



East Bierley CE (VC) Primary School

Attendance Policy

December 2023





Our vision:
Always Giving, Always Here

The Decision to portray it on a dove is to symbolise the Hope that is behind all we do, all we are and how we live our lives

Friendship, Trust, Courage, Respect, Forgiveness

Attendance Policy December 2023

1 Aims

It is important that parents and children hold a positive attitude to school attendance and punctuality so that they do not miss out on the opportunities at school. These qualities of reliability are also important in adult life.

Poor attendance, especially when condoned by parents, disrupts a child's education. This causes a lack of continuity and progression in schoolwork and can establish patterns of behaviour which may lead to long-term truancy.

We work closely with our partners to ensure this policy is fulfilled and including the Department for Education (DfE) and the Education Social Work Service.

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every child 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:

- 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.

3 Our expectations

3.1 We expect that all children will:

- Attend school every day.
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher or the school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

3.2 We expect that all parents and carers will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day.
- Ensure that they contact the school **daily** of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child.
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.

3.3 We expect that the school will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere.
- Provide a safe learning environment.
- Provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's concerns.
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor individual children's attendance and punctuality.
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition.
- Inform parents of the percentage attendance of all children on the school report.
- Make initial enquiries regarding children who are not attending regularly.

- Consult and meet with parents where there are concerns regarding their child's attendance. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order.

4 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The Governing Body

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

4.2 Head Teacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual children.
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

4.3 The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual child level.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher.
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

4.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a twice daily basis and submitting this information to the school office.

4.5 School Office Staff

School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

5 Recording Attendance

5.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all children onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. The register will mark whether every child is:

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

A full list of the DfE attendance codes are available in the [DfE guidance](#).

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for at least 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Children must arrive in school by 9.00am on each school day, with the classroom doors opening at 8.40am. The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.35pm for classes on first lunch and 1.20pm for those on second lunch.

5.2 Unplanned absence

The child's parent or carer must notify the school office on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible. Contact would normally be expected on the second and subsequent days of absence unless this has been advised previously, for example for a sickness bug where the child must remain away from school for a minimum of 48 hours.

We will mark absence due to illness as 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 the child's parent or carer 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 or carers will be notified of this.

5.3 Planned absence

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

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the child's parent or carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and provides evidence of the appointment.

The child's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence, the process for this is covered in section 6

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

It is important that children are punctual so that they do not miss out on the beginning of each school day. This time can be important because information is often given out which allows for the smooth running of the day and helps children feel part of the school community.

A child who arrives late before the register has closed will be marked as late (L). If they arrive after the register has closed, they will be marked as absent (U).

Any child arriving after 9.00am must be signed in by a parent or carer through the main reception area.

The school monitors the punctuality of all children and any that are classed as persistently late will initially be contacted by the attendance officer, with follow-up procedures the same as for persistent absence.

5.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason. We will follow the First Day Calling Procedure, detailed in Appendix 1, with any child who is not in school unexpectedly. This procedure will ensure that proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.

5.6 Reporting to parents

We will include an attendance report in children's annual written report produced towards the end of the summer term. Parents have access to our Arbor Parent Portal which includes up-to-date information on their child's attendance.

6 Authorised and unauthorised absence

6.1 Approval for term time absence

All requests for term time absence must be made on the school's Leave of Absence request form. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to children during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when making decisions.

The fundamental principles for defining "exceptional" are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By unavoidable it means an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance and will not be authorised.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 5.2 and 5.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parents belong. (A maximum of three days may be authorised in any one school year). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Exceptional circumstances could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
- Attendance at the wedding of a close family member, where the ceremony takes place on a school day, if the headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional. For weddings in the UK a maximum of one day may be authorised and for weddings abroad a maximum of 3 days may be authorised.
- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Traveller children 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 child is attending educational provision.

Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above, the Headteacher reserves the right to authorise if they feel the circumstances justify it.

Applications for periods of absence can be made by either completing a form that can be collected from reception or completing the form available on the school website.

6.2 Emergency Contact and First-Day Calling Procedure

As part of our commitment to safeguarding procedures, school implement a first day calling and contact procedure. In the event of a child being absent from school and contact from a parent/guardian has not been received by 9:30am, our procedures are as follows:

- Step 1 – Calls are made to the first contact on the list.
- Step 2 – If no reply is received, all other contacts are phoned until an answer is received.
- Step 3 – If no replies are received, an email and Arbor in-app message will be sent to the child's parent/guardians.
- Step 4 – If no reply has been received by 10:30am, a home visit will be made to check on the welfare of the child/family. (This will be the result of a conversation between the Headteacher and DSL)
- Step 5 – If no contact can be made, the police will be contacted to initiate a 'safe and well' check. This will be done using the 101 number.

