

# Beckingham Primary School



## Attendance Policy

**Date Reviewed: February 2025**

**Next Review: February 2028**

## **AIMS**

Beckingham Primary School (BPS) realises that for a child to reach their full educational potential, a consistently good level of school attendance is essential.

We aim to work together with parents/carers and the Local Authority to ensure that all our children attend school every day and on time unless absence is unavoidable e.g. illness, persistent health issues or exceptional circumstances.

It is a legal requirement that pupils of statutory school age (identified as the term after a child turns five) receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. A pupil whose attendance drops to 90% misses the equivalent of two whole terms of learning if this were to continue over their time in primary school. At Beckingham Primary School we will therefore encourage parents to ensure their child receives maximum possible attendance, and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly as a partnership.

All members of the school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness in line with statutory safeguarding requirements, with the Head Teacher having overall responsibility in the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil. We aim to create an ethos in which high levels of attendance and punctuality are recognised and valued across our whole school community. Outstanding attendance by pupils is recognised and celebrated at the end of each term through attendance certificates presented during assembly. For this purpose only, the period of attendance being measured is taken from the beginning to the end of each of the three terms, to allow pupils who have had periods of illness to be awarded certificates at alternative times of the year. Their official attendance is monitored from September onwards and it is this figure that will be monitored within school, and cannot legally be altered for any purpose.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

### **We expect that all parents/carers will:**

- Ensure their child attends school every day they are able.
- Ensure their child arrives punctually – lateness is recorded on the school system and if it is in excess of 30 minutes after each of the two daily registration points (9am and 1pm), is recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Ensure their child arrives appropriately prepared for the day.
- Inform the school of any illness. Parents may on occasion be asked to provide evidence in relation to the absence in order for the absence to be authorised.
- Inform the school in advance of any medical appointments during school time. Parents will be asked to provide supporting information from the hospital, doctor or dentist, such as appointment details card/letter/text message, in relation to the absence in order for the absence to be authorised. A period of absence will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment. There is an expectation that a child will be in school for registration before an appointment or return to school after the appointment, depending on when the appointment falls within the school day and the health of the child. Where possible medical appointments should be arranged outside of school hours.
- Inform the school before 9am on the first and every subsequent day of absence, citing the reason for absence.

- Inform the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that any problems can be quickly identified and dealt with, with staff working with parents/carers to encourage the child into school on the same day.
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details and ensure school has more than one name, address and telephone number as an emergency contact.
- Engage with early interventions designed to support the family and their child's attendance at school.

**Parents/carers can expect that school will:**

- Provide a safe, learning environment that encourages pupils to want to attend.
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor individual children's attendance and punctuality.
- Share attendance data with parents/carers and make it clear what good attendance and success looks like for their child.
- Communicate clearly and consistently with parents/carers and children regarding attendance.
- Promote and celebrate good attendance and punctuality, for example through assemblies.
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexpected absence to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence and some reasons given may not reach the legal threshold for authorisation. In the case of long-term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, information from a doctor or other relevant body may be requested to assist school in offering appropriate support to the child.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Local Authority Attendance Service.
- Follow the Local Authority advice for children who are failing to access education in school due to medical and behavioural needs, in line with Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.
- Provide intensive and bespoke support to children at risk of persistent absence (classified by the DfE as absence which falls below 90%).
- Work alongside other services and teams to support children's attendance e.g. other schools, the Local Authority, Early Help, Social Care, Virtual School and the local community (including volunteers).

The **Attendance Champion** for our school is the Headteacher, Mrs Furniss. For day-to-day aspects of attendance please contact the school office on 01427 848230.

**Parents can expect that governors will:**

- Monitor attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis.
- Hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

**Parents can expect that the Local Authority (Nottinghamshire County Council) will:**

- Provide support, information and guidance to school and act as a partner with school to support in some cases of persistent absence.
- Work with schools in the enforcement of penalty notices, fines and prosecutions in cases that require legal involvement.

- Identify suitable provision and reasonable adjustments for pupils unable to access education due to prolonged ill health.

We are all responsible for children’s good levels of attendance at school, and we partner with other agencies to help us do this. For children who might need extra support to maintain their attendance e.g. Young Carers, we signpost families to appropriate places to reduce the impact that their needs and personal circumstances have on their attendance at school. Safeguarding and attendance are closely linked, and we work together with agencies including Health and Social Care where necessary to identify where children need extra support.

