



BENTON PARK SCHOOL

CREATING A CLIMATE FOR GREAT LEARNING
SUCCESS AND OPPORTUNITY



Benton Park School Attendance Policy

Approved:	September 2021
Review:	August 2024
Key Lead:	Deputy Headteacher

Section 1: Introduction, Ethos and Background

This policy sets out the procedures through which we seek to raise attendance, improve punctuality and, as a consequence, raise levels of achievement.

This policy is written with regard for the legal powers and duties included in the following:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4) & (6) and 458(4) & (5);
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010; and
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011

We believe that there is a clear link between attendance and positive outcomes for children and young people. Research findings and learning from best practice show that:

- Students must attend regularly to achieve their full potential
- Students who miss out on school can feel vulnerable and left behind
- Leave in term time is disruptive and can seriously affect your child's education.
- Students who consistently miss 17+ days in a school year lose one full grade in their GCSEs
- Unauthorised absence can lead to prosecution.

The following shows the link between % attendance at school and number of days absent:

- 98% = Fewer than 4 days absent in one school year.
- 95% = Fewer than 10 days absent in one school year.
- 90% = 4 weeks (20 days) absent in one school year.
- 85% = 5½ weeks (28 days) absent in one school year.
- 80% = 7½ weeks (38 days) absent in one school year.

Over a period of 5 school years, students with an average attendance of 85-90% will have missed half a school year of education, while students with an average attendance of 80% over the same period will have missed a whole school year.

Our aim is to therefore is to encourage full attendance for all students at Benton Park School. We do this by:

- Creating a warm and welcoming environment
- Ensuring that students feel safe at all times
- Developing a strong sense of citizenship within our students
- Offering a curriculum that engages and inspires
- Ensuring high quality teaching at all times
- Encouraging, praising and celebrating achievement and success

This policy outlines the process by which parents/carers can request leave under exceptional circumstances for their child(ren). In addition, this policy provides clear procedures regarding absence through illness and the school's response to illness and absence. This policy follows the latest Government legislation and guidelines and is the culmination of detailed consultation with Leeds City Council. It has been developed and agreed by the Aireborough Family of Schools to ensure consistency, fairness and clear decision-making in relation to school attendance and absence.

Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities

At Benton Park School we are clear that attendance is everybody's responsibility. By working in partnership with parents, carers, students and other professionals, we seek to ensure every child has an attendance that meets or exceeds the Benton Park School target of 97%. Outlined below are the roles and responsibilities of key staff within school and how they will help to ensure this target is achieved:

Parents/Carers

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child is in school and that they do not undertake periods of absence without good reason. It is the role of the parent/carer to promote the value of good attendance and punctuality. They should inform the school if their child is going to be absent by 8.30am, either via the school attendance phone number or the school's attendance email address. Any known absences should be passed on to school as early as possible, and where applicable, the parent/carer has responsibility for informing school if there are any known barriers to the child attending school, so that support strategies can be put in place to address and resolve these.

Parents/carers should work with school to identify any barriers to their child attending school, and attend meetings to support the school in identifying strategies to increase their child's attendance. Parents/carers should proactively engage in any support offered, to reduce the need for formal intervention and/or legal action.

Parents/carers should, wherever possible arrange for any medical/dental appointments to be outside school hours. Where this is unavoidable, appointment cards should be provided and the child should return to school after the appointment.

Parents/carers should not book holidays during term-time. If parents/carers wish to take their child out of school during term-time, they must submit an Exceptional Circumstances Form for the Headteacher's consideration, prior to the period of absence requested.

Headteacher

The Headteacher will consider any exceptional circumstances request for absence and consider whether to authorise this, based on the school's policy. This may be delegated to the Deputy Headteacher in the Headteacher's absence.

Deputy Headteacher: Attendance Lead

The Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for attendance will provide a strategic lead throughout the school through effective line management of the school's Attendance Officer, liaising with key pastoral colleagues about attendance, ensuring compliance with the policy outlined and having oversight of improvement strategies, particularly of targeted cohorts of students and those at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

The Deputy Headteacher will also be responsible for data analysis and reporting to the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body, as well as liaising with the Local Authority to address attendance concerns and to agree a joined-up approach to supporting students with extreme persistent absence.