6.3 Reducing persistent absence

Children whose attendance is less than 90% are referred to as 'Persistent Absentees' by the DfE and will be considered for referral to Pupil Attendance and Pupil Support Service. School staff will then begin a programme of monitoring and support:

- Step 1 – Parent/guardian and school staff meet to discuss the absences and agree an action plan to improve attendance.
- Step 2 – A letter summarising the discussion and a copy of the action plan is sent to the parent/guardian.
- Step 3 – After 6 weeks the attendance of the child is reviewed by school staff.
- Step 4 – If the percentage has improved to above 90%, half-termly monitoring is implemented.
- If the percentage remains below 90%, the parent/guardian is invited to a second meeting with school staff to discuss the absences where further, more formal actions are outlined. At this time, if appropriate, a referral to social care may be made.

Where there is persistent failure to adhere to a plan to improve attendance, legal action may be considered. If legal action is approved by the Kirklees Legal Intervention Panel, the matter is heard in the Magistrate's Court for the offence of knowingly failing to ensure your child's regular school attendance (s444(1)(a) Education Act 1996). If found guilty, this carries a penalty of up to £2,500 or up to 3 months imprisonment and guardians will receive a criminal record. Additionally, other community orders may be attached.

6.4 Legal sanctions – Leave of Absence

The local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. For this to occur, there must be a minimum consecutive absence of 10 school sessions – this can be split over weekends or school holidays – before triggering a penalty notice request.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as a leave of absence taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the local authority commencing legal proceedings against guardians for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular school attendance. If found guilty, guardians may be fined up to £1,000 and will receive a criminal record.

Where a parent has been previously issued with a penalty notice on two or more occasions for the same child, we may request direct prosecution proceedings under [s444\(1\) Education Act 1996](#).

The school follows the Kirklees Code of Conduct for the issuing of penalty notices.

6.5 Legal sanctions – Suspended/Excluded Children

If a child has been suspended or excluded, that child may not be in a public place during the period of suspension/exclusion without just cause (such as attending a medical appointment). If that child is seen in a public place, a penalty notice is issued to each parent of each child. This is for £60 if it is paid within the first 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the local authority commencing legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular school attendance. If found guilty, you may be fined up to £1,000 and you will also receive a criminal record.

7 Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors our children's absence on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

A child's guardian is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health.

Guardians are expected to contact school on the first and each day of absence unless informed not to do so by the office staff.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their guardians, we will consider involving Attendance and Pupil Support.

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 will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

Attendance data is tracked and recorded using the school's MIS Arbor. This information is used to:

- Track the attendance of individual children

- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as needing intervention and support

8 Strategies for promoting good attendance

As a school we raise the profile of attendance with parents and carers through the use of our home-school agreements, at parents' evenings, in school newsletters and other communications. At new parents' induction evenings and in communications we raise awareness of the importance of punctuality and attendance

If a child's absence falls below 95% an email will be sent to guardians promoting the importance of good attendance. If attendance continues to fall, and certainly when a child reaches the persistent absence threshold, meetings with guardians will take place to discuss strategies in school and at home which encourage regular school attendance and the production of an action plan for improving attendance. If absence fails to improve we may engage with our LA support services.

9 Links to other policies

This policy links to these other school policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Appendix 1 Request for Term Time Leave of Absence Form

East Bierley CE (VC) Primary School



Request for Term Time Leave of Absence

Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year. Full attendance is vital for your child's educational progress. Kirklees Council expects all parents/guardians to ensure that their children attend school regularly. Absences due to holidays taken during term time can seriously impact on a pupil's academic attainment. Council policy is to only grant leave of absence in the most exceptional circumstances. If permission is given for Leave of Absence the Headteacher will determine the number of days of absence.

Taking 'Leave of Absence' for 5 or more school days without the school's permission will result in a referral to the Local Authority who will issue a Penalty Notice resulting in a fine of £60. Penalty Notices are issued, per parent per child.

If you wish to apply for your child to be absent from school, please complete this form and return it to school **at least two weeks before the intended departure**. Thank you.

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Name of child/children | |
| Class | |
| Date of first day of absence | |
| Date of return | |
| Number of days requested | |

Any special circumstances you would like to be taken into consideration:

Signed:.....

Date:.....

For school use:

| | |
|---|-------|
| Total sessions absent this academic year: | |
| Total unauthorised session absence this year: | |
| Attendance term to date: | % |
| Request authorised: | Y / N |
| Penalty notice requested: | Y / N |

Reason if authorised

Reason if unauthorised and any additional comments:

| | |
|---|--|
| Date request form sent | |
| Date request form received | |
| Date response letter issued | |
| If required - Date any further letters issued | |
| If required - Date penalty notice submitted | |