

BENTLEY CEVC & COPDOCK PRIMARY SCHOOLS

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Our federation is committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence and, providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils, recognising this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities and access to full-time education to which they are entitled. High attainment depends on good attendance and we will act early to address patterns of absence and support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually. Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school have large gaps in their learning which will impact their progress and ability to meet age-related learning expectations.
- 1.2 The whole school community, pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors, have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community know of the policy and have access to it on the schools' website. Legislation and guidance includes:
- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
 - Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
 - Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
 - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
 - The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold, Keeping Children Safe in Education and mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

2. Roles and responsibilities

All members of our schools' communities have a responsibility to identify trends in attendance and punctuality. More specifically:

2.1 The Headteacher

- Implementation of this policy at the schools
- Monitoring school-level and individual pupil-level absence data, including progress following attendance interventions and reporting it to governors termly
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Work with the Attendance Officer (member of School Office team), to tackle persistent absence or lateness
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- To consider requests for absence and meet with parents to discuss such requests as appropriate
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where considered appropriate

2.2 The Attendance Officer

- [Monitoring and analysing attendance data](#)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to the Headteacher and Safeguarding governor and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Working with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to tackle persistent absence

2.3 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, both morning and afternoon, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the School Office. High attendance will be praised and celebrated

2.4 School Office staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. They will ensure effective systems are in place to support the Headteacher and work with the EWO to tackle persistent absence or lateness

2.5 All staff

All staff (teaching and support) have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

2.6 Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the schools' policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfill expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for each school on at least a termly basis
- Ensuring staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3 Recording Attendance

3.1 Registration

The school is required to record all pupils' names and mark their attendance on the Attendance Register twice each day; once at the start of the day and at the start of the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown below).

Registration opens as soon as the school day starts and again straight after lunch.

Morning registration opens at 8.45am and closes at 8.55am

Afternoon registration is taken at 1.00 pm and closes at 1.05pm

Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive after registration opening time (8.45am) but before the register closes, will be counted as **present but late** and will be dealt with following the schools' policy on punctuality and lateness (see para 5.5)

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending another setting)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Unauthorised holiday (NOT approved or days in excess of approval)	Unauthorised
H	Authorised holiday	Authorised - Approved due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence when the school has been notified of absence due to illness
J	Interview	Approved Educational establishment
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence – change code when reason for absence notified
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence school not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Participation in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence – pupil taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	N/A in a primary school
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Authorised absence where pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Organised or approved by the school
W	Work experience	Work experience placement
X	Non-compulsory school age absence (see Covid addendum also)	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Exceptional circumstances - Enforced closure, travel disruption as a result of local / national emergency	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll (not yet joined the school)	Not counted in possible attendances
#	Planned school closure (school holiday / INSET day)	Not counted in possible attendances

3.2 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment/correction are distinguishable. The reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and position of the person making the amendment will also be recorded. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher. Attendance Registers will be retained for 3 years after the date of the last entry.

- ii) The schools recognise the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. We also recognise that mental health has an impact on attendance and attainment. Inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education, as authorised absence will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will challenge parents/carers about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **rests with the Headteacher**.
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 1 week**, the absence will remain unauthorised; After 5 days, absence is recorded as unauthorised in accordance with DfE guidance.
- iv) Absence may be authorised in the following circumstances providing an explanation is received:
- Physical or mental illness, injury or other unavoidable causes (e.g. family bereavement)
 - Where an arrangement is in place for the LA to provide transport for children living 2 miles from school if 7 years old or younger, or, if living 3 miles away from school and the child is aged 8 and over and the LA could not provide the transport
 - Dental/medical appointments (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible), the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary
 - Observance of a time of religious importance
 - Attendance at a pupil referral unit (PRU)
 - Participation in an approved public performance for which a licence application has been made and the application approved by the Local Authority (LA)
 - The pupil's parents/carers are from the Traveller community and the pupil is engaged in the parents'/carers' work

Please note, holidays will not be authorised in line with DfE policy.

