



Policy: Attendance

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Introduction

At Brindley Heath Academy we strongly believe that attendance at school and being punctual are vital foundations for children's personal and academic growth. Establishing excellent attendance and punctuality patterns from an early age give children the greatest chance to maximise their potential and enable children to develop a deep-rooted sense of belonging to their class and school communities. Developing positive attendance and punctuality behaviours are vital aspects of continued academic success as well as future success within the workplace.

We believe that:

- Prolonged and consistent absence, in any year group, affects access to the curriculum and access to the social side of school therefore work and interactions will be missed and personal and academic progress will be negatively affected.
- Repeated and consistent lateness is an unsettling start to the school day for both the child and school.

These beliefs are supported by a large body of research that shows that high attendance levels are important because:

- There is a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training.

As a result of this, our expectation is that children maintain an attendance figure above 96% throughout an academic year.



As a school we adhere to the South Staffordshire code of conduct (Available at <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Education-welfare/Attendance.aspx>) and Department for Education (DfE) documents:

- School Attendance: Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (July 2019)
- Children Missing Education (September 2016)

What the Law says about attendance

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. Section 444 Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

‘the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable (a) to age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise’

and

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

In recognition of this, the law makes it an offence for a parent or carer to fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a school at which the child is a registered pupil, without good reason or the agreement of the school.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of School will oversee and co-ordinate the schools work in promoting regular and good attendance. The school is responsible for the accurate recording and monitoring of attendance and that the policy is consistently used. They will ensure that issues are identified at an early stage and that support can be offered and put in place prior to attendance becoming an issue.

Head of School

- Maintains whole school responsibility for attendance
- To set clear and challenging attendance targets as part of school self-review
- To ensure that all school personnel, pupils and parents are aware of and comply with this policy
- Monitor trends and arrange for letters to be sent when triggers are hit
- Target intervention and support to those children that have been highlighted as poor attendees
- Where required, utilise a multi-agency response to the attendance concerns
- Have a clear system in place for parents to report a child’s absence
- Report to the Governing body the attendance figures and progress to achieving the set targets
- Promote the importance of excellent attendance through assemblies
- Publicise excellent attendance during assemblies and newsletters

- Reward good attendance
- Responsible for authorising absence by adhering to DfE guidelines and referring cases to Staffordshire Country Council when required
- To schedule a home visit from a representative of the school if no contact has been received

Teachers and support staff

- Set a good example of punctuality and good attendance;
- Ensure that registers are taken at the appropriate times and are accurate and up to date
- To encourage good attendance and punctuality for the children in their care
- To have an awareness of class and individual attendance patterns and report concerns to senior leader
- To inform senior leaders of any concerns about attendance or where attendance is impacting on a pupil's achievements
- Discuss individual pupil attendance at parent-teacher consultations
- Praise pupils for good punctuality and good attendance

Administrative attendance officer

Daily roles

- To carry out first day calling processes – see below
- To monitor late entrants into school and adjust SIMS accordingly along with the time of arrival
- To forward phone messages to class teachers regarding absences
- Record reasons for absence on SIMS
- Record medical appointments on SIMS and state whether medical evidence has been seen

First Day Calling Process

- There is a 9.30am deadline for all parents to inform school that their child is absent from school that day and the reason why.
- At 9.30am first day calling will take place for all parents who have not made contact with the school.
- If there is no answer, we will try all available contacts for the household
- If there is still no answer, we will leave a voice message and send an e-mail
- Where contact isn't made home visits will take place.
- If we perform a home visit, and we still cannot make contact with you, school will call 111 and ask the Police to perform a 'Safe and Well' check at your address.

