

Broadwood Primary School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Last reviewed	July 2024
Reviewed by	Full Governing Body
Next review date	July 2025

Rationale:

We want every child to enjoy and embrace all that our school has to offer, achieving academic success, confidence, ambition and lifelong friendships.

Every child has a right to receive a full-time education, and good attendance at school will ensure children are more successful and prepared for the next stage of their life.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. Being in school daily impacts positively on children's well-being, attainment and wider life chances.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head teacher and Governors work in partnership with all staff, other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education:

'The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.'

If you decide to have your child registered at our school, you have an additional legal duty to ensure your child attends school regularly. Your child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Our aims for improved attendance:

- Aspire to high standards of attendance and punctuality from all children and build a culture where all children can and want to be in school and ready to learn.
- Raise academic success.
- All children to maximise opportunities in school and beyond.

Expectations of our school:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, children and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all children are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify children or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a child's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of children absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

Procedures:

- Maintain appropriate registration processes and attendance data.
- Communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and children.
- Have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- Work with parents to improve individual children's attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Attendance Service or appropriate agencies any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the nominated person with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Expectations of all stakeholders:

Attendance is everyone's business!

Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge. This policy will now set out expectations for different stakeholders.

Expectation of our Governing Body:

- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual children or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

Expectations of the Local Authority:

- Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the child's, child's cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
- Have a School Attendance Support Team which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type):
- Communication and advice: regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.
- Targeting Support Meetings: hold regular conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify individual children and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those children.
- Multi-disciplinary support for families: provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.
- Legal intervention: take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School

Working with cross-border children

If one of our children lives in a different local authority area, both local authorities will work together to support the child and family.

Expectations of the Teaching Staff:

- Report concerns around children's attendance to the Lead and Headteacher.
- Keep an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Provide background information to support referrals.
- Monitor follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasise with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Follow up absences with requests for an explanation which should then be recorded.
- Discuss attendance issues with parents where necessary

Expectations of the Headteacher:

- Ensure policies and procedures are up to date, relevant and adhered to.
- Work closely with all professionals and families to improve attendance.
- Oversee systems for monitoring of school attendance.
- Recognise and act on trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contact families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Make referrals to the Attendance Service.
- Provide reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Attendance Lead.
- Liaise with professionals to determine individual / family barriers to attendance.

Expectations of the staff in the School Office:

- Report concerns around children absent from school to the Headteacher and relevant staff.
- Collate and recording registration and attendance information.
- Take and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensure the Attendance and Lateness are completed daily.
- Record details of children who arrive late or go home early.
- First Day Response: Contact home if no reason for absence is received (phone call or text message).

Expectations of the Attendance Lead:

- Take and record messages from parents regarding absence.
- First Day Response: Contact home if no reason for absence is received (phone call or text message).
- Report concerns around children absent from school to the Headteacher.
- Improve school attendance by carrying out home visits, attending meeting with the parent / carer.
- Identify with parents the reason for poor attendance and work with parents to achieve improved attendance.
- Monitor attendance levels & punctuality, identifying patterns of absence.
- Offer attendance contracts and attendance plans.

- Offer group work sessions to remove the barriers to attendance including friendship groups.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.
- Make a referral to legal team when necessary
- Delivering an 8-week intensive attendance support intervention.

If necessary, we will seek external support if we have significant concerns relating to attendance.

Expectations of Parents/Carers:

- Ensure your child has good attendance and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contact the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Inform the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence. (Appointment card/letter)
- Make requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not usually authorised.
- Work with school to overcome specific barriers that affect attendance.

Registration:

- Registers are legal documents and will be marked twice a day
- Parents must always give reasons for absence to the school.
- School will determine whether absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Registration

School gates and doors are 8.40 am until 8.50 am.

We provide a free Breakfast club which opens to children and their families at 8.00am.

