



Attendance Policy

Updated: January 2021

Reviewed: September 2021

Next review due: September 2021

At Bridgewater Primary School, we want all of our children to thrive. In order to be successful, and for the children to access the quality education that they are entitled to, regular attendance is essential. Parents and school staff are responsible for promoting regular attendance. Pupils must attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Regular attendance will help the children to fulfil their potential and build secure friendships. 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 as well as on our school website.

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 (See Appendix 1).

Aims

We aim to work in partnership with parents to support good attendance and share the link to pupil attainment. The Education Act 2011 clearly states that the prime responsibility of parents/carers is to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

All pupils are expected to achieve an attendance target of above 96% and to aim for 100%. 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; this impacts upon their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child ending the year at 90% attendance means that the child misses on average:

- One half day every week
- Nearly four weeks every school year
- Over one school year in a school career

Below 90% is classed as 'persistent' absence.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance (as recommended by Ofsted) for all children, except in exceptional medical circumstances
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be 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 children starting in the EYFS in order to promote good habits at an early age
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the outside agencies, where appropriate, 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 to attend school
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties

- Recognise the key role of all staff, especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance

Bridgewater Primary School aims to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all pupils to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. We will aim to do this by:

- 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

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 pupils' attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Inclusion and Partnership Service (EIP) any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve
- To report attendance statistics to Northamptonshire LA and the DfE where requested
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Office Manager and Senior Leadership Team members with responsibility for monitoring attendance

Daily procedures

Computerised registers provide a daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are documents that may be required in a court of law; for example, as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school.

All pupils are expected to arrive at school and be in class between 8.45 am to 9.00 am each morning ready for registration and the start of the school day.

The register is completed promptly in the morning at 9.00 am and in the afternoon at 1.15 pm. Children arriving at school between 9.00 am to 9.30 am or after 1.15 pm for the afternoon session must report to the School Office. For monitoring purposes, we are required to record this, including the reason for the lateness and a late mark will be placed on the register. Any children arriving at school after the registers have been closed (9.30 am and 1.45 pm) will receive a 'U' (unauthorised absence) code on their attendance. Codes for attendance are shown in Appendix 2.

Pupils missing registration and arriving late for school following a medical or dental appointment will be coded as 'M' on the register. Parents should, however, avoid making routine medical/dental appointments during school hours whenever possible.

Parents should inform the school of any pupil absence by calling the school and leaving a message on the absence line by 8.45 am for each day the child is not in school.

Once the registers have been taken and any absence notifications updated, a ParentMail text will be sent to all parents of pupils who are not in school requesting a reason for non-attendance. The School Office will continue to contact the parent until a reason for the absence has been received.

Monitoring and Reporting

The school regularly monitors attendance and late arrivals with letters to parents advising them of the school's concerns. Where persistent lateness/absence gives cause for concern these will be referred to the Education Entitlement Service and a Parenting Contract meeting arranged.

A Parenting Contract is an agreement between a parent/carer and either the school or the local education authority. This contract is a way for the parent and the school to work together to improve the pupil's attendance or lateness in school.

Any pupils going out of school during the school day will be signed out by parents on the school's electronic system, InVentry. Children are to be collected from Reception and if they return the same day must be booked back into school on InVentry.

Attendance 'zones' have been set up to help us to consistently reward good attendance and manage attendance which needs to improve.

These zones are:

The Green Zone: Attendance is above 96%.

The Amber Zone: Attendance is between 92% and 95.9%. Attendance will be monitored closely and a letter will be sent to parents in order to bring our concerns to their attention. If, after an adequate period of time, the attendance does not improve, parents may be invited to a Parenting Contract meeting to explore necessary support.

Red Zone: Attendance is below 92%. Persistent absence is classed as below 90% but any absence close to this is monitored. In cases of unexplained persistent absence, we will seek advice from the county council.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Any absence, unauthorised and authorised, is reflected in your child's percentage attendance.

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

Exceptional circumstances may be authorised at the Headteacher's discretion and may include; bereavement, marriage, religious observance, education off-site or representing school, county or country.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- 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

Coronavirus

During a lockdown, if your child has a critical key worker place, the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- Our responsibilities to record attendance and follow up on absence
- Our ability to adhere to the procedures in line with our local authority's code of conduct
- Parents' duty to make sure their child of compulsory school age regularly attends school

New Category for non-attendance related to coronavirus

There will be circumstances where pupils cannot attend due to coronavirus. To account for this, the DfE has added a new category to the school attendance regulations to cover the 2020/21 academic year.

We will **only** use the new category where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- Against guidance from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) relating to the incidence of coronavirus or its transmission
- Prohibited by any legislation or statutory directions relating to coronavirus

In this case, we will not penalise parents, and this category will **not count as absence** (either authorised or unauthorised) for data collection purposes.

See the below table for the scenarios covered by this category.

Data Collection

The DfE will collect attendance data for the school census, which will include data from the autumn term 2020.

Absence Codes

We will use the following codes in addition to the usual attendance codes we used before the coronavirus outbreak.

Definitions

- Code X - not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Code I - illness

Note: we will still use code X for pupils of non-compulsory school age who are not expected to attend a session, as we did before the outbreak.

