



Bexhill
Academy



Attendance Policy 2024-2025

Adopted: August 2024
Next Review: September 2025

ATTENDANCE POLICY For Bexhill Academy

This policy was adopted on 19 August 2024
This policy is due for review on 1 September 2025

Aims and Principles:

Regular school attendance is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. Bexhill Academy believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. Our expectation for attendance is 100%.

Bexhill Academy values all students and we will work with families to identify the reasons for unsatisfactory attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and SEND.

Responsibilities:

Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024) states:

“Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools’ efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.”

We ask you to support the academy by sending your child into school to access their learning. By registering your child at Bexhill Academy, you have an additional legal duty to ensure your child attends school regularly. This means 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. Do not keep them at home for unnecessary reasons, including minor illness. If you have any concerns regarding your child’s attendance at school, your first action should be to contact your child’s Form Tutor so that any issues or concerns can quickly be resolved.

Context

Bexhill Academy is a community school that recognises the staff, parents/carers and students play an important part in making it successful. We aim for an environment that enables and encourages all members of the community to put learning at the heart of everything we do. For our students to be able to gain the most from their education it is vital they attend regularly and should be at school, on time, every day unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Why is Regular Attendance so Important

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

Learning at our school is very interactive, requiring the participation of the students with the teacher and one another during class. This is adversely affected when a student is absent or habitually late – not only for that student, but for the dynamics of the entire class both during their absence as well as upon their return, when time is taken to reintegrate them into the learning context of the class.

In addition, non-attendance at school can be detrimental to developing the confidence and resilience skills required to be successful adults. We want our students to “Be the Best” and this means being a fully engaging member of our community.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with families. All partners should 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 and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

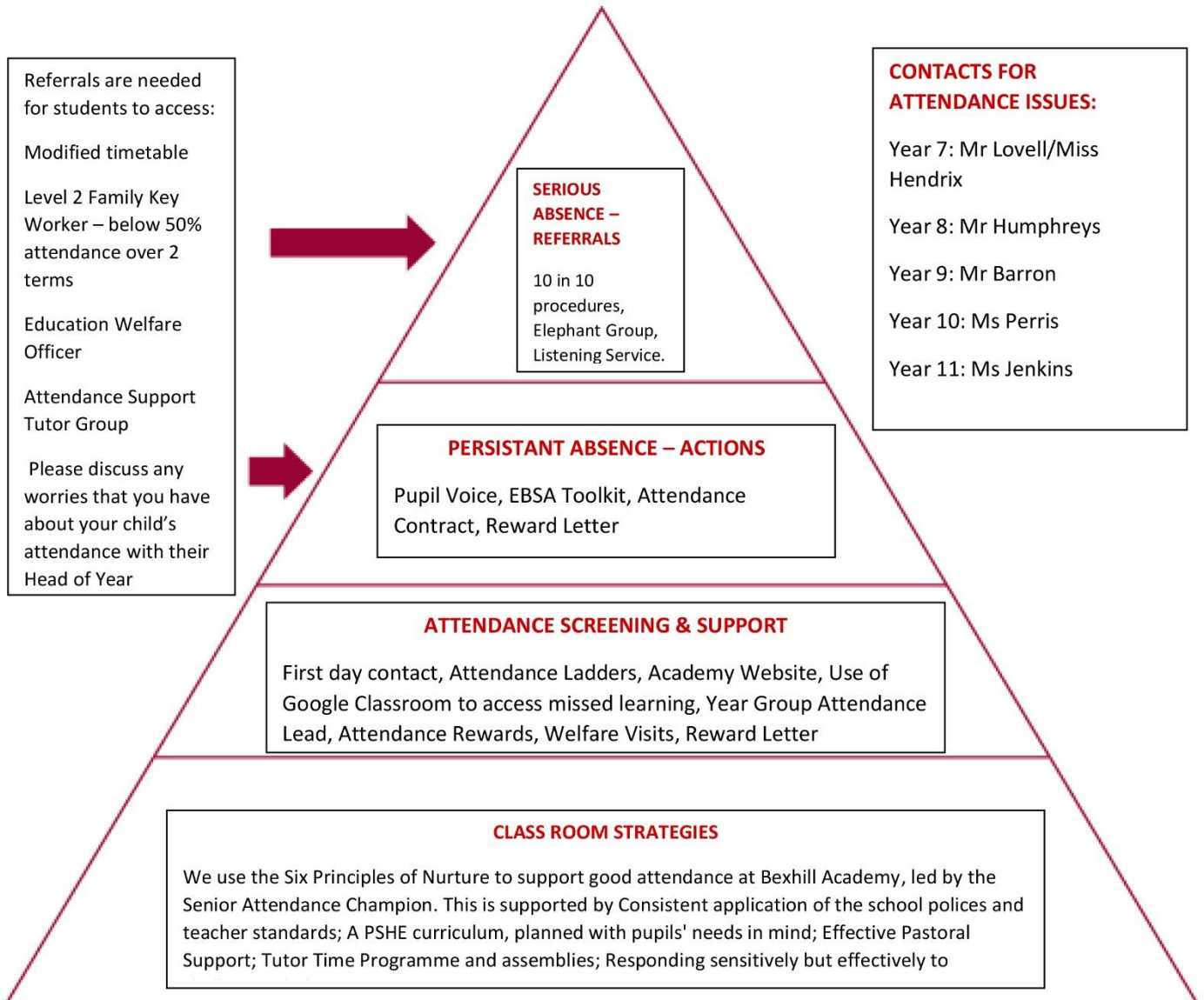
Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues (Appendix A shows Bexhill Academy's Graduated Response for support)