Weekly

- Provide class and whole school attendance information to the Head of School for the weekly newsletter
- Alert Head of School to any attendance concerns
- Update the school attendance display
- Update attendance slides for the end of week assembly

Fortnightly

- To monitor register coding and alert staff of inconsistencies
- To undertake fortnightly attendance reporting to update senior leaders

Half-termly

- To send attendance notifications to parents as a result of attendance concerns
- To invite parents to meeting regarding attendance where attendance is a concern

Additional roles

- To liaise with the Head of School regarding requests for leave and respond via letter to parents
- To contribute attendance information toward governors reports
- To produce individual/group attendance reports as requested
- To produce attendance figures and documentation for end of year reports

Parents/Carer

- To ensure their child attends school regularly, is properly equipped and is ready to learn every day that school is open
- Ensure that their children are punctual, registration takes place between 8:45am and 9.00am
- Ensure that their child is collected on time at the end of the school day – 3.10pm
- Ensure that their child is not collected until the end of each day
- To notify the school every day of absence by 9.30am. All absences will be recorded as 'O' unauthorised until an explanation or evidence is provided. The onus is on the parent to inform the school and provided appropriate evidence
- As in the work environment medical and dental appointments should be booked outside of the school day whenever possible
- To provide the school with up to date contact details and telephone numbers for every adult with parental responsibility. The school should be provided with at least two emergency contact numbers. If contact details change then we must be informed of new details within 24 hours
- Avoiding taking holidays in term time - If a 'Leave of Absence' is required for exceptional circumstances, it should be made in writing (using the application form available from the school office) to the Head of School at least 15 days in advance of the proposed start date of the absence. The circumstances you consider 'exceptional' must be detailed

Please note that exceptional circumstances do not include holiday of a lifetime, special family birthdays, cheaper holiday deal or visiting relatives abroad/far away

- Where attendance is a concern, working in partnership with the school to improve matters
- Keeping school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school

Pupils

- To attend school regularly and promptly
- Arriving at school on time, registration is at 8:45am
- To attend morning and afternoon registration promptly
- Begin to know and understand the value of good attendance

Unauthorised absence examples

It is not acceptable to assume your child can have days out of school for the following events and activities:

- Moving House
- Funerals
- New babies
- Other child in family is sick and parent cannot get other child to school
- Parent on holiday and child staying with a relative/relative cannot bring child to school– it is expected that other arrangements are made with family members/neighbours/friends to bring your child to school
- Parent/Carer/sibling being sick/illness
- Parent sick on a long term basis and cannot get child to school – it is expected that other arrangements are made with family members/neighbours/friends to bring your child to school
- Inclement weather i.e. severe snow – if you live within a 1 mile radius of the school, unless there is a babe in arms in the household, or you live in a remote setting, you are expected to get your child to school.
- Buying new school shoes/summer uniform because parents forgot to do it in the holidays
- Going on holiday/ returning from holiday
- Tiredness
- Waiting in for the builders/Gas man/delivery driver to arrive
- Withdrawing your child from school when alternative arrangements have been made to address the reasons they are unable to attend or take part in a specific lesson or event e.g. carol service