Scenarios:

	Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils who have to self-isolate because they have symptoms or live with someone who does, and are waiting for their test results 	X
Note: we will use this code only until they get their test results	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils who remain unwell following a negative test result (i.e. with a different illness) 	I
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils who have to continue to self-isolate because they tested positive 	
Note: they should self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of symptoms, and should only return to school if they don't have symptoms other than a cough or a loss of sense of smell or taste.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils who have to self-isolate (for 14 days) because someone they live with tested positive 	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils who have to self-isolate (for 14 days) because they are a close contact of someone who tested positive 	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils who have to quarantine (for 14 days) after a trip to a non-exempt country 	X

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- Pupils who are required to shield in the case of a local lockdown, or live with someone who is required to shield

Note: We will ask to see the family's shielding letter. We will use this code until shielding is paused and we've contacted the pupil's parents to set the expectation that the child needs to return to school

X

Pupils who are asked not to attend in the case of local lockdown

Note: We will follow PHE or DHSC guidance on whether we need to prevent some pupils from attending.

X

Holidays in Term Times

Holidays during term time will **NOT** be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. When a child is absent for a long period their learning can be disrupted and, on their return from holiday, they will find that the class has moved onto other units of work; this can impact on their future attainment, sense of confidence and wellbeing within the class.

Fixed Penalty Notices for Term Time Absence

In line with Northamptonshire County Council policy, parents/carers may be fined if they take a child out of school for the purpose of a holiday. From 22 April 2016 Northamptonshire County Council has updated its policy on unauthorised absences. The period for parents receiving a fixed term penalty notice has been **reduced from ten to five days or 10 sessions; this could be either five consecutive days or the equivalent of 5 days within a six-week period.** As a result, all holiday or absence requests of 5 days or more will automatically be referred to the Educational and Inclusion Partnership team (EIP) and may result in a fine.

If a holiday or absence during term time is unavoidable parents are asked to:

- Complete a Leave of Absence form which can be obtained from the School Office
- Email or write to the Headteacher on head@bridgewater-pri.northants-ecl.gov.uk stating the circumstances of the holiday request

All holiday or absence requests for 5 days or more will automatically be referred to the Educational and Inclusion Partnership team (EIP).

Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, both parents 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. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

Absence for performance

Children wishing to be removed from school for a performance must have a local authority licence. The Headteacher will consider all requests that are made with a licence; however, she must be satisfied that this absence is not having a negative effect on a child's education before signing to authorise this absence.

The school will authorise **up to 3 days absence per academic year** for performances. Any further absences are at the Headteacher's discretion; they will be reviewed on a case by case basis and may not be authorised.

Where permission is sought for repeated absences or a long-term absence, the impact on the child's longer term education will be considered before agreeing. Their current attendance data will also be reviewed.

Wherever possible, we urge parents to consider performance roles that occur outside of the school hours, at weekends or in the holidays.

Definitions

Authorised absence is an absence that 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 telephones the school to explain the absence. **Authorised absence will still be reflected in your child's percentage attendance.**

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 is when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. An absence will be unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Approved Educational Activity

Children who are educated off-site, dual registered or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises will be recorded as on an approved educational activity. This means that for statistical purposes educational visits or approved sporting activities can be counted as statistically 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of the appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

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.

Headteacher, Senior Leaders and Office Manager

The Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and Office Manager is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Noting and acting on any emerging trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence, including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the EWO service
- Providing reports and background information
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence
- Reporting to the Governing Body regarding attendance and actions to address any trends

Parent Link Worker

The Parent Link Worker supports families to overcome barriers, which is impacting upon attendance and offer support as needed.

Governors

The governing body has a responsibility to monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school's attendance policy and practice by:

- Supporting the Headteacher and other members of staff to uphold the Attendance Policy
- Encouraging all parents and carers with their responsibility to ensure attendance and punctuality is at its optimum for learning
- Engaging with the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team on analysing attendance figures, including challenging the school on any emerging trends and noting any actions the school is putting in place to address them
- Reports on attendance will be made regularly to the Governing Body regarding attendance figures.

Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- 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 Headteacher, a member of the Senior Leadership team and the School Office Manager where there are concerns, so they can be acted upon
- 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
- Putting attendance percentage information onto reports and TLC slips in order to keep parents regularly updated about their child's attendance

Administration staff

Members of staff in the School Office, particularly the School Office Manager, are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence and lateness
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early
- 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 and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- 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 any 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 authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary and in exceptional circumstances, as these 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

Summary

Bridgewater 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. Any parents/carers experiencing difficulty with the regular attendance or punctuality of their child/children are encouraged to contact the School Office in the first instance so help can be appropriately organised.

In 2020 – 2021, the members of Bridgewater Primary supporting children and parents/carers with attendance and punctuality are:

- Mrs Alison Harvey – Headteacher
- Mrs Janice Cox – School Officer Manager
- Mrs Frances Troop – Deputy Headteacher
- Mrs Laura White – Assistant Headteacher
- Mrs Louise Thomas– Parent Link Worker

Related Policies

- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions Policy

Signed.....

Chair of Teaching and Learning Committee

Date.....

Signed.....

Chair of the Governing Body

Date.....

Signed

Headteacher

Date

Appendix

Appendix 1:

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](#)

Appendix 2: 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 Traveler absence	Pupil from a Traveler 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