



Attendance Policy

Date Issued: September 2022

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Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Mrs R Leonard	Head Teacher (Designated Attendance Responsibility)	0191 5864049 blackhallprimary@durhamlearning.net
Mrs N Lowes	Additional senior leaders with responsibility for attendance	
<i>Mrs C O'Neil</i>		
Mrs C Baker		
Mrs S Grayson		
Mrs K Law		
Mrs D Brown	Office Manager	
Mrs A Clark	Admin Assistant	

Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Mrs R Leonard	Head Teacher / Safeguarding	0191 5864049
<i>Mrs C O'Neil</i>	Deputy Head Teacher / Mental Health / any home issues	
Mrs C Baker	Assistant Head Teacher / SENCO	
Mrs J Dobson	School Councillor	
Mrs N Lowes	KS2 Lead / any home issues	
Mrs K Law	KS2 Lead / any home issues	
Mrs L Vincent	Child Inclusion Worker / any home issues for a child in Butterflies or Bluebells	

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

Blackhall Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role *in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring* that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance *is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils'*, improving attendance *is everyone's business*, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national *focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom*, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

Here's what the data shows:

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

This policy is supported by our policies on:
Safeguarding
Anti-bullying
Behaviour

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

2. Attendance data

At Blackhall Primary School we rigorously analyse attendance data on a fortnightly basis to ensure that individual families are identified early and support can be offered. Analysis also takes place for cohorts and specific groups on a half termly basis. This analysis will be used to look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence in order to identify barriers and develop strategies.

Attendance features on all SLT agendas and regular attendance concerns are alerted to staff members to ensure they can facilitate discussions with families.

Senior leaders will also use data to monitor the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

When a pattern is identified, the school will look at individual cases to decide the best course of action.

In the initial stages of the concern, the school will send a letter to the parents to make them aware that the pattern has been identified and provide contact details for the parents to get in touch if they require any support.

Where absences continue, the school will speak to parents over the telephone or face to face to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and make a plan / otherwise agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

4. Facilitate support

The school intends to support parents in removing barriers affecting attendance. This could include an early help assessment or whole family plan, particularly if there are wider issues affecting attendance. The school can also facilitate access to wider support services for parents such as, counselling, parenting groups/classes, housing etc.

The school is committed to reducing persistent and severe absence. Where support is refused or has limited impact on improving attendance, support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority.

5. Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not having impact or there is a lack of engagement, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract.

6. Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is having limited impact or there is a lack of engagement, attendance may be enforced through statutory intervention or prosecution to *protect the pupil's right to an education.*

General / frequently asked questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.

- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- *Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or*
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Attendance and absence management

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

Attendance is promoted in school on a daily basis through discussions with pupils and display. A weekly attendance league runs in all phases of the school where the winning class receive additional break time the following week. Certificates for green attendance (above 96%) are awarded to children on a half termly basis. Letters congratulating pupils and their parents are sent on a half termly basis.

Communication

The school requests that all parents remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive *letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs)*. If we have concerns regarding your *child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home*.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change *in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline*. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

On the first day of absence

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a *reason for the child's absence*. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Doctors and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

Periods of extended absence

If a *child's* absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received, the school will contact the parents to verify the absence *and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.*

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Punctuality:

Registration time is between 8:50am and 9:00am at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 30 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked for the reason for their lateness and to record this on the system we have in the main reception area.

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions parents will be contacted by a senior leader to discuss barriers and possible support to enabling good punctuality.

If lateness becomes persistent and support has limited impact or there is a lack of engagement with support, more formal action will be considered in conjunction with the local authority.

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to *solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer.* Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the *pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school* at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Pupils with specific needs

In development and implementation of the policy, obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have been considered.

The specific needs of pupils/pupil cohorts are applied fairly and consistently and consideration is taken to the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Please see key contact list and details at the start of this document.

Blackhall Primary School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The School will:-

- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Monitor attendance effectively and follow up absence appropriately.
- Raise awareness of regular school attendance by highlighting expectations in newsletters, the school prospectus, assemblies and parents meetings and pupil reports.
- Encourage a welcoming and positive atmosphere in which pupils feel safe and their presence is valued.
- *Reward pupil's successes in achieving* high attendance standards.
- Discuss appropriate strategies with pupils and parents to support those with attendance difficulties.
- *Use appropriate resources and advise parents on accessing support to aid their child's social, emotional and behavioural development.*
- Ensure staff receive training regarding supporting pupils with school attendance difficulties.
- Consider individual circumstances and discuss strategies with parents and pupils in the event of a child returning to school after a lengthy absence.

The Senior Leadership Team will ensure that the whole school is involved in reinforcing good attendance through:

- Aiming to ensure there is a whole school approach, which reinforces good attendance.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance to parents/carers and pupils through regular letters and information sent home, and by issuing a parent friendly copy of the attendance policy.
- Seeking to promote the importance of good attendance to pupils and parents/carers during assemblies and at parent/carers events.
- Ensuring safe and structured learning environments for pupils.
- Delivering informative lessons that are set to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Providing extracurricular activities
- Ensuring all staff have strategies in place for recording, monitoring and responding to students with attendance concerns.

The Attendance team will

- Meet with leaders to discuss particular families and strategies for support.
- Regularly monitor and review the Attendance Policy and make certain all staff are aware of it.
- Ensure the school has strategies in the place for collecting and analysing attendance data.
- *Report attendance to the local Authority, DFE and the school's governing body as required.*