Attendance Overview

<p>98 – 100% (It's great to be gold!)</p>	<p>Excellent attendance will be acknowledged through group and individual recognition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent group attendance will be acknowledged on the weekly newsletter and praised during school assemblies. • Excellent individual attendance will be recognised through termly and annual recognition through certificates. • Excellent individual attendance will be acknowledged through termly progress slips, parents' evenings and on end of year reports
<p>96-97.9% (It's Good to be Green!)</p>	<p>Good attendance is the expectation here at Brindley Heath Academy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good individual attendance will be acknowledged through termly progress slips, parents' evenings and on end of year reports
<p>90 - 95.9% (Attendance needs to improve)</p>	<p>At half-termly points, a standard letter (Appendix 1) will be sent to parents stating attendance levels. This letter will remind parents of the school's target levels for attendance and the negative effect of irregular attendance on learning.</p> <p>If at the next half-term point attendance has continued to stay in this band a second letter (Appendix 2) will be sent which will invite parents to provide an explanation and comments and will inform parents of the likelihood of referral to the Education Welfare Service unless improvement is made.</p> <p>Where improvement has been made, this will be acknowledged with a letter of recognition (Appendix 3)</p>
<p>85-89.9% (Persistent Absence - Attendance is a cause for concern)</p>	<p>Attendance below 90% is classed as persistent absence.</p> <p>Burden of proof is on parents to bring in evidence to support all child's illness and appointments. If no evidence is forthcoming, then marks as unauthorised.</p> <p>At half-termly points, a letter (Appendix 4) will be sent to parents stating attendance levels and inviting parents into school for an attendance meeting. A senior leader will now become involved with meetings and interventions. Meetings will take place to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce school expectations and discuss detrimental effect on learning • Investigate why pupil has not attended regularly • Reach agreements in planning for rapid improvements over the next half term <p>Attendance will be monitored on a fortnightly basis and there will be regular contact with the parent, either to praise attendance levels or to show ongoing concern.</p> <p>A penalty notice request will be sent to South Staffordshire where criteria is met (see below).</p> <p>Where improvement has been made, this will be acknowledged with a letter of recognition (Appendix 3).</p>
<p>Below 85%</p>	<p>In addition to the above actions, if pupil has not been referred to the Local Authority this should be done (if this has not already taken place) and meeting to create a plan of action.</p> <p>A penalty notice request will be sent to South Staffordshire where criteria is met (see below).</p>

Procedures

Late to school in the morning and afternoon

Registration happens in the classroom and not when a child arrives at school. Registration starts at 8.45am and finishes at 9:00am. If a child arrives for registration in the classroom before 9.00am they will be marked as present code (/). If a child arrives at school after the classroom doors have closed they will need to enter via the office and a reason for the lateness given. This will be marked as late (L). School register systems close at 9.30am and any children arriving after this time will be marked as late using a U code and this will impact upon your child's attendance percentage. Where lateness is persistent (more than three per half term) a letter will be issued (Appendix 5) by the attendance officer to notify parents of the need for improvement.

Late collection at the end of the school day or after school events

The school day ends at 3.10pm. Sometimes we receive messages at the end of the day to say that parents will be late collecting their children due to traffic or other unforeseen circumstances and we accept that sometimes this happens. However, should parents regularly collect their children beyond 3.10pm, it is not the duty of the school to provide childcare beyond the end of the school day, unless there are unforeseen circumstances, and contact with the school has been made. Children who are regularly not collected until after 3:25pm will be taken to Wraparound Childcare and charges will be made.

Attendance and Illness

If your child is please ensure that you notify school, via the school office (via phone 01384 872343 or absence reporting through Parentmail) as soon as possible and no later than 9.30am. This needs to be done every day of absence (unless your child is admitted to hospital, or has a long term illness-related absence for a period of time – in this instance you do not need to ring every day). First day calling will take place for all parents who have not made contact with the school by 9.30am –see first day calling process above.

The school follows guidance that contains information about time allowed for certain illnesses e.g. 48 hours for sickness bugs in line with the Public Health guidelines (see Appendix 6)

Whilst it is important that we encourage the highest levels of attendance in all pupils, we are aware that a very small percentage of children with known medical conditions may not be able to achieve the highest levels of attendance. Where this is the case, reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that individuals are not unfairly disadvantaged.

Leave of Absence Requests

It is now necessary, for all parents to seek 'Leave of Absence Request Form' at least 15 school days before you are intending to take your child out of school. These forms are available from the school office and must be completed by the parent/primary carer and returned to the Head of School. In order for the Leave of absence to be authorised it would have to meet the following criteria;

- A parent/primary carer has a life limiting illness
- Other circumstances which are considered to be exceptional (This does not include examples such as: holiday of a lifetime, special family birthdays, cheaper holiday deal or visiting relatives abroad)

Please note: All holidays/leave of absence requests that do not adhere to the above criteria will be unauthorised. All holidays/leave of absence, of 5 days (10 continuous sessions) or more, may be referred to South Staffordshire Council, Educational Investigation Service, who may issue a fixed penalty notice fine.