Key Stage Leaders

Key Stage Leaders will have an overview of attendance and priorities within their key stage. Alongside the Deputy Headteacher and the school's Attendance Officer, they will be instrumental in identifying attendance trends for both individuals and cohorts of students. Alongside this, Key Stage Leaders will be responsible for identifying barriers to attendance and developing and implementing strategies to help students overcome these barriers.

Key Stage Leaders will be integral in ensuring attendance remains a priority for staff and children within their key stage and will do so through regular communication with students and parents/carers, sharing of data, supporting significant attendance cases and rewarding both excellent and improving attendance.

Pastoral Staff

Pastoral staff will support the Key Stage Leader in using data to identify priorities, recognise barriers to attendance and plan to overcome them. Pastoral staff will work directly with students to assess and review attendance, set targets as appropriate, liaise with the school's attendance officer in supporting good attendance and review progress of students at risk of low or decreasing attendance. They will also be integral to supporting, and challenging, students with poor punctuality, whether to school or lessons.

Pastoral staff will be involved in the communication about attendance to staff, students and parents/carers. Pastoral staff will support the successful reintegration of students after extended periods of absence on a case-by-case basis, depending on the individual student's circumstances.

Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer plays a critical role in the management of absence of all students in school. They are the key point of contact between home and school and will ensure contact is made with parents/carers about absence and attendance concerns. Where absence is an ongoing issue, the Attendance Officer will provide a bridge between home and school and will develop an understanding of the barriers to attendance and, through liaison with other colleagues in school, plan to overcome those barriers. Regular contact will be made with home to ensure the student and family are supported to make the required improvements.

As well as the attendance of children in the school building, the Attendance Officer, in liaison with other pastoral staff, will support and monitor the attendance of any students attending off-site learning opportunities. The Attendance Officer will identify key cohorts of students to be monitored, and liaise with Key Stage Teams and the Deputy Headteacher about the best way to implement appropriate strategies to improve the attendance of those identified students.

The Attendance Officer will lead on the 'Fast Track' part of the attendance system by monitoring data and trends, issuing warning letters, monitoring for improvement and following up the appropriate course of action.

The Attendance Officer is responsible for producing Fire Registers each day, and ensuring that these are available as and when required.

The Attendance Officer will work with the Key Stage Leaders and Deputy Headteacher to identify particular cohorts where additional support is required. In these cases, the Attendance Officer will track and log all actions and interventions and, where attendance remains a concern, they will prepare the evidence for prosecutions. They will also be responsible,

alongside the safeguarding team, for reporting children as missing education in line with the locally agreed CME protocols.

The Attendance Officer will ensure that registers are completed and that follow up systems are in place where there are any concerns. They, alongside pastoral staff, will respond to any gaps in attendance on a lesson-by-lesson basis, instigating safeguarding checks and notifying parents in the case of any unaccounted absence or other concerns as appropriate. This will usually be via SIMS In-Touch text message.

Should a medical condition, supported by written evidence and a next-steps plan from a medical professional (hospital consultant, specialist nurse or CAMHS practitioner), prevent a child from attending school for 15 or more days, the Attendance Officer can make a referral to the Leeds City Council Medical Needs Teaching Service. Evidence provided by a General Practitioner would not be sufficient for the Local Authority Medical Needs Team to consider a referral.

Attendance and Welfare Officer

The Attendance and Welfare Officer will collaborate with the Deputy Headteacher and the Attendance Officer to identify students whose attendance is a concern. Individual students will be identified if they have prolonged periods of absence, or patterns of absence which causes concern, and strategies will be put in place to ensure they can fully re-engage with school life.

In addition, the Attendance and Welfare Officer or other nominated staff will conduct regular safe and well checks for any child who is on roll at Benton Park School but not attending the school site. This may include them being visited at any alternative provision and/or at home even where other professionals have regular contact. Where school have not been able to conduct safe and well checks for a student on our roll, or if it has not been possible to physically see the child, support will be sought from senior staff, the Local Authority and/or the police, as required.