Children will be supervised by school staff.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any child who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Our school seeks to improve general punctuality and to improve attitude of persistent offenders by: -

- Informing parents of our expectations and offer ways of helping combat lateness.
- Parents of persistent late attenders will be contacted and lateness will be actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases.
- Praise and acknowledge latecomers who improve.

- Schools may use other incentives to improve levels of punctuality.

Once the doors are closed at 8.50am children must enter through the school office. Any child who comes into school after 8.50am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those children who are late. A child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning.

Authorised and Unauthorised absences

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do **not** have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence providing school with full and accurate details of the reason for the child's absence and expected date of return. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised

Where we have not received a reason for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date, the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. The Family Support Worker will check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those children who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the

child is absent and we will attempt to contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card/letter or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission a parent /carer for the school to make their own enquiries. Alternatively, we may make a referral to the School Health Advisor to offer support.

Granting leaves of absence

We can grant a leave of absence when a child needs to be absent from school with permission.

The specific circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution
- Study leave: for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with.
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable. (For full details please see part-time timetable)
- Exceptional circumstances: We can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at our discretion.

Partial timetables

All children of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in your child's best interests, there may be a need for a school to provide a child of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For

example, where a medical condition prevents a child from attending school or another setting full-time and a part-time timetable is used to help the child access as much education as possible. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a child's behaviour.

A part-time timetable should:

- Have the agreement of both the school and the parent the child/carer.
- Have a clear ambition and be part of the child's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- Have regular review dates which include the child and their parents.
- Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the child, after which the child is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process. In some limited cases, a child with a long-term health condition may require a part-time timetable for a prolonged period.

Where the child has a social worker, the school is expected to keep them informed and involved in the process.

If the child has an education health and care plan, the school should discuss the part-time timetable with the local authority so that any support package that is in place can be reviewed as swiftly as possible.

In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a child being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record the absence accordingly.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

In line with government guidance, the governing body have agreed that no holiday requests will be authorised.

Parents will be asked to complete a holiday form which clearly states that the holiday will not be authorised. This information is then sent to the Local Authority and a fixed penalty notice may be given if the absence meets the national threshold of 10 unauthorised days absent within 10 school weeks.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 97% for individual children unless there are complex medical circumstances.

Robust actions are in place to address any concerns relating to attendance.

Promote and Celebrate 'good attendance' regularly through a whole school approach.
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Monitor attendance daily and quickly identify trends of absences or any other concerns.

Family Support Worker/Attendance lead to communicate with families to rectify any concerns and offer support. For example, if a lone parent is poorly, we may be able to offer transport.

If we are unable to communicate with families, a visit will be made to the home address if we feel this will be beneficial for the child.

Intervention from Headteacher either with a telephone call, home visit or meeting.

Family support and an Early Help will be offered to support with any barriers that are impacting on attendance. An attendance contract will be offered at this stage.

Regular meetings will be held between the family support worker and Headteacher.

Local Authority Attendance Service will be notified if we do not see positive impact as a result of school actions, which may result in a Penalty Notice.

The LA Attendance Service working jointly with Legal Services may also consider:

- Applying for a parenting order.
- Applying for an education supervision order.
- School Attendance Order (If parent has not registered their child in a school).
- Community Order.

The LA Attendance Service can remotely check and monitor attendance levels. The LA Attendance Service regularly carries out register checks to identify children with low attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Head teacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Rewards & Recognition

Although good attendance is an expectation the school seeks to improve whole school attendance by offering incentives, this may include:

- Daily Certificates for every class with 100% attendance for the day.
- Weekly celebration for the class with the best attendance. Class teacher provides a reward for the children e.g. extra playtime.
- Half termly reward afternoon for every child who has had at least 98% attendance during the half term: craft activity, dance session, sporting activity or movie afternoon.
- Termly certificates for 96+% or 100% attendance.
- Individual incentives offered to families who work together with staff to improve attendance.
- Termly reward (trip out) for class received most weekly rewards during that term
- Prizes offered to individuals for improved attendance, particularly children with low attendance.

Improving attendance

If a child falls to 90% or below in attendance, parents will be informed that their child will be on a 4-week attendance monitoring period.



