

Birchwood Junior School Attendance Policy



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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

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](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:10am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:15pm and will be kept open until 1:20pm.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – **by 9:30am** or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6)..

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents must notify school via Parentmail or a note explaining and asking to take their child out of school for a dental or medical appointment. The office reserves the right to ask for proof of this appointment. E.G: Letter or doctor's slip.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Parents will be notified by letter if their child persistently arrives late. If this continues after the letter then legal advice will be sought by the school which could result in a **£60 fine** per parent per child.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

The school will use the flowchart to follow accurate absence monitoring procedures (Appendix 2).

School will make first contact calling for every day the child is absent from school unless parents have informed school.

If no contact is made by the second day, the Head of School is informed via CPOMS and the office will contact the emergency contact details on the child's file.

If by the 5th day no contact has been made and the child is still absent, the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Officer) will contact the police to conduct a safe and well check.

3.6 Reporting to parents

Birchwood Junior School will report attendance termly through individual progress reports and through parents' evenings. Birchwood Junior School will also update their attendance percentage weekly on the school website and inform parents regularly through termly newsletters.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

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

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as: DFE guidelines make clear that leave of absence during term-time should be regarded as exceptional. An example that can be given is that during 2012 London Olympics all police leave was cancelled. As a result for that specific timeframe it was agreed that requests for leave for the children of Police officers affected by the cancellation of their leave would be treated as exceptional.

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 governors & Executive Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- 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
- It is not the policy to authorise holidays in term time. The only exemption to this is where parents serve in the armed forces (this does not extend to the emergency services i.e. Police, Fire, Ambulance etc). Where authorisation is not granted then subsequent term time holiday absence will be reported as a matter of course to the Education Welfare Service; Birchwood Junior School are under a duty to do this.
- Where unauthorised leave is taken, the Governing Body has decided that it will support the imposition of a fixed penalty fine. This can be very expensive. This will apply to any parents/guardians who book holidays in term time.
- Approved Public Performance Where children are invited to perform in a licensed show or concert (e.g. orchestra, pantomime) you are asked to consult with staff about how much time away from school is required. Where possible such requests will be granted provided that the child's education is unlikely to suffer. The school will also be sympathetic towards leave to participate in a recognized city, county or national sporting event. Where parents wish to take their child (ren) out of school during term time for purposes other than holidays, they should write a letter and attach any evidence to prove this request.

4.2 Legal sanctions

What is considered as poor attendance?

Anything below 94% is weak, under 90% is poor and if attendance dips below 85% we will have serious concerns. Below 85% is regarded as persistent absence by the DFE. In this Birchwood Junior School are aiming for every pupil to achieve attendance levels of at least 95%. Birchwood Junior School monitor attendance and provide termly reports on each pupil's attendance. At the end of each half term Birchwood Junior School will identify all those pupils whose attendance has fallen below 90% and issue a courtesy letter or make telephone call informing parents. Birchwood Junior School then monitor the pupils' attendance on a weekly basis and hope to see a pattern of unbroken weeks developing. If there is no change in improved attendance the following could occur:

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, 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.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Parents can support regular school attendance by:

- Making sure their child leaves for school with plenty of time to arrive on time.
- Supporting and encouraging their child by attending parent's evenings and other events.
- Contacting the school to discuss any concerns regarding their child's attendance.
- Working partnership with the school to resolve any issues that are impacting on their child's attendance

School can support regular attendance by:

- Working with parents/cares with regular communication about attendance.
- Rewards such as certificates and trips to the Active Nation climbing wall
- Providing a Breakfast Club that encourages children to start their day in the right manner.
- The use of different strategies such as 'Bagel Mornings'
- Parental workshops to discuss the impact of poor attendance.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a weekly, termly and annually basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call school every day their child is absent from school.

If a pupil's absence goes above 4 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

All absence data is recorded on Birchwood Junior School's MIS system and reports are generated in line with the correct absence monitoring. All absence data is securely stored through encryption via the school server which is securely backed up to the cloud. Only relevant and correct absence data is sent to parents in relation to their child/children. The school publishes overall absence percentages on its website, no formal names are given.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The governing board

The governing board (Birchwood Federation Strategic Committee) is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Executive Headteacher & Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Executive Headteacher & Head of School

The Executive Headteacher & Head of School is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Executive Headteacher & Head of School also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The attendance officer/family support worker

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Executive Headteacher and Head of School
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Executive Headteacher & Head of School when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.4 Class teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

7.5 Office staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. The office staff are also directed to follow the flowchart with regard to first day calling as per **appendix 2**.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed in 2021 by the Executive Headteacher & Head of School. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy.

Appendix 1: 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 Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller 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