



Attendance Policy



Implementation Date	September 2021
Review Date	September 2023

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Benhurst Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head teacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues (this is in line with Havering's expectation for excellent attendance).
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Borough's Attendance & Behaviour Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:
- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.

- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.
- Informing all parents whose children's attendance falls below 93% for any reason.

Definitions

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent provides written confirmation of the reason for absence on the child's return to school.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

If a parent has provided no reason for absence, that absence will automatically be recorded as unauthorised by the school until the parent provides a reason that the school is prepared to authorise.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Borough's Attendance & Behaviour Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to LIFE Education Trust, Havering LA and the DfE where requested.
- Staff must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Informing the office if a parent has verbally informed a teacher of a reason for absence at the classroom door on the day of absence. This should be done immediately to ensure the school does not make an absence call.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers.
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them.

- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be provided in writing.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.

Head teacher

The Head teacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues. This can also be deployed to the Attendance Officer or class teachers.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the Borough's Attendance & Behaviour Department. This department monitors the attendance of all children whose attendance is below 95% for any reason.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the School's Attendance Office and the Borough's Attendance & Behaviour Office.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Absence/Lateness is recorded on SIMS and Inventry
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home before the end of school.
- In conjunction with the Borough's Attendance & Behaviour Office, staff keep an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Head teacher.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for part or all of a school day in term time. These must be only if absolutely necessary and are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

All the school doors open at 8.50am until 9-00am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00am and 12.45pm (KS1) and by 1.45pm (KS2). These registers are then reviewed in the office to enter the correct absence code.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Once the classroom doors are closed at 9-00am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9.00am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil. Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised lateness for the morning which counts against a child's attendance.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence. This must be accompanied by an appointment card, letter or text from the establishment.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Sickness Absence

If your child is unable to attend school due to illness, please telephone the school as early in the morning as possible on the first day of absence and leave a message on the school answerphone. An electronic message can also be left via the website. This is especially important because, if a child is absent from school, we need to be satisfied that the parent is aware and the child is not intended to be at school.

If your child is absent due to illness for an episode that lasts for more than one day, it is not necessary to call the school every day, but on the child's return to school the absence should be supported by a note from parents/carers.

We ask, if your child's absence due to illness lasts for longer than one week, that you ring us after the first week to update us on their condition.

We also ask, if your child has suffered from an episode of vomiting and/or diarrhoea, that you allow between 24-48 hours after the last instance of vomiting or diarrhoea before they return to school. This is to prevent infection and we would ask parents to work within the spirit of this recommendation.

The Local Authority's Borough's Attendance & Behaviour Office monitors attendance, on a regular basis, and is informed of any pupil who is absent for 95% or less of school term time and may require to see parent's/guardian's notes. It is also a requirement that we write to parents to inform them if their child's attendance has fallen below 93% for whatever reason.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 10.00am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. If we are unaware why the child is absent, we will contact the parent first, followed by any other contact on the child's data record (if we are unable to contact a parent) to check the reasons for the child's absence. Please refer to Appendix 1 (Havering Guidance for First Day Calling).

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of their school life, a child has repeated periods of illness, the Borough's Attendance & Behaviour Office may write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. The Borough's Attendance & Behaviour Office can provide the appropriate forms. In addition, we may seek written permission from you for the School to make their own enquiries.

Holiday/Family Occasions

Amendments to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 make clear that Head Teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

From September 2013, absence for family holiday will not be authorised and is likely to be subject to a penalty notice (fine).

Requests for absence during term time should be supported by the appropriate form completed by the pupil's parent/guardian. The form can be obtained from the school office or website. If the request for absence is made via a letter from a parent, or a verbal request, a form must still be completed at least 14 days before the expected period of absence.

Duly completed forms will be forwarded to the office for the Head Teacher to address the request. Shortly afterwards, the Head Teacher will inform you of his decision by letter.

Where absences occur directly before or after a holiday request (whether authorised or not) or before or after a school holiday, they will be marked as unauthorised unless we receive medical evidence to support the absence. The medical evidence is required within seven school days of the absence.

Request for Leave of Absence to Take Part in Stage/Television Productions/Photoshoots

A form for this purpose can be obtained from the school office or website.

All requests are at the discretion of the Head teacher who will take into account a range of factors (e.g. academic performance, homework, attendance).

- If absence is below 90% for any reason at the date of this request, permission will not be granted.
- In Year 1, absence is not granted in June as the children work towards the Phonics Screening tests.
- In Year 2, absence is not granted in March, April or May as the children work towards their SATs tests.
- In Year 6, absence is not granted in March, April, May or June as the children work towards their SATs tests, attend the residential and prepare for their secondary school.

Medical/Dental Appointments

If your child has a medical or dental appointment to attend, this should be notified to the child's class teacher in writing before the day of the appointment and supported by a copy of the appropriate appointment letter/card.

Appendix 1



Havering

LONDON BOROUGH

Guidance - First Day Calling

The process is easy, but it requires a consistent diligent approach.

1. Get registers in promptly
2. Listen to absence calls, read absence emails (or however you get messages in)
3. Bring together registers, 'lates' register, absence calls, any other information you might have about the absence of a child - produce the list of children absent with no explanation
4. (Maybe consider a double check in school before you start calling)
5. Start first day calling for children absent without explanation, call everyone on the contact list until you get an answer. Leave messages if there is a voicemail option. If you have text message systems use them - but don't leave it at that.
You might get an overseas ring tone - is the family taking a holiday they haven't told you about.
Once you make contact, stop this 'first day calling' process.
Continue to manage the unauthorised absence, using your attendance processes.
6. Call the contact list at least twice.
7. By this stage, if you have a good contact list (4 numbers minimum) you probably have a reply.
8. If no reply at all, from anyone on the contact list for the child
 - Does the child have additional agency support, such as a social worker, contact them.
 - Do you have any in school intelligence, does anyone know the family.No explanation from a supportive family is very worrying - so don't just concentrate on children who you already know to be vulnerable.
9. Make a prompt home visit.
10. If you cannot get an answer refer immediately to children's services / MASH / Police - request a welfare call.

Tell your parents about this process.