If there is no improvement in attendance, an attendance contract will be issued. Barriers and an Early Help plan will be discussed at this meeting.



A 4-week further monitoring plan will take place and support from school will be put in place if necessary.



If no improvement is made, we will make a referral to the Local Authority legal team

Attendance Contracts for attendance – guide for parents

What is an attendance contract?

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent or carer and either the school and / or the local authority. An attendance contract may be offered if your child has failed to attend school regularly.

An attendance contract is meant to support you, the school and the LA to identify and address the issues surrounding your child's irregular attendance at school and encourage a positive working relationship to improve attendance. It is not intended to be a punishment.

What does it involve?

Everyone signed up to the contract will agree to take certain actions which are realistic and which address the issues of non-attendance for a specified period of time. You might agree to do things like getting your child up on time, signing a daily report card and reporting any difficulties to school as soon as possible. School might agree to inform you if your child does not arrive at school, deal quickly with any problems and involve other agencies that might be able to offer you additional support. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

Do I have to enter into an attendance contract?

Entry into an attendance contract is voluntary but it does provide you with an opportunity to get support to improve your child's attendance at school. If you do take up the offer of an attendance contract and try to comply with it, this may assist your case if the local authority decides to take legal action against you for your child's irregular attendance. If you refuse the offer or don't comply without good reason this may also be presented as evidence.

If you decide not to enter into a contract, you will need to try to find other ways of improving your child's attendance and it may be worth discussing how you intend to do this with the school or local authority.

How is an attendance contract arranged?

You will be invited to a meeting in school with a school representative. The local authority Area Attendance Officer may also attend. Depending on their age and understanding, your child can attend part or all of the meeting.

At the meeting you will be asked your views on your child's attendance and whether there are any underlying issues. Try to think about the reasons behind your child's absences, any particular difficulties you are experiencing at the moment and what would help you to improve your child's attendance. Also think about what you can do to improve attendance.

School will explain what support they can offer and whether any other agency including the local authority might also be able to help you and your child. You will be able to discuss what is expected of both you and the school and then agree the actions that will support

improved attendance. If you choose to accept the offer, the final contract will be signed by you, the school representative and in some cases the area attendance officer.

Non-compliance with an attendance contract

If you choose not to comply with the requirements set out in the attendance contract, our attendance lead will contact you and seek an explanation and decide whether it is reasonable, and the attendance contract remains useful. If the explanation shows that the attendance contract is proving difficult to comply with through no fault of your own, then a meeting will be arranged with you to review and amend it. Where no explanation is given, or the attendance lead is not satisfied with the explanation, you will be served with a warning to explain that the attendance contract is not working and may be terminated, and another course of action pursued. This may be in the form of a letter, and record of it should be kept. If there are further instances of non-compliance, we will arrange a meeting with you to review the attendance contract and discuss how it can be made to work. Following this meeting, school and/or local authority will decide whether the non-compliance is undermining the contract to the extent that it is no longer useful in which case an alternative course of action (such as a different legal intervention) would need to be decided upon. The decision and reasons should be recorded. Failure by yourself, school, or local authority to keep to the terms of the attendance contract cannot lead to action for breach of contract or for civil damages. There is no criminal sanction for a parent's failure to comply with, or refusal to sign, an attendance contract. If the child's irregular attendance continues or escalates to the point where prosecution is deemed appropriate, however, any failure or refusal may be presented as evidence in a legal case.

National contacts

www.direct.gov.uk School attendance, absence and your child

www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport Behaviour and attendance - Parental responsibility

familylives.org.uk Truancy Helpline: 0808 800 2222

Local contacts

www.newcastle.gov.uk Schools – Attendance

You can phone the Attendance Service on 0191 277 4500 or

Email attendanceservice@newcastle.gov.uk

If you require this information in audio, Braille or large print, please contact the Attendance Service to arrange.

This policy applies to all children registered at our school and is available either on the school website or at our school office. It has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.