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 an attendance 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: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.



WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

Bexhill Academy, local partner, parents/carers and students should 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 as soon as possible.
- **LISTEN & UNDERSTAND:** When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and 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.
- **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
- **ENFORCE:** Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention such as a Penalty Notice

Safeguarding

Students may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for every student encompasses Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying. Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter. Priority students will be monitored daily to review their attendance and appropriate safeguarding actions taken as required.

In accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024, we recognise that Children Missing from Education and Children Absent from Education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, students and all members of school staff.

We expect all parents/carers to promote good attendance at the academy.

To help us all to focus on this the academy will:

- Give you details on attendance in our academy newsletter
- Report to you throughout the academic year on how your child is performing in school and what their attendance rate is
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements and individual achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance
- Take appropriate disciplinary action on students who arrive late to school and lessons
- Promote student attendance through tutor time activities, assemblies and attendance incentive programmes
- Make internal and external referrals as required for individual students and families to reduce persistent absence and serious absence (see Graduated Response for details)

Absence Procedures

If a student is absent, it is the parent/carer's responsibility to:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and to continue contact every day that your child is absent from school
 - By text - **07480632723**
 - Absence line – **01424 730722 – press 1**
- Send a letter in on the first day of return with an explanation of the absence, even if you have already telephoned us
- If you have any queries regarding day-today attendance for your child, the first point of contact should be your child’s Form Tutor
- In the case of more complex attendance issues, the point of contact would be your child’s Head of Year (see Graduated Response document for contact names for each year group)

If a student is absent, we will:

- Text/phone the parent/carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Send a letter informing you of their absence if we have received no notification from you
- Carry out a Home Visit
- If absence persists, your child’s **Form Tutor, Head of Year** or the **Attendance Officer** may contact you to discuss this. Our Administration Team will also write to you to highlight this.
- If after 2 weeks there is still no improvement we will refer the matter to the **Attendance Team**
- Medical evidence may also be requested for absences of 3 days or more
- Where absence is related to family illness, family medical evidence may be requested.

Where a child has been absent without parent/carer contact, the police may be called to carry out a welfare check.

Internal Truancy – Refusal to attend lessons.

The Education Act 1996 states that parents and carers must ensure that all children of compulsory school age (5 to 16 years) receive a full-time education that is suitable for their age, ability and special educational needs. This means that your child should not have sessions of unauthorised absence during term times therefore your child should attend

school regularly unless he or she is ill or the school has authorised their absence. **Within these expectations, it is imperative that students attend their lessons daily. Internal truancy is just as detrimental to their education as not coming to school at all.** This form of in-school truancy often results in disrupted lessons, distraction of classmates and have an adverse effect on the teacher's time and attention.

Internal truancy is closely monitored at the academy and those found to be truanting lesson will be escorted to the Re Engagement Room for their safety for the remainder of the day. If students refuse to attend the Re-Engagement Room and remain persistently defiant, they will receive a fixed term suspension. If a fixed term suspension is triggered, upon return to the academy, students will be placed in the Re-Engagement Room for the first day, in preparation for the return to regular lessons. At Bexhill Academy we understand that many children and young people find school or college difficult for a variety of reasons, including disability, anxiety and post-viral fatigue, however it is the refusal of attending school and lessons which prevents us from offering the support and guidance to improve and progress both socially and academically. We have a wide range of support in place but deliberate refusal to access lessons or school is not acceptable.

Targets

The academy has targets to improve attendance and every student has an important part to play in meeting these targets – we expect 100% attendance for all of our students. Through the academy year, we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our academy newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Expectation for students

Irregular attendance means that students will miss aspects of the educational experience on offer at Bexhill Academy.