Children whose attendance falls to 90% or under are deemed to be **‘persistently absent’** and can be referred to the Local Authority for enforcement action. Pupils whose attendance is 50% or under are **‘severely persistently absent’** and parents/carers will be expected to engage in substantial support.

## SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE

As a school, we aim to work collaboratively with parents/carers to improve school attendance. This means that we will listen, empathise and support with attendance. However, if this is unsuccessful, legal sanctions will be considered where appropriate in line with the DfE publication ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ (2024).



If all other measures to improve attendance such as the use of letters and informal meetings, formal meetings and offers of support have no impact on improving attendance deemed as of concern, then fixed-penalty notices are given as an option for consideration by the DfE, as outlined in the document ‘Working Together to Improve Attendance’ (August 2024, section 181, pg 56):

*‘All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice for absence is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).’*

Should a pupil’s attendance or lateness continue to be a concern despite the support strategies in place, with no improvement to the expected level set by school during monitoring processes, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team for statutory aged pupils. This could result in a Penalty Notice/fine being issued or ultimately a referral for prosecution by

Nottinghamshire County Council, as per section 444 Education Act 1996. This may result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

### **Daily monitoring procedures**

Lateness and attendance are monitored daily by the school team who will:

- Scrutinise the registers daily, monitoring authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons provided for pupil absence and lateness, before completing the register in accordance with the correct use of regulation attendance codes.
- Once the registers have closed at 9.30 am, ring the contacts of any pupil not present for an unknown reason, starting with contact telephone number 1, to establish a reason. Leave voicemail messages, if no contact is made, requesting parents to contact the school regarding their child(ren)'s absence. Use text/email messages if appropriate to establish contact.
- Log the outcomes of any communications as a comment on the register.

If there is no response from any of the methods outlined, it may be necessary for staff to visit the home and carry out a welfare check in order to ascertain the whereabouts of the child(ren) and establish their safety and wellbeing. If there is no response at a home visit, a slip indicating the visit will be left requesting information on the absence. No response to an enquiry regarding a child's absence by the end of the school day will be considered unexplained and will be recorded as unauthorised, with continued investigations ongoing until the reason for absence is known. This must not be later than 5 days after the session. If contact is not made for two consecutive days, the LEA Education Welfare Team will be contacted for next steps.

### **Early Intervention Process:**

The early intervention process at Beckingham Primary School is designed to address any attendance concerns promptly and take the form of half-termly checks. The procedure followed is outlined below:

- **Step 1:** A letter (L1) will be sent to parents/carers if a child's attendance drops below 96% to inform of the current percentage for information. The letter is sent to both parents/carers separately, if applicable.
- **Step 2:** If attendance drops further at the next monitoring point, to below 94%, a further letter (L2) will be sent offering support if necessary to identify any barriers to attending. The letter is sent to both parents/carers separately, if applicable.
- **Step 3:** If attendance continues to drop below 92% a further letter (L3) will be sent to parent(s) inviting them to attend a meeting to discuss reasons for absence and barriers that may be preventing attendance improving. This is a supportive meeting, entered into voluntarily to discuss the needs of a pupil and family and identify ways that barriers to attendance can be removed. This letter is sent to both parents/carers separately, if applicable.

- **Step 4:** If attendance drops below 90%, a meeting will again be offered as in step 3, but an Early Help Assessment will also be offered during the meeting to help identify any areas that might need more formal support, with the parent/carer decision being recorded.
- **Step 5:** Should an informal meeting result in no improvement in attendance an Attendance Contract meeting will be offered so that a formal document listing support offered and expectations of improvement can be agreed upon, and an Early Help referral will again be offered.
- **After step 5:** School might consider using a 'Notice To Improve' letter, a strategy used in partnership with the Local Authority to set targets for improved attendance. This is a final attempt to improve attendance when parents/carers are failing to engage with support being offered by school, before referring parents for legal sanctions.

Following use of pathways above, if attendance does not improve, school will liaise with the Local Authority for consideration of legal sanctions.

