

# Benjamin Britten School



## Whole School Attendance Policy

## Introduction

For a child to reach their full academic potential at secondary school, a high level of school attendance is essential. Pupils are expected to consistently work towards 100% attendance at this school. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers, the importance of maintaining regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to education legislation and this Whole School Attendance Policy is written in accordance with the legislation and statutory guidance produced by government and the Department for Education (DfE).

The whole school community –students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – has a responsibility for promoting regular school attendance; the purpose of this policy is to clarify each party's role in this.

This policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. Leaders will ensure that all members of the school community have knowledge of the policy and access to it.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its aims.

All staff (teaching and support) at Benjamin Britten School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all of our children are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day.

Members of the Leadership Team will co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

The school will also work with the Suffolk County Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) in fulfilling these aims.

**The name and contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion – the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school, is:**

Mr D Flanagan

Email address: [D.Flanagan@benjaminbritten.school](mailto:D.Flanagan@benjaminbritten.school) 01502 582312

**The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is:**

Mrs S Burnett

Email address: [absence@benjaminbritten.school](mailto:absence@benjaminbritten.school) 01502 582312

**The name and contact details of the school staff members pupils and parents should contact for enhanced support with attendance (Head of Year and Pastoral Leaders) are:**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Head of Year</b>	<b>Pastoral Leader</b>	<b>Contact</b>
<b>7</b>	Mr A Cook	Mrs L Smith	01502 582312
<b>8</b>	Mrs H Hammond	Mrs N Reeder	01502 582312
<b>9</b>	Mrs J Adams	Mrs A Knights	01502 582312
<b>10</b>	Mrs N Wright	Mrs N Norton	01502 582312
<b>11</b>	Mrs C Burton	Mrs L Spall	01502 582312

### **Promoting attendance**

Good attendance is built on a strong partnership between the school, parents or carers, and the child. The Home-School Agreement outlines how we work with families and sets clear expectations of parents'/ carers' in ensuring their child achieves excellent attendance.

We ensure our pupils understand the importance of good attendance and its benefits. This message is reinforced through assemblies, displays around school and regular communication with tutors, year teams, and school leadership. Students who achieve 100% attendance are rewarded with weekly achievement points, acknowledged through their form tutors. Similarly, students who show improvement in attendance are also recognised. Tutor groups which reach specific attendance milestones are rewarded with a monthly Attendance Breakfast. Regular recognition and positive communication with families is also key, and half-termly prizes and end-of-year rewards, including prize draws and certificates, further celebrate sustained good attendance.

To maintain a focus on excellent attendance, we build strong relationships with families and work closely to address any emerging concerns. Parents and carers receive information about attendance through newsletters and live data on the "My Child at School" app. We continually promote the benefits of high attendance, maintain accurate admission and attendance registers, and ensure effective procedures are in place to follow up on absences in line with legal requirements.

Should a child's attendance fall below the school's target, we promptly contact parents or carers to discuss the issue. Additionally, we submit daily attendance reports to the Department for Education, in accordance with the legal expectations placed on all schools.

The Home-School Agreement contains details of how we work with parents as well as our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child sustains good attendance.

### **Monitoring attendance**

The school's strategy for improving attendance is centred around the continuous monitoring and analysis of attendance data. By regularly reviewing attendance patterns, the school identifies students or specific groups who require targeted support. Weekly attendance data is shared with key staff members, such as form tutors, year teams, and the SENCO, enabling them to intervene early and address attendance issues before they become a pattern.

Attendance is monitored on a daily basis to detect any emerging trends, ensuring that no key absence points are missed. If a pupil's absence becomes prolonged and communication with the

family becomes a cause for concern, the Family Engagement Lead will conduct a home visit after three days of absence, to establish face-to-face contact and provide support.

In addition to individual monitoring, the school tracks attendance for specific groups, such as year groups, those in receipt of free school meals and pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This data is reviewed weekly and shared with the school's leadership team monthly. Comparisons with local and national benchmarks take place half termly or when new data becomes available. Reports are shared with the governing body to guide decision-making and inform improvement strategies.

