



Attendance Policy

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1. Rationale

Balmoral Learning trust is committed to providing a full and effective education for all children that enables them to acquire the skills and characteristics to be effective learners and be happy and successful in life.

Good school attendance is an essential building block in a child's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. To promote regular attendance our schools will work with parents and carers to ensure children achieve maximum attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are addressed quickly.

This Statement forms part of the Safeguarding suite of policies

We are committed to:

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that; *the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.*
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2014) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024'
- DfE (2014) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2024) 'Providing remote education'

- DfE (2024) 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures

- Behaviour Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Attendance Officer Home Visit Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Trust has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures and **effective practice** across the Trust
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Trust Complaints Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Head of School is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- To work towards an attendance target of 96% for all children
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Keep accurate records of attendance for all pupils twice a day that include times of late arrival and if an absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Contact parents, as soon as possible, on the first day of absence if a child is not in school and no message has been left to explain the absence
- Follow up on unexplained absence to attempt to authorise the absence or to support the child or family.
- To review patterns of attendance to identify children who are not attending well or have poor punctuality in order to support families to improve attendance
- To work with attendance services where patterns of attendance or punctuality are of concern
- To promote excellent attendance through a safe learning environment, appropriate learning experiences, high quality teaching, rewards and recognition.

- To work with attendance services to inform the Local Authority of any pupils being deleted from the register if they:
 - Are being educated from home.
 - No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
 - Have an authorised medical note.
 - Have been permanently excluded.

3. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Persistent absenteeism:

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

4. Training of staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and ongoing training.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

5. Pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA)

The school will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary.

The Head of School will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
 - Ensuring letters are sent to parents.
 - Regularly reviewing attendance across the school including how attendance is recorded
 - Reviewing all applications for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances
 - Engaging with external attendance support
 - Using fixed penalty notices where appropriate

The local governors will engage in attendance panels to reinforce messages and outline relevance in terms of training and employment.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. early help. Social care, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care.

Where a pupil becomes at risk of PA, the school will:

- Welcome pupils back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meet with parents to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Review weekly progress and the impact of support.
- Make regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups, including:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM

- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND

6. Absence procedures

Parents will be required to contact the school office via email or telephone as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence.

A telephone call will be made to the parent of any pupil who has not reported their child's absence on the first day that they do not attend school. If the child is subject to a protection plan or looked after the social worker will be contacted.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 90%, attendance monitoring procedures will be initiated using A Start Attendance agreed protocols. These procedures are staged and may include a referral to the City of Sunderland Attendance Team.

Stage 1- A letter will be sent that indicates that attendance is under review and a cause for concern.

Stage 2- Attendance is still a concern and has not improved since the initial letter. Parents will be invited to a meeting with the head of school to discuss any support that is needed.

Stage 3- Attendance continues to be a concern and the attendance target set at stage 2 has not been met. A further meeting will be held with the head of school and a member of the Local Governing Body.

Stage 4- Attendance continues to be a concern and a referral to the City of Sunderland Attendance team is made

The City of Sunderland Attendance Team will review the attendance and may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

A Fixed Penalty Notice may include absence for a leave of absence in term time, including holidays, regardless of whether or not an official request has been made. Full information and guidance on Fixed Penalty Notices can be found on the City of Sunderland web site.

The school will build respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance.

Parents will be expected to:

- Treat staff with respect.
- Actively support the work of the school.
- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

7. Attendance register

The school uses SIM's to to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will use the national attendance codes published by the DfE to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- # = planned whole school closure
- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school for exceptional circumstances
- S = Study leave
- C1 = Leave of absence for participating in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- C2 = Leave of absence for part-time pupils
- E = Suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision made
- J1 = Leave of absence for job or education interviews
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- K = Attending provision arranged by the LA
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed

- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Traveller absence
- Q = Absent due to a lack of access arrangements or due to the pupil having to attend a school that does not qualify for travel arrangements and is more than walking distance from where they live.
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity, with supervision being physically provided by an appropriately trained and knowledgeable person
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- W = Attending work experience
- Y1 = Absent due to their regular transport not being available
- Y2 = Absent due to travel disruption
- Y3 = Absent due to part of the school premises being closed
- Y4 = Absent due to the school site being closed
- Y5 = Absent due to being in criminal justice detention
- Y6 = Absent due to public health guidance or law, despite the pupil being well enough to attend
- Y7 = Absent due to any other unavoidable cause, the nature of which must be documented by the school.
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

8. Working with External Partners

If they are persistently absent, pupils will be referred to the attendance officer who will attempt to resolve the situation through a parent agreement. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the attendance officer with the school, will refer to the Local Authority who have the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices to parents.

The school will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence, and will provide regular reports to the local governing body and the Trust.

9. Lateness

Each school in the Trust will publish the times of their school day on the school web site. Parents will be reminded of this on an annual basis at the start of the academic year and reminders given regularly throughout the year.