Students need to understand that if they are absent or late they will not get access to their entitlement of learning for success. Furthermore, their development of their social skills, key learning skills and their ability to achieve academically will be severely compromised.

Students should:

- Aim for 100% attendance, only being absent through genuine illness
- Arrive at school by 8.20am in time for Tutor Time at 8.30am and be punctual to every lesson, Students arriving after 8:30am will be marked as "Late"
- Morning registers close at 9:00am and afternoon registers close at 1:20pm. Students arriving after these sessions will be marked as absent for the session.
- Register at reception if they are late
- Bring a note from home explaining the reason for absence following every session of absence

- School finish times are:
KS3 students: 3:00pm
KS4 students: 3:05pm
- See individual teachers and catch up work missed during the period of absence

Staff to support attendance

The first point of contact for you if you have any queries regarding your child's attendance is the Form Tutor. If you require further clarification, you can contact the Head of Year for your child:

Year 7: Ms Hendrix and Mr Lovell

Year 8: Mrs Kemp

Year 9: Mr Baron

Year 10: Ms Halvey

Year 11: Ms Jenkins

Other members of the Attendance Team include:

Attendance Support – Ms C Jack – Corinne.jack@bexhillacademy.org

Ms Jack supports attendance at the academy by promoting attendance rewards and also keeping the academy updated weekly on attendance progress

CLA and Attendance DDSL – Ms Holdsworth – denni.holdsworth@bexhillacademy.org

Ms Holdsworth manages our programme for supporting vulnerable students with their attendance at the academy

Attendance Officer – Mr J Bayliss – joseph.bayliss@bexhillacademy.org

The role of the Academy's Attendance Officer is to help the Academy improve attendance and meet the needs of children and young people by supporting and advising them and their families using a range of different tools, i.e. group mentoring, liaising with outside agencies, informing parents/carers of their rights and responsibilities in relation to regular academy attendance and the process of legal proceedings in relation to non-school attendance.

The Attendance Officer also helps the Academy develop appropriate strategies in partnership with other agencies to maintain and/or improve levels of attendance to help ensure the Academy's performance indicators and targets are met. The Attendance Officer works together with Heads of Year on a weekly basis to ensure consistency and delivers training to staff regarding academy attendance strategies as appropriate.

The academy are also supported by Helen Gardiner from the Education Welfare Team.

Safeguarding and Attendance Manager – Nikki.ashdown@bexhillacademy.org

The role of the Attendance Manager is to oversee the Attendance Team to improve attendance across the academy. Ms Ashdown takes a lead role in analysing data and supporting the year group teams to target intervention. Ms Ashdown also manages the Administration Team who are central to ensuring accurate records and registers are in place.

Ms Ashdown also arranges training and support for Bexhill Academy staff and other Attendance Staff in the nearby area. She leads the local Attendance Leads Forum.

Senior Attendance Champion – Mrs T Hillman – trudy.hillman@bexhillacademy.org

The Senior Attendance Champion is expected to set a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance, establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and make sure they are followed by all staff and have a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school. It is an ongoing responsibility, and the Senior Attendance Champion is also expected to regularly monitor and evaluate progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes

Summary

The academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. This data is also made available to the Department for Education and the Local Authority. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure their child attends and arrives on time. All academy staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

At KS4, pupils not achieving Grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving Grade 4. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving Grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra familial harms, including crime (the proportion of children that had been cautioned or sentenced for any offence that had ever been persistently absent was 81% and for serious violence offence was 85%)

APPENDIX – OTHER INFORMATION

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the academy (not the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why we require information about the cause of any absence.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoons away from the academy for a good reason, like medical/dental appointments which UNAVOIDABLY fall in academy time, emergencies or other reasons the **academy** deems to be unavoidable (e.g. family grievances). Students will not be allowed to leave the academy for medical appointments without a note or appointment card.

Students with on-going medical conditions may have an Individual Health Care Plan in place that outlines reasonable adjustments to a student's timetable where CURRENT medical evidence to support this is in place.

Regular days off ill may be challenged by letter. Where possible, a doctor's note, hospital notice or prescription should be presented to the academy following a medical absence or illness.

High levels of authorised absence can lead to the support of the Level 2 Early Help Keyworker Service

Unauthorised absences are those that the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This type of absence can lead to sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absence includes:

- Parents/carers keeping students off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the academy day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at the academy too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other siblings or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time. Holidays should be taken during the school holidays. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, SI 2013 No 756, amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006 No. 1751, to remove references to family holiday and extended leave.