Longer-term patterns, such as seasonal increases in absence, are also tracked and addressed pre-emptively, through whole-school initiatives or targeted group initiatives, to counter these trends and improve overall attendance.

## **Intervention**

The school's strategy for reducing absence, including persistent absence, severe absence and increased absence amongst specific pupil groups, begins with actively listening to and understanding the barriers to school, faced by students and their families. Year teams act as the crucial link between home and school, ensuring that communication is open and collaborative. They regularly engage with families to discuss attendance challenges and work together to identify and mitigate these obstacles. By gathering this feedback, the school can work to tailor its support to address the specific issues each student faces.

Support can include initiatives such as placing students on a six-week attendance monitoring plan, which builds on earlier interventions and involves close collaboration with both the student and their family. Throughout this process, students' voices are continuously listened to, and personalised rewards are offered for sustained improvement. In addition to this, the Year teams, Head of Lower/ Upper School, SENDCO and Family Engagement Lead meet fortnightly to review ongoing attendance concerns, and external agency support is explored if a necessary next step.

In cases where attendance issues persist, the school may formalise support through attendance contracts or by working with the local authority's Education Welfare Officer (EWO). At this stage, the Family Engagement Lead plays a key role in supporting families and ensuring they receive appropriate support. This formalised approach helps to ensure that persistent absence is addressed through coordinated efforts with external agencies.

If these measures fail, the school is prepared to enforce statutory interventions to safeguard each student's right to an education. In partnership with the local authority, the school will take necessary legal steps to ensure that students maintain regular attendance and do not miss out on their education.

## **Supporting children with specific needs**

### Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

When pupils have complex barriers to attendance, appropriate staff in school will identify barriers where possible and seek practical and realistic solutions to support school attendance. Information resources and external agencies will be accessed where this could be helpful for pupils and their families.

### Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where pupils are absent from school due to a diagnosed mental or physical health condition, we will work with health professionals and seek a realistic offer to enable the pupil to access education in or out of school. This may include a phased return, online tuition, and support with home resources. Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls,

or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that are related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

#### Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Pupils may be helped by a phased return to school or to lessons over a short period of time, and subject to regular reviews. This would be in discussion with parents/carers to decide the best approach for the pupil in their particular circumstances.

#### **Leave of absence in term time**

At Benjamin Britten School, we recognise attendance of 98% or above, as 'regularly attending school'.

Children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the best academic progress and personal development possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child due to 'exceptional circumstances'. At Benjamin Britten School, leave of absence is only granted at the discretion of the Headteachers and shall not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school will consider each request on a case-by-case basis. Retrospective requests will not be considered and will also result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. In such cases, the school may make a referral to the Local Authority to request that a penalty notice fine is issued, or consider prosecution. Please contact the relevant year team with your request for a leave of absence one month prior to the date requested.

*The need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation is not an exceptional circumstance, will not be authorised and can incur a penalty notice fine, in line with statutory guidance on school attendance.*

#### **School Procedures**

Any child who is absent from school during the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher, or a designated member of staff acting on their behalf, can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the DfE.

#### **Registers**

Morning registers are taken by the Form Tutor and afternoon registers by the class teacher for period 4, using the Bromcom management information system. Cover teachers will also use Bromcom, unless they do not have access to the system, in which case a hard copy of the class register will be completed and given to the year team. Our school day begins at 8.45am and finishes at 3.15pm.

#### **Lateness**

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.45 am to 9.05am. Any pupil arriving after the register is closed will be marked as late or unauthorised absence, unless there is an acceptable explanation, i.e. school bus was delayed. In cases, for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

Afternoon registration takes place from 2.00 pm until 2.10 pm.

Pupils arriving after the start of school, but before the end of the registration period, will be coded as late before registers close.

