

Begbrook Primary Academy Attendance Policy v2020

Our Aim

Begbrook's attendance target for this academic year 2019-20 is: 96.5%

Begbrook Primary believes that regular attendance is the key to enabling children to gain the greatest benefit from their education and reach their full potential. Regular attendance is defined by Begbrook Primary as attending school every day and on time when the school is open, unless there is an unavoidable reason for not doing so. We explain about different types of absence in this policy and we will actively promote this ethos throughout the school community and encourage our students to achieve this. Where this expectation is not met we will identify and address the barriers that prevent this.

Research shows children and young people who attend school at least 96% of the time are more likely to achieve good results. Studies of attendance show a clear correlation between attendance and achievement, which continue throughout primary and secondary school. Good attendance develops the essential life skills necessary for young people to be responsible and successful citizens and is important for personal, social and emotional development and self-esteem.

Please ensure that you and your child/children support our school rules about attendance

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to promote a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff. To help focus on good attendance the school will:

- ❖ Celebrate and reward students who achieve our expectations of a high level of attendance and those who have shown sustained improvement
- ❖ Share attendance information with parents and students focusing on the link between attendance and achievement
- ❖ Promote high attendance and punctuality through assemblies, class discussion ; always reinforcing the link between attendance and achievement
- ❖ Communicate attendance matter to parents via text; telephone; email; letter and through the school website.
- ❖ Continue to support families and children to attend school every day and on time.

The Law

All children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) are legally required to receive an education. It is a parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that their child has an education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly then the parent/carer is guilty of an offence. Prosecution can result in parents receiving a fine of up to £2,500 for each child. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 requires schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and once again at the start of the afternoon session.

On 1st September 2013 the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

came into force amending the 2006 regulations and changing the law about pupils taking leave during term-time. The amendments made it very clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless they consider the absence to be 'exceptional circumstances' The change in legislation removed all references to family holidays, extended leave and the previous threshold of 10 school days' authorised absence in a school year for term-time holidays.

Types of absences

Every instance of absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. All reasons for absences are fully investigated and if no reason is given, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Authorised absences (approved absences)

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, like illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time.

Absences due to illness/appointments need to be reported to the school via telephone/email/webform no later than 9.30am on each day of absence.

Illness- In most cases, absences for illness reported following the school's procedure will be authorised, unless there is a reason to believe that the illness is not genuine, or if there is persistent sickness absences that are affecting a child's attendance and education. In these cases, the school reserves the right to request supporting medical evidence for the period of illness. This can be in the form of a medical appointment card or a prescription issued on the day of absence. Only in rare cases will the school request a letter from a GP. Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the Parent/Carer on the first day of absence may not be authorised and will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the Parent/Carer. It is school policy that where a child has been sent home from school or absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea, they must not return to school until 48 hours after the last episode to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.

Medical/Dental Appointments- Wherever possible, medical and dental appointments should be made out of school time. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the absences may be authorised providing that we are informed of the absences following the school's procedure. The child should be absent for as short a period of time as possible. All absences for medical or dental appointments must be supported by providing the school office with sight of or a copy of the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

Exclusion- When a child is excluded from attending school for a fixed period of time, this is counted as authorised absence.

Religious Observance- Begbrook Primary acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence for religious observance. One day will be granted as authorised absence for religious observance of festivals such as Eid, and any additional days taken may be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence.

The school must still be notified of the absence by 9.30am on these occasions.

Exceptional Circumstances- Only the Head Teacher can approve absences from school classed as Exceptional Circumstances. Examples of such absences may include a family bereavement, music or ballet exams, visits to other schools or sporting activities.

Some holidays in term-time may also be classed as Exceptional Circumstances and each case will be reviewed on an individual basis by the Head Teacher. To apply for an absence to be recorded as Exceptional Circumstances, Parents/Carers must email the school for the attention of the Head Teacher outlining the following:

- The reason their child will be absent from school during term-time and why it should be classed as Exceptional Circumstances.
- Why the absence is unavoidable
- The dates of the intended absence and the reason

The Head Teacher will then review the request, taking into account:

- The circumstances of the request and purpose of the absence the length of the proposed leave
- The child's current and previous attendance record
- Their ability to catch up on missed schooling.
- Proximity to SATs tests or other school exams
- The child's educational needs and general welfare
- Previous term-time holiday / absences due to Exceptional Circumstances taken in the current and previous academic years.

Only the school can approve or decline a request and make the decision as to whether the absence be authorised. Retrospective requests will not be considered and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If permission for the absence is not given and the child is still absent, it will be recorded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be requested from Bristol City Council.