Poor Attendance Referrals

In accordance with Staffordshire County Council, penalty notices can be issued for unauthorised absence and/or persistent lateness.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in the first five days of exclusion.

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if one of the following criteria is met:

- There is unauthorised persistent absence. The criteria used is at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of twelve school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive
- There is a period of absence not authorised by the head teacher or in excess of the period authorised by the Head of School (e.g. family holiday)
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed. The criteria used is at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An "excluded child" is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in the care of the LA with whom other interventions will be used.

Other conditions:

- There will be no limit on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence can be used in an academic year.
- In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child
- Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised persistent absence / lateness will be restricted to one notice/ warning per parent of a pupil per academic year¹.

Exclusion

Parents and carers can be issued with Penalty Notices if a pupil, who has been excluded, contravenes the details set out in the Exclusion Letter as to their whereabouts during the first 6 days of exclusion.

Section 103 Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents in relation to an excluded pupil; a parent has to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion.

What the Law states regarding penalty notices

A Penalty Notice is £60 (per parent, per child), if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120, if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt. The payment must be paid directly to the Local Authority, the school does not receive the money. Parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days has expired and full payment has not been made.

Where a child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the parent could be guilty of an offence under:

1. Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 – If the child is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1,000.
2. Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996 – an aggravated offence. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act then the parent is guilty of an offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2,500 and a prison sentence of up to 3 months.

Safeguarding

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis may be considered as a safeguarding matter. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, we will adhere to:

- Working together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2018)
- School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Extended leave from school can be a significant safeguarding, for example in the case of female genital mutilation (FGM), which is a form of child abuse common to some African, Asian and Middle Eastern communities in the UK. The age at which girls are subject to FGM varies greatly from shortly after birth to any time up to adulthood. Victims are usually aged between four and ten, primary school age. It is illegal in the UK to subject a child to female genital mutilation (FGM) or to take a child abroad to undergo the procedure – Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

Any information or concern that a child is at immediate risk of or has undergone FGM or forced marriage will result in a child protection referral under school procedures to the Designated Senior Person. Teachers and members of staff with teaching responsibilities have a specific legal duty to act with regards to concerns about female genital mutilation and must personally report to the police a disclosure that FGM has been carried out, in addition to liaising with the DSL/Children's social care.

School Closures

The Head of School will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, e.g. severe weather, the school may have to close. The Head of school must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person, who uses the school site, pupils, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors. If at any point, use of the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Head of School may need to close part or all of the school.

If a decision is made to close part or all of the school, the Head of School will endeavour to inform parents of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place. If the Head of School decides to close part or all of the school, then the register for those pupils affected is closed for the day and coded as an enforced school closure. This does not affect a child's attendance record. Parents should always assume that the school will remain open during term time unless they hear otherwise.

Appendix A: Holiday Request Letter

Dear

Re:

Thank you for letting us know Name: will to be absent from school from Dates:

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

I have considered your application very carefully. Although I understand the reason for your request, I am unable to approve leave of absence in this instance, as I believe the circumstances are not exceptional. **Therefore, if your child is away from school during this period it will be recorded as Unauthorised Absence.**

As a school we are obliged to inform you that you may be subject to a Penalty Notice if your child's absence from school is unauthorised. This is in line with Staffordshire County Councils Code of Conduct.

The Penalty Notice fine would be :-

- £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996.

I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1,000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Our key priority is to ensure your child(ren) are as successful as possible, are able to reach their full potential and gains maximum benefits from their educational experience. Any period of absence brings about missed learning time and any pupil returning from a protracted period of absence is unprepared for the lessons which build upon missed teaching. This means that teachers may have to help individual children catch up on missed work and therefore poses a potential risk of the underachievement of other students in the class – something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

I would hope that upon reflection you are able to support this decision in line with the Local Authority and Government policy, that leave should be restricted to the 13 weeks school holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