### **First Day Absence**

Parents/ carers are expected to contact the school if their child is absent for any reason. This can be through the designated absence answerphone 01502 582312 option 1 or email address [absence@benjaminbritten.school](mailto:absence@benjaminbritten.school). These messages are accessed by the Attendance Administrator each morning. The parent/carer of any child who does not arrive at school, and with no notification for absence, is contacted by text message or phone call. If there is no explanation for absence provided by the parent, then a phone call will be made on the numbers supplied to the school. Explanations for absence, or lack thereof, is then recorded on the register via Bromcom.

If the school is unable to make contact with priority parents/ carers, then the school will continue to try to make contact throughout that day, using the other contact numbers available for the child. If there is a safeguarding concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be contacted and actions may include a home visit, Police involvement, Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) or social care involvement. The school will ensure that they leave notice of a home visit. If there is no contact from the parent or carer following this, then the Local Authority and/ or the police may be contacted. We will also inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences from school for pupils in receipt of support from these agencies, in line with statutory requirements.

### **Absence without explanation**

Daily calls will be conducted by the school and the school will continue these calls for every day a pupil is absent without explanation.

Any pupil who is absent without explanation for 3 days may incur a home visit. After 5 consecutive days of absence without explanation, the school will submit a MARF to the local authority.

After 10 days, there will be a referral to the Children's Services Attendance Staff for the local area Children Missing in Education (CME) team. The school will include details of the action that they have taken to make contact with parents/ carers and the police may be notified.

### **Absence Notes**

Notes received from parents explaining absence are kept for the remainder of the academic year. However, if there are attendance or safeguarding concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation, the notes will be retained for a longer period.

## Frequent Absence

Within the school it is the responsibility of the year teams to be aware of, and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible.

Meetings between the year teams and the Family Support and Engagement Lead will occur fortnightly to look at individual patterns of pupil absence and discuss action to be taken.

## Live lessons

Live lessons can be offered by the school if there is sufficient medical evidence that the pupil is unable to learn at school, at a medical practitioner consultation level.

In this instance, the year teams will collate all medical evidence and a support meeting will be conducted with parents/ carers and the school. Actions and timescales will be agreed and revised in a timely manner.

## Persistent Absence (PA) and Severe Absence (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; **this can be authorised or unauthorised absence**. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's educational attainment and the school requests the full support and co-operation of parents/ carers to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as 'severely absent'. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

Support meetings can be put in place and action plans can be set up by the year teams or the Family Support and Engagement Lead. The action plan will include engagement with all parties who can support the pupil's attendance.

If the attendance does not improve then a referral to the EWO can be made. Actions taken by the EWO may include the 'Fast Track' process.

## Fast Track

The **Fast Track** model promotes early intervention by schools, the LA and parents/carers in cases of persistent absence. It aims to ensure appropriate and time limited intervention is in place to tackle the underlying causes of poor or non-attendance as soon as it becomes apparent.

Where a student has an attendance rate below 95%, and some unauthorised absence, the school can make a referral to the EWO and a 'Fast Track' case may be opened. Please see Suffolk county website for details of this process.

## National framework for penalty notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be

consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing **each parent** (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 **per parent**, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, **each parent** may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

## Record Preservation

The attendance or admission register is preserved for 6 years from the date the data was entered.

## Roles and responsibilities

### The governing body responsibilities:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteachers to account for the implementation of this policy

### The headteachers' responsibilities:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors and/ or authorising a senior leader to be able to do so
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual children
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing penalty notices, where necessary and/ or authorising a senior leader to be able to do so

### The senior attendance champion responsibilities:

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence
- Using absence data to track and monitor whole school attendance and identify children or cohorts that require support
- Devising strategies to address poor attendance and remove any barriers



- Building relationships with parents and external agencies to discuss and address attendance issues
- Creating intervention and reintegration plans in partnership with children, parents and external agencies
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to children and families
- Benchmarking attendance data against local, regional and national data to identify areas of focus for improvements

The attendance administration officer, Family engagement lead, Pastoral Leads and Head of Year responsibilities:

- Completing the daily attendance register
- Implementing a system of first day calls and subsequent daily absence calls
- Co-ordinating 'safe and well' checks and home visits
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns to the senior attendance champion and headteachers
- Working with the local authority to address persistent or severe absence
- Advising the headteachers or other authorised leader when to issue penalty notices

Class teachers/form tutors responsibilities:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis
- Meeting and greeting students each lesson
- Regularly reviewing attendance data and implementing any agreed strategies when there is a concern

Admin/office staff responsibilities:

- Taking calls from parents about absence on a daily basis and recording it on the school system
- Transferring calls from parents to an appropriate member of staff who can provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents'/Carers' responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Benjamin Britten School.

