education
- Acting early to address patterns of absence proactively with necessary support and challenge to bring forth improvements
- Working with the Local Authority Access to Education team as required
- Striving to exceed the Local Authority annual attendance figure aims
- Supporting parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons.

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

School Attendance, DfE, July 2019

As a UNCRC Rights Respecting School, children's rights underpin our school ethos. Every child has the Right to an Education (Article 28, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). Persistent absence or lateness can impact on children receiving the full education they are entitled to.

In line with Brighton and Hove, we aim for above 96% attendance for every child. In this city, pupils who attend for more than 95% of the year achieve GCSE results that are one grade higher than those with lower attendance. Alongside the academic benefits, attending school is also about being with friends, experiencing new activities and learning new skills. The routine of school can be comforting and familiar for children, providing a consistent support network.

To contextualise this aim:

- Missing 19 days in a school year means only being in school for 90% of the time
- Being late 15 minutes every day would mean missing two weeks of learning in a year



2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) 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:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Brighton and Hove City Council Code of Conduct for issuing Fixed Penalties regarding School Attendance*.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with our *Safeguarding, Child Protection, Children with Health Needs who cannot Attend School, Administration of Medicines and School Exclusion* policies.

3. School Procedures

3.1. Attendance Register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register is taken at the start of the first session of each school day (by 9.10am) and once during the second session (by 1.30pm). It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

Pupils must arrive in class by 9.00am on each school day (KS1 doors open at 8.50am, KS2 doors open at 8.55am).

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.



3.2. Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 10.00am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

We ask that parents call the School Office on 01273507722 to and report a pupil absence by pressing option 1.

Absence due to illness will be 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 parents to provide 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 will be notified of this in advance.

3.3. Medical or Dental Appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. Please call or visit the School Office to inform us of an appointment and provide evidence, such as a letter, text or email, of confirmation of appointment.

However, we encourage parents 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.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4. Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. Registers close at 9.10am. In line with our attendance procedure, the office staff will ask the reason your child is late. If this is something personal or an ongoing factor which you would like the school to be aware of, please request to speak to one of the Assistant Heads.



3.5. Following up Absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If the school has not been informed about an absence, either in advance or via phone, a member of the Office staff will call parents or carers. This will take place from 10.15am. This is for safeguarding reasons and in order to log reasons for absence.

3.6. Reporting to Parents

You will receive your child's absence record within their end of year report. This will show whether they have attended each session and the codes applied to any sessions which they were absent for. Their overall attendance percentage will also be included.

4. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

4.1. Granting Approval for Term-time Absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define **exceptional circumstances** as:

- Visits to seriously ill relatives
- Bereavement of a close family member (usually for funeral only but each situation is considered individually)
- Weddings for immediate family
- Religious observances
- An unexpected and traumatic event which may require time off

Exceptional circumstances **do not** include:

- Birthdays
- Day trips or holidays
- Siblings who are mildly unwell and home from school

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- 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

- Some sporting, music or theatre activities outside of school

All children can feel unwell or show mild illness sometimes; it shouldn't normally be a reason to keep them off school.

Children are generally expected to attend school if they have:

- runny nose, cold or cough
- tummy ache
- headache
- nits
- conjunctivitis

We will always contact you if your child becomes increasingly unwell or we don't feel they are well enough to be at school. Please refer to our Administration of Medicines Policy if your child requires prescribed medication for any illness.

Vomiting and diarrhoea are good reasons for staying off school and the school enforces a 48 hour rule before returning to school. Equally, a child may have a doctor's note saying they need to be off school.

Sometimes children complain of illness as a way of communicating that they are worried about something. This can be indicative of a wider problem or concern. It's always good to make time to talk to your child, listen to them and find out what the real problem is. If you find it difficult to talk to your child about things, speak to someone at your child's school. If you are aware of a reason your child's attendance may be affected, such as being a Young Carer, please speak to Rachel Tuck, the Executive INCO, or attendance officers and Assistant Heads, Sally Geard and Michaela Francis-Hicks.

4.1. Legal Sanctions

Schools can request that the Local Authority fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age (the first term after their 5th birthday).

If issued with a penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

- The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. The Brighton and Hove *Brighton & Hove City Council Code of Conduct for issuing Fixed Penalties regarding School Attendance* states that penalty notices can be issued for:
 - Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed). (6 sessions within a period of 6 school weeks)



- Pupils whose attendance has not reached a satisfactory level during a 6 week period following intensive support.
- Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification in a fixed term or permanent exclusion.
- 6 or more sessions of unauthorised absence within a term
- All unauthorised holidays taken during term time. The Local Authority recommendation is that this is for any unauthorised leave of six sessions (3 days) or more.

The Access to Education team will issue penalty notices on behalf of schools and will always serve them by first class post. The team will also ensure that the issuing of penalty notices is closely monitored with the relevant financial penalty being imposed.

If the penalty notice has not been paid within the 28 day deadline the case may be escalated and consideration given to prosecution for the original attendance offence.

A parent may receive more than one separate penalty notice resulting from the unauthorised absence, but not in excess of 3 penalty notices for an individual child in any twelve-month period. A penalty notice will be issued to each parent of each child.

If an initial Fixed Penalty Notice has failed to secure an improvement in attendance, the Access to Education team reserves the right to proceed with prosecution, providing the necessary casework has been completed by the school. Each case will be considered on its own merit.

5. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

We report each year group's overall attendance alongside our whole school percentage in our fortnightly newsletters to celebrate attendance strengths.

6. Attendance Monitoring

The Assistant Heads act as Attendance Officers (contact information p13), liaising with the Headteacher and Executive INCO as necessary to monitor and track attendance and any penalty notices. The Attendance Officers monitor pupil absence on a fortnightly basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2). If a child has been had vomiting or diarrhoea, they are not permitted back into school for 48 hours, in line with healthcare recommendations. In this instance, a follow up phone call the next day is not required. If a child has been hospitalised or a doctor has signed them off from school for a set period of time, daily call ins are not required. In all other circumstances of illness, daily calls are required.

If a pupil's attendance dips under 95% or persistent lateness is recorded, the attendance officers will look further into the reasons around this through analysis of the pupil attendance



record. They will take into account authorised and unauthorised absences, lateness or any illness or other reasons for absence.

If a pupil's attendance is 90% or below, the attendance officers will make contact with the pupil's parents and carers to discuss the reasons behind persistent absence and any support required. The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, a more formal Attendance Support Meeting will be held. This may include a parent / school attendance plan which both parties will be expected to sign and agree to.

If following an Attendance Support Meeting the pupil's attendance does not improve, we will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority Access to Education team.

Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 The Full Governing Body

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The Attendance Officers

The attendance officers:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues



- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.4 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. They may also discuss absence or lateness concerns with the Attendance Officers for follow up.

7.5 Office Staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.



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



Contact Information

Attendance Officers:

Assistant Headteachers Sally Geard and Michaela Francis-Hicks

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