East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service will issue fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised holiday absence during term time. This fine is payable at £60 per child, per parent

Whilst any student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend the academy. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the academy, the parents/carers and the student. If the student is reluctant to attend, it is never advisable to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse. Please contact your child's Head of Year if you have any concerns regarding their attendance.

Persistent Absenteeism

A student becomes a "persistent absentee" when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academy year for **whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any student's educational prospects and we need parents/carers' full support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and the parent/carer will be informed of this. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our regular attendance tracking. Students are also likely to be involved in other interventions where absence affects attainment.

Selected PA students and their parents/carers will be invited to attend an Attendance Planning meeting with a Head of Year or other member of the year group team. The plan may include additional support through a mentor and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day they can miss essential work. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the student and encourage absence. Students who are late to the academy will receive Behaviour Points in line with the academy Behaviour Policy and an after school detention.

The academy day starts at 8.30am and we expect all students to be in class at that time. Students should aim to be at the academy by 8.20am. The academy is open from 7.45am.

Registers are marked immediately and submitted by academy staff by 8.45am. A student will receive a late mark if they are not in class by 8.30am. All students arriving after 8.30am will be required to sign in with a member of the morning Duty Team via reception.

At 9.00am, the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a student arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will

not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of prosecution if the problem persists.

Withdrawals from Learning in Term Time

As parents/carers, you can best support your child by encouraging good attendance at school.

Taking holidays in term time will affect a student's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking your child away in academy time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in academy time to go on holiday and at Bexhill Academy holidays in term time will not be authorised.

Children must attend every time the academy requires. The only exceptions are the ones set out in the Working Together To Improve School Attendance.

If there are very exceptional circumstances the academy may authorise a leave of absence – in these circumstances the parent/carer should apply to the Head Teacher using the Withdrawal from Learning Form available from reception or the academy website. All applications in these exceptional circumstances must be made in advance. In making a decision, the academy will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of absence in term time.

Excluded children

When a child is excluded from school, the parent will be responsible for ensuring that their child is not found in a public place during normal school hours on the first five days of each fixed period or permanent exclusion. (Section 103 Education and Inspections Act)

Legislative Framework for School Attendance and Absence

The legal framework governing school attendance and the responsibilities of parents of excluded pupils, schools/ academies and the LA is set out in a succession of acts, regulations and other guidance.

Education Act 1996

Under Section 7 of the Act: the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that the child may have, this can be by regular attendance at school, or otherwise (the parent can choose to educate their child themselves). If it appears to the LA that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise then

they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend the school regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. In addition, if it can be proved that a parent knew of the child's non-attendance and failed to act, then they may be found guilty under Section 444(1 A). This offence (known as the higher or aggravated offence) can lead to a warrant being issued compelling a parent to attend court and conviction may result in a higher-level fine and/or a custodial sentence.

On 6 April 2017, in the case of Isle of Wight Council v Platt [2017] UKSC 28, the Supreme Court ruled that the word 'regularly' means 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.'

Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/38/contents>

The Act added two new sections (444A and 444B) to the Education Act. It introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under Section 444; the issuing of penalty notices is governed by:

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007
 - The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) 2013
 - The Education (Penalty Notices) (England_ (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/210/pdfs/uksiem_20240210_en_002.pdf

Children Act 1989

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/36>

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37/section/16>

Education and Inspections Act 2006

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2013)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/756/regulation/2/made>

Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

Every moment in school counts and days missed add up quickly. Evidence shows that pupils who have good attendance enjoy better wellbeing and school performance than those who don't.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There are only a few circumstances where a child is allowed to miss school, such as illness or where the school has given permission because of an exceptional circumstance.

However, if your child misses school without a good reason, local councils and schools can intervene and you may be issued a fine.

The Department for Education has introduced a new national framework which will mean all councils have the same rules in place for when they need to consider a fine. All schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons.

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be **£80 if paid within 21 days**, or **£160 if paid within 28 days**.

This rate is in line with inflation and is the first increase since 2012.

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

Appendix A

Attendance Guide for Parents/Carers

Newsletter content to showcase attendance expectations

What YOU must do:

Try to telephone the school before 8.30am each day of your child's absence.

Tell the school in advance, of any medical appointments and bring in appointment cards/letters.

If you are not sure whether your child is well enough to attend school, send them in anyway as they often perk up on arrival.

Have a backup plan for if your child misses transport, call on a family member, neighbour or friend.

If you and your child are experiencing difficulties with school attendance then talk to us as a first step so we can help!

What WE will do:

Check your child's attendance every day.

Phone home to discuss your child's attendance with you.

Invite you into school for attendance meetings if we are concerned.

If we cannot establish a reason for absence or we have not seen them for a week, then we will make a welfare home visit.