Classroom Teachers

It is the classroom teacher's responsibility to ensure that the register is completed within the first five minutes of every lesson. Where students have been present previously in the day, but are currently not in lesson, the classroom teacher should report this to the Attendance Officer and relevant Key Stage Team, to enable safeguarding checks to be implemented. If a student arrives late to the lesson, SIMS should be updated as quickly as possible. Classroom teachers should plan for and provide catch-up work as appropriate for students whose absence has meant that they have missed learning.

Local Authority

Where parents/carers are not fulfilling this responsibility, the Local Authority have a statutory responsibility to ensure children are in full time education. The Local Authority will work with school to provide formal support, which may include parenting contracts and Education Supervision Orders. There are a number of options available to the Local Authority for parents who persistently miss school:

- Penalty notices, fines of £60, have been available to the Local Authority since 2007, but their use has increased since the change in legislation around term-time holidays. The Local Authority can prosecute parents in the Magistrates Court for non-payment

of penalty notices, which can lead to a fine of up to £1000, a Parenting Order, and a criminal record.

- The Local Authority can apply to the Family Court for an Education Supervision Order, which means that the Local Authority can act directly on behalf of the child to ensure they attend school.
- The Local Authority can also submit a case directly to the Magistrates Court. There are two types of such prosecution and, if found guilty of the most serious offence, parents can face a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a community rehabilitation order, or even a custodial sentence of up to 3 months.

Section 3: Supporting Attendance

In order to support excellent attendance, we will record two attendance sessions a day (AM and PM) and report on student attendance at fixed periods throughout the year. During lessons, we will ensure registers are complete and that all children are accounted for, as this is a key part of our safeguarding protocols. Students with great attendance will be acknowledged and celebrated through the use of achievement points and, therefore, eligibility for the school's rewards incentives. Students who we feel need to improve their attendance will be set targets and supported in identifying barriers to attendance and, wherever possible, removing or overcoming these barriers.

Attendance data will be used to plan for effective strategies, to analyse the impact of the school's work and identify priorities and areas for improvement. Data will be used to:

- Monitor individual absence and lateness to both school and lessons
- Identify patterns and trends in attendance and punctuality
- Identify students who should be celebrated for excellent attendance or significant improvement

Term Time Absence and Requests for Leave

Parents/carers do not have the right to remove their children from school during term time without prior permission and agreement by the Headteacher. In the event of exceptional circumstances, parents may request leave during term time in writing to the Headteacher. Each application will be considered by the Headteacher, or the member of Senior Leadership with delegated responsibility, who will decide whether or not the absence is to be authorised and the number of days. **Please note that leave will not be considered retrospectively.**

Please note, it has been agreed across the Aireborough Learning Partnership Trust that we cannot take into consideration the impact of other Local Authority school holidays, continental shift patterns or public service shift patterns when considering holiday and leave requests.

Fixed Penalty Fines

Under the latest Government Legislation parents/carers who take their children out of school during term time, without authorisation, will be issued with a Fixed Penalty fine by the Local Authority and could face possible prosecution in court.

In Leeds, a penalty notice will be issued for unauthorised absences of five days or more within a twelve-week period and as a school, we are fully committed to this policy.

The penalty notice includes absences for holidays, as well as other unauthorised absence. If a penalty notice is issued, it will be for the whole period of absence, meaning that the penalty would be the same for an absence of five days or ten days.

Fines are issued for each parent and each child so, for example, a family of four with two parents and two children will be fined a total of £240. The penalty will double if the notice is not paid within 21 working days. If it remains unpaid, it will be passed for prosecution at the Magistrates Court.

Section 4: School Responses to Absence

At Benton Park School, we value excellent attendance and work in close partnership with parents and carers to ensure every child is fully accessing their education. As with every school, and in line with DFE guidance, we make a distinction between 'authorised absence' and 'unauthorised absence'. Below are some examples of both, but please be aware this list is not exhaustive:

Authorised Absence	Unauthorised absence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical appointment (with letter) • Family bereavement • Religious observance (one day only) • Participating in an authorised sporting activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained absences • Family holiday during term time • Truancy • Birthdays

Our responses to non-attendance are evidence based and intended to be implemented at the point of most impact. Below are the key stages for parents and carers to be aware of:

Above 97% Attendance is excellent and a cause of celebration.

