

**Believe
You
Can**

Attendance Policy

**(including children with health needs
who cannot attend school)**



Document Control

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1. Introduction

Our aim is to be a successful school and your child will play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

2. Why regular attendance?

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of other children in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law which may result in prosecution.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%).

Every state school in England will now share their daily attendance registers across the education sector - including with the department for education, councils, and trusts in the next stage of the government's drive to reduce pupil absence in school.

The sharing of daily school registers will form a new world-leading attendance data set that will help schools spot and support children displaying worrying trends of persistent absence or those in danger of becoming missing in education.

3. Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents / carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- ❖ Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- ❖ Give you details on attendance by informing you by letter each half term of your child's attendance. We will send out letters on green paper if your child's attendance is above 95%, on yellow paper if it is above 90% but below 95%, and on red paper if it is below 90%;
- ❖ Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- ❖ Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings / events;
- ❖ Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high school;
- ❖ Continue to further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school;
- ❖ Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents / carers, pupils, staff and governors; and
- ❖ Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

Working Together to Improve Attendance:

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

4. Understanding types of absences

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason like illness, medical / dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and / or legal proceedings. Types of unauthorised absence include:

- ❖ Parents / carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- ❖ Truancy before or during the school day;
- ❖ Absences which have not been properly explained;
- ❖ Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- ❖ Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- ❖ Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed; and
- ❖ Holidays that exceed the amount agreed by the Principal

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents / carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the

impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse. If your child is reluctant to come into school, please come in and talk to us about it; together we will find a way to resolve matters.

5. Persistent absenteeism (PA)

Persistent absences are taken case by case. A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they have 5 sessions (am and pm attendance marks count as 2 sessions) of unauthorised absences. Once they have registered 5 unauthorised absences, they will be issued a warning letter. A further 5 unauthorised absences will result in a penalty notice (PN) explaining that due to the number of absences the family have incurred a fine. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' / carers' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly by conducting a bi-weekly meeting between the attendance officers and pastoral team, who will look for any persistent absentees, patterns of absence and any persistent late comers. Attendance contracts may be issued to parents of children who are regularly missing their education.

6. Absence Procedure

If your child is absent you must contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of absence, by telephone or in person.

If your child is absent we will:

Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;

- ❖ Invite you in to discuss the situation with our pastoral team and/or attendance officers and / or the Principal/Deputy if absences persist; and
- ❖ If attendance drops to or below 91%, you may be invited for an 'Early Help Review'
- ❖ Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Team linked with school if attendance moves below 85%.

Parent fines for unauthorised absences will also be brought under a national framework to help tackle inconsistencies in their use. A fine to parents must be considered if a child misses 5 days of school for unauthorised absence. Costs for fines are £80 if paid within 21 days and £160 if paid in 28 days (Per parent, per child). If the same parent is issued with a second penalty notice for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, the amount will be charged at £160 with no option to pay the lower rate of £80.

7. Telephone Numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents / carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't,

then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

8. Strategies to Improve Attendance and / or Punctuality

Parents / carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents / carers in improving their child's attendance and / or punctuality. This includes:

- ❖ Meetings in school between parents / carers, pupils, pastoral staff and the attendance officers.
- ❖ Use of the Early Help Assessment Framework and / or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority Attendance Team); and
- ❖ Penalty notices.

9. The Attendance Officer and Team

If difficulties cannot be resolved using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Team within the school. He / she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist, the Local Authority can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school.

10. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being just ten minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school. How we manage lateness:

- ❖ The school gates open at **8:30am**;
- ❖ The school day starts at **8:40am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time;
- ❖ Registers are marked by **8:50am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time;
- ❖ At **9.10am** the registers will be closed;
- ❖ If your child arrives at school after 9.10am, they will be given a 'U' on the register marking an absence despite being in school;

- ❖ Afternoon registration will be at **the end of lunchtime depending on year group.**
- ❖ Registers will close **10 minutes** later.

In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the assistant Principal and / or a member of the pastoral support team/attendance officers to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

11. Persistent Illness

Persistent illnesses are taken case by case. A pupil becomes 'persistently ill' when they have 10 sessions (am and pm attendance marks count as 2 sessions) of illness related absences. Once they have registered 10 sessions of absence, they will be issued a 'Persistent illness' letter. This letter is to raise their understanding that these absences have a negative impact on their child's education. On the letter, the parents are signposted to our school nurse who is available to offer support to the family if needed.

12. Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents / carers to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off during term time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance using the 'request for leave of absence' form from the school office or in writing.

In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time, and leave may only be authorised when the Principal considers that there are '**exceptional circumstances**' relating to the application. In the rare instance where a leave of absence is granted, the Principal will decide the number of school days a child can be away from school, and the agreed date of return to school. Where a leave of absence is not granted or where the child fails to return to school by the agreed date following approval of leave of absence, then the principal will pass on the details to the local authority in line with the duty around reporting children missing in education.