- v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:
- no explanation has been given by the parent/carer;
 - the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
 - the pupil is staying at home to mind the house;
 - the pupil is shopping during school hours;
 - the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, e.g. a birthday;
 - the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep;
 - absence during SATs tests

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless—

- (a) An application has been made in advance to the school by the parents/carers with whom the pupil normally resides;
- (b) The Headteacher, or a person authorised by the Headteacher, considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

4. Collection and analysis of data

- 4.1 The Headteacher will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to parents and the Governing Board. Such reports will include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the schools' future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.
- 4.2 Attendance is monitored by year group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and disabilities and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.
- 4.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the LA within the stipulated time frame.

5. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

- 5.1 Attendance has a very high profile and is regularly discussed in whole-school assemblies. Parents are reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and punctuality and their links to their child's attainment.
 - **As soon as a pupil is identified as falling below 95% attendance, parents / carers may be sent a letter explaining this and that their child's attendance is being monitored.**
 - **At 92% an 'At Risk of Persistent Absence' letter may be sent home clearly outlining expected improvements.**
 - **At 90% attendance, the pupil is considered to be in the 'Persistent Absence' criteria and the SASO is informed.** Again, a letter will be sent home and evidence of the reasons given for absence may be requested i.e. appointment cards for GP if frequently ill. Parents / Carers will be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher (or Deputy / Assistant), the School Attendance Officer and the School Nurse if they consider that this would help. If no improvement is seen in the child's attendance over the next 6 weeks a formal meeting will be arranged with those people mentioned above, with the SASO monitoring and working with the family.
- 5.2 Our schools have procedures for dealing with unexplained absences. Parents are contacted on the first day of absence and asked to explain the reason for absence in writing, a letter to be sent with their child on their return to school. Efforts will continue to obtain a reason for the absence. Any outstanding unauthorised absences are discussed with the SASO during termly visits.
- 5.3 **First-day calling**
We operate a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage, pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents'/carers' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents/carers on the first day of absence, the school will send an email or write them a letter, sent by first class post. Where there is a particular cause for concern, there may be a home visit to establish the whereabouts of the child. If contact with parents/carers is still not made, a referral to the LA will be considered.
- 5.4 **Meetings with parents**
Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence with or without explanation, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the

attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them. If there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time limit (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

5.5 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in their classroom for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes (see para. 3.1) will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the School Attendance Service. See Appendix for protocol followed to manage lateness.

5.6 Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes will be sent to the School Office to sign in. They will be reminded of the importance of punctual attendance and a letter will be sent home to parents if more than 3 late marks occur in a term.

5.7 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school records the names of everyone in the building. Pupils arriving late and after registration closes should therefore report to the School Office.

It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.

5.8 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment) or, returning to school later in the day, report to the School Office.

5.9 Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders them vulnerable to harm. Whilst this is unlikely to occur at a primary school, we take this risk very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with their parents/carers immediately.

6. Term-time holidays

6.1 It is expected that pupil absence due to; holidays, days out with relatives and family treats will be organised during the 13-week school closure period.

The Headteacher is not permitted to authorise any leave of absence during term time unless they are satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

6.2 Holidays are not usually 'exceptional circumstances' and therefore will not be authorised. Time off school for family holidays **is not an entitlement**, however, every application will be considered on its merits. An application must be made in writing, completed by all adults with parental responsibility for the child/ren, with appropriate evidence as required by the school, **6 weeks in advance** of the intended absence. The following are not 'exceptional circumstances':

- cheaper cost of holiday during term-time;

- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced during school holidays; and
- holidays that overlap with the beginning or end of school term.

We will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing, noting the reasons for the decision.

6.3 Issuance of Penalty Notice following unauthorised absence

The school or Suffolk County Council (LA), can issue fines to parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child/ren from school. If issued with a penalty notice, each parent/carer must pay £60 per pupil, (if paid within 21 days). or £120 each per pupil, if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to Suffolk County Council. Penalty notices can be instigated by the Headteacher, by a request to the LA (Fixed Penalty Notice) and they can be issued by the Local Authority Officer (Legal Penalty Notice).

The law says that if children of compulsory school age are absent from school without good reason, they are committing an offence and their parents or carers may be prosecuted in the Magistrate's Court.