92% - 97% Attendance could be improved.

90 – 92% Attendance is a concern. Appropriate strategies will be put in place to support the required improvements. Regular monitoring will be undertaken by the Attendance Officer and/or pastoral staff.

Below 90% Monitoring by the Attendance Officer, pastoral staff and/or SLT will be put in place. Absence due to illness will no longer be authorised without a medical note. Targets for improvement will be set and an appropriate monitoring process put in place. Regular contact between home and school will be put in place.

If there is **NO** improvement within a 2-week period, the Key Stage Leader will arrange a meeting with the student and their parent/carer and an improvement plan will be agreed, implemented and monitored for impact. If a child is not seen during an extended period, appropriate safe and well checks will be undertaken there will normally be a minimum of every 2 weeks. If the absence is unauthorised, a meeting will be arranged to identify barriers to attendance and identify strategies to support increased attendance.

Where there are concerns with a student's attendance, communication will be made with parents/carers and meetings arranged to discuss any issues. Individual strategies will be put

in place to ensure the student's attendance improves, and these will be monitored by the Attendance Officer and the Key Stage Leader.

Where there are safeguarding concerns linked to a student's absence, these will be referred to the school's Safeguarding Officers, following normal school procedures.

Students commencing school in Year 7

The importance of good attendance and punctuality is clearly expressed at the Parents' Introduction Evening and forms part of the learning contract between school and parents.

Primary school records and liaison will be used by the Key Stage Leader to identify potential poor attendees, who should be targeted for close monitoring from the beginning of term.

In the case of Year 7 students, as soon as any indicator of unsatisfactory attendance is triggered, parents will be contacted and a meeting arranged in order to discuss strategies for improvement.

At the end of the first term, students with attendance less than 90% and/or with more than four interrupted weeks absence will be contacted by Key Stage Leader and advice and help offered in order to improve attendance. An Attendance Improvement Plan will be agreed, implemented and monitored for impact.

In-Year Admissions

All new students will be monitored and supported during their first few weeks at school. This will include their attendance and punctuality. As part of an interview for prospective entry to school, this review process will be clearly articulated to the parent/carer and the student.

All schools are required to inform the Local Authority of any student who joins a school, within **5 school days** of the arrival or departure. The Attendance Officer will notify the Local Authority Admissions Team of students arriving on roll within 5 days of their start date, using the Local Authority Pupil Movement Form. This notification must take place regardless of whether a member of Local Authority staff has been involved in the admission decision of the student to Benton Park School.

In-Year Transfers

All schools are required to inform the Local Authority of any student who leaves a school, within **5 school days** of the arrival or departure. The Attendance Officer will notify the Local Authority Admissions Team of students leaving Benton Park School within 5 days of their final day using the Local Authority Pupil Movement Form. This notification must take place regardless of whether a member of Local Authority staff has been involved in the decision making around deletion from register. This Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for student welfare will monitor in-year transfers, and ensure that appropriate notification is given to both school staff and external colleagues as necessary.

Managed Moves

Students on a managed move from another school will have an attendance target set and will be monitored weekly by their Key Stage Leader.

Children Missing Education

Where a student absconds from the school site during the school day, parents/carers will be contacted to ensure the safety of the child. This will also be recorded on our internal safeguarding systems.

Where students are 'missing' during the school day and cannot be located, the school will follow the West Yorkshire protocols for 'missing' students.

Patterns in periods of missing during the school day will be monitored and form part of our safeguarding arrangements.

Where a student has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, enquiries will be made to establish the whereabouts of the student. If this is unsuccessful, and school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the student is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause, the school will make a referral to the CME Team.

Lateness to School

Students arriving late will need to 'sign in' on arrival at Student Reception and explain the reason for their absence. Students who arrive to school after 8.25am will incur a same-day sanction for their punctuality. It is vital that students arrive to school on time, as important messages risk being missed if they are not in attendance for registration.