Parents will be expected to:

- notify the school on every day of absence, using the dedicated phone number or email address.
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, correctly dressed and with the correct equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child's school life.

Benjamin Britten School will endeavour to support parents to address any concerns.

Children's responsibilities:

- Attending school every day, on time
- Attending every timetabled session, on time

**Categorisation of Absence**

**Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.**

**1. Unauthorised absence**

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason, for example:

- Parents keeping children from attending the school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Day trips and holidays during term time
- Leaving the school site for no reason during the day

**2. Authorised absence**

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996, for example:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during the school day and for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

**3. Approved Educational Activity**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off-site but with the approval of the school.

**Note: pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.**

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off-site

If a pupil is receiving education off-site, or is attending at a school where they are dual registered, the school will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

## Appointments

As far as possible, medical and dental appointments should be made outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to the school prior to the appointment. Wherever possible, a minimum of 24 hours' notice of the appointment should be given.

Students must attend the school before and after the appointment, wherever possible. If the appointment requires the student to leave during the day, an adult listed on the student's record must sign them out.

Should a student arrive late to the school following an appointment, they should report to the Main Reception.

## The Registration System

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information:

Code	Description	DfE Description / Explanation
/	Present (AM)	Present for school morning session
\	Present (PM)	Present for school afternoon session
B	Attending any other Approved Education Activity	Attending any other approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances	Leave absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Leave of absence – regulated performance	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence – Temporary part-time timetable	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
D	Dual registered	Dual registered to another school
E	Suspended or excluded without alternative provision	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision
I	Illness	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
J1	Leave of absence – Interview for employment or transfer to another educational institution	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

K	Alternative provision provided by LA	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
L	Late (before registers closed)	Late arrival before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Reason absence not yet established
O	Absence in other or unknown circumstance	Absence in other or unknown circumstance
P	Participating in sports activity	Participating in sports activity
Q	Unable to attend – lack of access arrangements	Unable to attend the school because of lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance	Religious observance
S	Study leave for public examination	Study leave for public examination
T	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes
U	Late (after registers closed)	Late (after registers closed)
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Attending an educational visit or trip
W	Attending work experience	Attending work experience
X	Not required to attend-non-compulsory school age pupil	Not required to attend-non-compulsory school age pupil
Y1	Unable to attend – Transport not available	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being provided
Y2	Unable to attend – widespread travel emergency	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend – unavoidable partial closure	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed.
Y4	Unable to attend – unavoidable full closure	Unable to attend due to the whole schools' site being unexpectedly closed

Y5	Unable to attend – criminal justice detention	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend – Public Health Guidance / Law	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend – Unavoidable other than Y1-Y6	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Pupil not on roll	Prospective pupil not on admission requester
#	Planned whole school closure	Planned whole school closure

## Complaints

All complaints are dealt with under the Benjamin Britten School Complaints Policy and Procedures, available on the school website. Complaints should be made in writing and will follow the complaints procedures and set timescales. The handling of complaints may be delegated to an appropriate person. The outcome of the complaint will be communicated in writing.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/ her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his/ her age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs he/she may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term 'parent' is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those who have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that pertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

### **Register and Admission Roll Keeping**

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

### **Attendance Targets**

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007

### **Guidance Documents on Attendance**

The following DfE and other relevant documents are used to guide attendance recording:

- [Working together to improve school attendance, DfE \(August 2024\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [School attendance parental responsibility measures, DfE \(January 2015\)](#)
- [Children missing education, DfE \(September 2016\)](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education, DfE \(September 2023\)](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children, DfE \(December 2023\)](#)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website.