The LA states that the issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate:

- Where a pupil has taken holiday during school term and the absence is not authorised by the school, irrespective of the number of days of absence.
- Where a pupil is stopped with parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school.
- Unauthorised absence can include persistent lateness.

Further information on Penalty Notices can be obtained from the Suffolk County Council website.

7. Extended leave of absence

7.1 In considering absence for extended trips overseas the school will take account of the following:

- the importance in terms of the child's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- where extended leave of absence is granted, there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes school-set work during this period.

8. Parents'/carers' responsibilities

8.1 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 school.

8.2 We expect parents/carers will:

- ensure their child/children attend punctually on every school day, unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment that cannot be arranged outside the school day;
- support their child's/children's attendance by keeping requests for authorised absence during term time to a minimum and only when absolutely necessary;

- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

8.3 Parents/carers will also be expected to:

- notify school on the first day of absence by telephoning or emailing the school by 9.00am and advise when they are expected to return to school.
- inform school in advance of any medical appointments scheduled during the school day. In order to be recorded as a medical absence we will require to see evidence provided by the doctor's surgery / dentist / hospital (appointment card / letter etc.);
- make non-urgent medical or dental appointments outside the school day and avoid appointments during registration;
- ensure children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child;
- 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 child's / children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child's / children's school lives, for example the child's reluctance to come to school. Bentley and Copdock Primary Schools will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

9. Pupils' responsibilities

- 9.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to the Headteacher.
- 9.2 Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, equipped and ready to learn. If they have been absent from school, they should give their class teacher a note from their parents on the first day of their return to school to explain the absence. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

This policy will be reviewed annually and approved by the Governing Board.

This policy is linked to the schools' Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, SEND policy.

Approved by	Governing Board of Bentley CEVC & Copdock Primary School Partnership
Date approved	October 2023
Status & review cycle	Statutory Annual

APPENDIX

Attendance Information for Parents

The Governing Board is keen to work in partnership with parents/carers, to promote an active and responsible approach to improving attendance and punctuality. This protocol is intended to support parents/carers in reinforcing these essential life skills in our pupils, and to support their learning.

Attendance at school is vital for a child's ability to learn, develop and achieve. As a parent/carer of a child of school age, you should:

- send your child to school on time every day with the correct uniform and equipment
- contact the school on their first day of absence if they are unwell, and return them to school as soon as they are well enough
- take holidays only during school holidays

There are 190 school days in an academic year, leaving 175 days free for families. Please remember that headteachers are not permitted to grant leave of absence on school days unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you need to take time out of school for any reason please contact the school to make a request for permission.

Where appointments in school time are unavoidable, it is essential that you take and collect your child from school, bringing them back once their appointment is over. The Local Authority also requires that we hold evidence of their appointment for school records.

Why is it important to be on time?

Being on time for school is an important life skill that will be increasingly important, as your child gets older. Starting good routines is essential from an early age to promote a positive attitude to punctuality as well as taking responsibilities and work ethos seriously in later life.

The beginning of the school day is an important part of the daily routine. It allows children the opportunity to:

- talk to their class teacher
- order their school lunch
- put things away tidily and prepare themselves for learning

If your child is late it:

- disrupts other children who have already settled
- disturbs the start of the lesson
- does not encourage children to take personal responsibility for themselves or their learning
- shows a lack of respect for the teacher and peers
- sends the wrong message that being late is acceptable
- If lateness persists, contact will be made with the EWO so formal support can be put into place to improve attendance



To encourage attendance, we will continue to emphasise the positive efforts of parents and children, which may include:

- Reporting attendance figures in assembly each term and celebrating this together
- School Council meetings
- School newsletters

Further Information

If you have any queries or concerns regarding your child's attendance, please contact your child's school. The contact details for the schools are as follows:

Bentley

Phone number – 01473 310253

Email – admin@bentley.suffolk.sch.uk

Coppdock

Phone number – 01473 730337

Email – admin@copdock.suffolk.sch.uk

Contact information for the School Attendance Support Officer can also be obtained from the school.