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the school, but it is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- ❖ When a pupil is just starting school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible;
- ❖ Immediately before and during assessment periods, especially in Y2 and Y6;
- ❖ When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence;
- ❖ Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below (96%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave;
- ❖ If a child has already had extended leave whilst at school.
- ❖ If the reason given is not deemed as exceptional.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised absence and the Principal may request the local authority to issue each adult with parental responsibility with a penalty notice.

Please note, for authorised holidays, confirmation of booking will be requested to show that the holiday was not booked prior to the holiday request. Holidays booked prior to the request will be seen as a condoned parental absence and will not be authorised.

Parents /carers risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date, and re-admission cannot be guaranteed.

13. Religious Absence

The school will authorise 'leave' per religious festival, e.g. Eid, as occasional days in the year.

14. Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters at The Olive Tree Primary School

Parents / carers

- ❖ Ensure children attend regularly and punctually;
- ❖ Contact school on the first day of absence;
- ❖ Avoid holidays in term time wherever possible and apply in advance using the form;
- ❖ Attend meetings in school; and
- ❖ Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies.

Children:

- ❖ Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime;
- ❖ Attend school / registration punctually;
- ❖ Speak to parents / carers or a teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance; and

- ❖ Co-operate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies.

Attendance Officers

- ❖ Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school;
- ❖ Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters;
- ❖ Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities;
- ❖ Review CPOMs to see any staff concerns regarding attendance and punctuality;
- ❖ Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance; and
- ❖ Attend bi-weekly meetings to monitor attendance and punctuality.

Office Administrator / Attendance Officers

- ❖ First day response: Contact parents / carers if a reason for absence has not been provided;
- ❖ Input and update the attendance registers;
- ❖ Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups;
- ❖ Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents / carers; and work with children and parents / carers to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, using Attendance Contracts where appropriate.

All School Staff

- ❖ Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment;
- ❖ Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum;
- ❖ Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns;
- ❖ Be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance;
- ❖ Raise awareness of any concerns you may have via CPOMs
- ❖ See pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff; and
- ❖ Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures.
- ❖ Ensure completion of the registers is done in a timely manner

Governors

- ❖ Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly;
- ❖ Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy; and
- ❖ Agree statutory attendance targets for the school.

15. School targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is **96%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Bolton.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in the newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Expectations

To manage and improve attendance effectively, all schools are expected to:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

Moments Matter, Attendance Counts Campaign:

Link to campaign:

<https://dfegovukassets.blob.core.windows.net/assets/Attendance%20campaign/Attendance%20campaign%20communications%20toolkit%20for%20schools.pdf>

The campaign seeks to influence parents and carers' views on the importance of school attendance.

To promote the importance of school attendance and the value of a school day, the national communications campaign will include:

- Promoted social media advertising
- Media partnerships
- Radio advertising
- Expert-led activity
- Out of home advertising
- Promoted online video – YouTube

When?

Campaign activity began in January and finishes at the end of March 2024.

7 ways schools can contribute towards the campaign:

1. Help create a national warm welcome to school for families throughout the spring by sharing the attendance campaign resources (on slide 6) on your social media channels, newsletters and website. You can tailor these to your school.
2. Make the Spring term a fresh start for children and young people struggling to attend school by taking a "support first" approach and sustaining efforts to engage families where absence is severe or persistent. We have produced range of webinars and case studies with tips and best practice to address attendance barriers.
3. Refer to the communicating with families to support attendance toolkit when communicating with families about attendance, to maximise your impact. The campaign will also encourage parents and carers struggling with their child's attendance to reach out to their school as the first step of support.
4. Set clear expectations for parents and carers about what they need to do to support good attendance (e.g., phoning when their child is ill). Be clear on what they can expect from you in return (e.g., phoning parents and carers to discuss a child's attendance where there are challenges and getting them into school for a meeting if there are concerns).
5. Remind parents and carers of the NHS Is my child too ill for school guidance and the Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty's letter on mild illness and school attendance that says a prolonged period of absence is likely to heighten a child's anxiety about attending school in the future.
6. Help reduce the spread of infection in your school - remind staff and pupils of the importance of regular and effective handwashing and ensure spaces are well-ventilated. You can use your CO2 monitors to manage good ventilation. Tell parents and carers about the steps you are taking to reduce infection spread to

offer reassurance.

7. Sign up to share your daily attendance data with DfE if your school has not already done so and use the data to identify and respond to trends early. 5

16. Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents / carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents / carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. All school staff are committed to working with parents / carers and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

This policy will be reviewed yearly in line with government changes.

Richard Coley
Designated Safeguarding Lead
21.10.2024