Unauthorised Absences

Holidays during term time- Absences due to family holidays which have not been designated by the Head Teacher as 'Exceptional Circumstances' will be recorded in the register as unauthorised.

Requests for holidays during term time need to be submitted via email to the school as detailed above (see 'exceptional circumstances'). All requests for holidays during term time will be responded to in writing by the school giving details of whether or not a Penalty Notice will be issued for the absence.

absences for unsatisfactory reasons- These absences will also be recorded as unauthorised; these may include absences for reasons such as:

- A child or family member's birthday
- Attending a wedding or other celebration
- Closure of a sibling's school or class (for example because of strike action)
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Unable to get up in the morning
- Arriving to school late after registers close at 9.30am.

Penalty Notices

Bristol City Council may issue Penalty Notices on behalf of the school or Education Welfare Consultant where a child has of 8 or more sessions (4 or more days) of unauthorised absences. This includes absences due to lateness after the registers have closed, unauthorised absences due to non-reporting or illnesses where supporting medical evidence has been requested but not supplied, the school may request that a Penalty Notice is issued to the parent/s for the absences. In requesting and issuing Penalty Notices, the school will follow Bristol City Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices. More information on Penalty Notices can be found on the Bristol City Council website.

Lateness

A pupil arriving late can seriously disrupt their own and others' learning.

Registers are taken in the classroom before 9.00am, children arriving after these times will be recorded as late and must report to the School Office to sign in. Registers close completely at 9.30am, children arriving after these times without reason e.g. medical appointment, dentist or a previously agreed reason, will be marked on the register as having an unauthorised absence for the whole session. In such cases, the school will inform Parents/Carers of the decision and explain the possible consequences of continued unauthorised absence due to persistent lateness. Children who have at least 8 absences in the register due to unauthorised lateness within any 10 week period may be subject to a Penalty Notice being requested from Bristol City Council.

If a child is persistently late (more than 30% of lateness in any 10 week period) then the school reserves the right to unauthorise the absence for arrival after 9.00am and the penalty notice procedure will take place. The school will contact families that are persistently late to offer support and guidance throughout this process.

Children missing in education

Where a child is absent from school for 10 days or more and no contact has been made by the parents to confirm the reason and the expected date of return (including where children have been granted leave for Exceptional Circumstances and have failed to return on the agreed date), the school will consider them to be missing. The child will be referred to the Education Welfare Service via the Pupil Tracking system which could result in their removal from Begbrook's registers and a re-application will need to be made for another school place. If the school has any concerns regarding the safety of a missing child prior to the 10 day period, a referral may also be made to the Education Welfare Service.

Attendance Support

Begbrook Primary offers varied support for children or families that are having difficulties with attendance or persistent lateness. A list of Family Support Services can be found on the website, or the matter can be discussed with a member of the Begbrook Team. A list of parenting support courses can be found on the Bristol City Council website.

School Attendance Procedure

- Where a child's attendance drops below 96%, for whatever reason, the school contact parents/carers to highlight this or discuss the matter via telephone, letter or email.
- Where there are genuine reasons for the absences and attendance shows to be improving, the school will continue to monitor and review the attendance for the rest of the academic year and the start of the next.
- Where there are no genuine reasons for the absences, parents may be asked to meet with the Head Teacher, Family Link Worker or the Education Welfare Consultant to discuss the school's concerns.
- Visits to the family home may be made in order to discuss attendance matters. In some cases, If no improvement is made and there are not sufficient reasons for the absences, further legal action may be taken by Bristol City Council in accordance with the Education Act 1996.
- School Attendance is part of our safeguarding duty. If a pupil is absent for two days or more without explanation, a home visit may be made and Police Welfare Checks can be requested.

Formal guidance informing this policy

- ❖ Education Act 1996 which states if any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.
- ❖ Pupil Regulations 2006 amended DFE April 2013
- ❖ Parental responsibility measures – regarding Penalty Notices (Fines) DFE November 2013
- ❖ Working Together to Safeguard Children DFE July 2018
- ❖ Keeping children safe in education. DFE March 2015
- ❖ Educating Children with Health Needs – DFE 2013 – Ensuring children with health needs do not miss out
- ❖ Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions – DFE December 2015
- ❖ Children missing education – DFE January 2018
- ❖ School Attendance – DFE July 2019
- ❖ Bristol City Council local code of conduct with regards to issuing of Education Penalty Notices
- ❖ www.bristol.gov.uk