Our attendance ladder underpins the procedures outlined above:



## **AUTHORISED ABSENCES**

An absence is classified as **authorised** when a pupil is away from school for a legitimate reason such as:

- Illness, receiving medical attention or a medical appointment
- Religious observance covering only day(s) exclusively set apart for such observance by the religious body to which the child's parents belong to
- Short and exceptional, unavoidable circumstances
- Approved sporting activities

Professional discretion will be used when considering whether an absence can be authorised, but there are legal guidelines that must be considered. The specific circumstances potentially encountered by military families, young carers, SEND and children with medical needs will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with school liaising with the LEA if necessary.

### **Illness**

Children who are unable to attend school due to diarrhoea or sickness can return 48 hours after the last episode.

Children with mild coughs, colds, sore throats, sneezes and runny noses who are otherwise well can continue to attend school. However, if they develop a high temperature (over 37.8 degrees) they should stay at home until their temperature has reduced and they are well enough to return to school. A guide to whether your child is able to attend school with minor illnesses is here: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health/a-z/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/) which is recognised by the Department for Education (DfE). We expect children to attempt to come to school unless they are too unwell to complete basic tasks. We will contact you if they continue to be unwell and need to return home. School will always liaise with Public Health if there is any concern regarding contagious illnesses and will inform parents as soon as possible if a child cannot attend school for any reasons and give guidance on when they can return.

### **Medical Needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

When children are prevented from accessing school due to physical or mental ill health, school will try to identify the barriers these pupils face, and use our tiered approach to supporting medical needs. This starts with the universal offer of support for all children and leads to higher tiers of need where increasingly specialist support is required. We will consider reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school, lunchtime arrangements and the storage and administration of medicines. We will liaise with appropriate services to ascertain support, in the rare instances that a pupil is unable to access any education inside the school setting. We will work with the Local Authority Inclusion Team to identify available options for education, and where a pupil's health needs mean they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, we may seek medical information to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision. This may take a variety of forms, which we will discuss with parents/carers on an individual basis. Processes will be put in place for implementing an Individual Health and Care Plan (IHCP) if required. This will outline areas such as emergency procedures, the medical condition's triggers, signs and symptoms, the pupil's resulting medical, educational, social and emotional needs and the identity of relevant adults who need to be involved in their daily care.

Where children have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), we will liaise closely with the appropriate professionals to work towards the best attendance outcomes for the child.

We are able to make adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments must be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with, the pupil and their parents/carers.

## **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is absent without the permission of the school even with the support of parent(s) such as:

- No reason provided by parent(s) to support an absence
- Caring for relatives
- Awaiting repair people
- Shopping
- A birthday or family celebration
- Visiting family
- Failure to follow school procedures or inform the school when taking a pupil out of school during term time
- A leave of absence that has not been authorised due to not being considered an exceptional circumstance

DfE guidance makes it clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised and legally the code given to a child in the register is always at the Headteacher's discretion.

### **Term-time Leave**

Parents are aware of key school dates with school holiday dates and end of Key Stage Assessment dates being published a year in advance. INSET days are published as soon as the school have agreed these, but may be subject to change.

Recent government guidelines have removed the discretion for headteachers to agree to term-time leave for holiday purposes and all leave, unless truly exceptional, must be unauthorised. Parents must complete a Leave of Absence Request Form, available via the school office, and provide any supporting evidence, if applicable, with their request. This also applies to parents requesting to take their child out of school during the school day. Parents will be informed in writing of the decision to authorise/un-authorise the leave

Exceptional circumstances (*definition of exceptional: rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis. Examples of requests for leave of absence that **do not** meet the criteria of an exceptional circumstance and **will not** be authorised and could be subject to a Penalty Notice fine/prosecution for pupils of statutory school age are:

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad.
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term.
- Trip of a lifetime.

- Visiting family or friends who have different half-term holiday dates.
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad.
- Relatives coming to visit.
- Extension of leave if a pupil has not returned to school after an agreed absence if it does not meet grounds for an exceptional circumstance.
- Leave taken due to potential of travel disruption.

In line with the partnership between home and school in working together to improve attendance, if there are any queries relating to any of the points in this policy, please do not hesitate to contact the school office on 01427 848230, or email us at [office@beckingham.notts.sch.uk](mailto:office@beckingham.notts.sch.uk)

**Useful links:**

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/education/school-discipline-and-exclusions/attendance-absence-truancy>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance\\_-\\_August\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf)

[nottinghamshire.gov.uk/notice to improve information](https://nottinghamshire.gov.uk/notice-to-improve-information)