- Registers are marked immediately the children come into school.
- The register formally closes at 9:30am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.
- After lunch, registers are marked as soon as the children return to the classroom. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- When the register is closed a record will be kept of the time the child arrived in school with any reason for the lateness. This will form part of attendance reviews

10. Leave of Absence/ Holiday in Term Time

Education regulations state that parents can make applications for term time leave of absence but that they must do this in advance and it must be for exceptional circumstances. The application must be made by a parent with whom the child lives and will be considered on an individual basis by the Head of School.

Holidays requested in term time will not be authorised unless the circumstances are exceptional and have been discussed in person with the Head of School.

The Trust recognises that sudden, serious circumstances do occur, when it may be impossible for children to attend school. In these circumstances parents should discuss this with school so that school know:

- When to expect the child to return.
- School can arrange or offer support to the family
- School know how to code the absence.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

Under national rules, we will consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) this includes when children are on an unauthorised holiday.

11. Truancy

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a child might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the Head of School is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice.
- A penalty notice will be issued in line with the [Penalty notices and legal intervention section of this policy](#) where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school.

The designated safeguarding lead will be involved where an instance of truancy may be linked to a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

12. Missing children

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they are collected by a parent.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the Head of School immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the Head of School.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
 - All classrooms
 - All toilets
 - All shared spaces
 - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.

- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The missing pupil's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.
- A critical incident chronology and review will be carried out during and, as soon as possible, after the incident. The learning from this will be shared with staff.

The Head of School will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

13. Religious observances

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals. Parents will be required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance using the leave of absence procedures.

14. Appointments

As far as possible, parents will be encouraged to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card will be sent to the school office.

If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out at the school office by a parent. Pupils will be expected to attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

15. Sport and acting performances/activities

Trust schools will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances/activities, which require them to be absent from school, will complete a leave of absence form.

Additional arrangements will be made by the schools for pupils engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education.

16. Young carers

The Trust understands the difficulties that face young carers, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as through their time at the school. A caring and flexible approach will be taken to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

The school, in conjunction with relevant authorities, will implement support for pupils who are young carers, to encourage their sustained and regular attendance at school in line with the school's expectations.

17. Penalty Notices and legal intervention

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect after **one term**, the school will consider:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team.
- Working with the LA to put a parenting contract or an education supervision order in place.
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

Where the above measures are not effective, the head of school will issue a notice to improve as a final opportunity for parents to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is considered.

Where a pupil reaches the national threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks, the school will consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate. Each case will be considered individually to determine whether a penalty notice or another tool or legal intervention should be used to improve attendance.

A fixed penalty notice will be issued in line with the LA's code of conduct and the DfE's ['Working together to improve school attendance'](#) guidance.

Penalty notices for unauthorised absences will be charged at £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

A penalty notice of £120 may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. This will be reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days.

Parents will only get up to two fines for the same child in a three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

Parents who are prosecuted and attend court because their child has not been attending school may be fined up to £2,500.

Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)

Where interventions have not been successful, an ESO can be an alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. ESOs are made through the Family or High Court and give the LA a formal role in supporting the pupil and parents to improve their attendance. LAs will issue parents with a notice of the intention to consider an ESO, set up a meeting to discuss with the parent and pupil, and decide whether the case will be taken forward.

Once an SEO is secured, a supervisor from the local authority will decide any actions or requirements. These may include:

- Requiring the parents to attend support meetings.
- Requiring the parents to attend a parenting programme.
- Requiring the parents to access support services.
- Requiring an assessment by an educational psychologist.
- Review meetings involving all parties to be held every 3 months.

Failing to comply with an SEO will result in a fine and decisions will be made about whether further action is required.

18. How do we encourage good attendance?

Schools in our Trust encourage good attendance in the following ways:

- Providing a welcoming and safe environment where children feel valued.
- Providing a curriculum that is broad, balanced, challenging and relevant to themselves and their local community.
- Involving children and their families through a well promoted reward scheme that celebrates good and improving attendance.
- By responding promptly to the concerns of parents and children about aspects of school life or other children and documenting these carefully with follow up actions.
- Sharing attendance and displaying school attendance totals and targets.
- Working with outside agencies to promptly engage with parents where there are attendance issues.

How do we promote our attendance procedures?

Each school in Balmoral Learning Trust will publish their attendance procedures on their web site. This will include:

- Current attendance levels for the school and each class
- The start and end time of each day
- The time that children can be brought to school

- Information for parents on the benefits of good attendance and links for them to find further information or support.
- Consequences of poor attendance
- Procedures to follow if a child is absent from school including methods of contact
- What school will do if they are not informed of an absence
- Procedures if a child is late for school
- Details of punctuality and attendance awards and celebrations including details of celebration awards

19. Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The Trust attendance target is 96% – full details of individual school attendance can be found on their school web pages

This policy will be reviewed annually by Balmoral Learning Trust. The next scheduled review date for this policy is 2023.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.