

Thomas A' Becket Infant School



Attendance Policy

1. Aims

We provide a broad, balanced, creative and inclusive curriculum which we believe all children have a right to enjoy. In order for all children to access the opportunities provided, it is necessary for them to attend school regularly and punctually. We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting and maintaining a strong attendance rate
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil is safeguarded and has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfill expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement methods to ensure they meet the pupils needs
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

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 pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Referring fixed-penalty notices to West Sussex County Council, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and providing staff training as necessary
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Using the services of PEI and other agencies as necessary to assist with attendance matters
- Supporting and working alongside the inclusion team to create intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers when appropriate.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Liaising with TAB Infant, and other locality schools, when there are concerns around absences across families, to track patterns and address safeguarding concerns.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Amanda Dingwall and can be contacted via telephone 01903 235386 or email head@tabinfant.org.uk.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Scanning registers daily, ensuring that all children are accounted for and contacting parents with regard to absence if necessary.
- Ensuring all data within the attendance module of BROMCOM is kept up to date and all attendance administration processes kept up to date in line with relevant guidance.
- Producing weekly/termly attendance reports from the MIS for the designated senior leader for attendance as requested
- Monitoring of children's absences, lateness, and requests for holidays liaising with class teachers and designated senior leader for attendance and ensuring these are recorded within BROMCOM
- Attending meetings to discuss children's attendance and lateness and any action to be taken and attending the locality meetings
- Administration of fixed penalty notices.
- Administration of absence request forms and letters to parents and make low level telephone calls to parents.

The attendance officer is Sam Cannings and can be contacted via 01903 235386.

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers will

- record attendance accurately on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information in a timely manner.

- understand and implement the school's policy on attendance;
- encourage high attendance and punctuality;
- liaise with the designated senior leader for attendance about children whose attendance is a cause for concern and follow up as appropriate.
- Discuss attendance matters with parents as necessary and promote strong attendance and punctuality.

3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system CPOMS and the attendance officer will record attendance codes on Bromcom.
- Pass on information, calls and emails to from parents/carers to the class teacher or Leadership Team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young persons
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (ie lives with and looks after them)

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Organise and book holidays and 'leave from learning' during the 175 days of school holidays and non-school days, and not during the 190 days of learning time.
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the class teacher of attendance lead, Amanda Dingwall, who can be contacted by telephone on 01903 202268 or by email head@tabinfant.org.uk

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils 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. It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

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

Pupils must arrive in school between 8:40am and 8:50 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:00 am. The register for the second session will be taken as the children come in from their lunch break before the start of the afternoon sessions.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school may ask for 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/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents should complete a leave from absence request form which is available from the school office.

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

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. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)

Regular analysis of lateness is completed and formally discussed monthly. Letters, phone calls or meetings will take place when pupils have an increasing number of lates or have missed a large proportion of learning due to lateness.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the child's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may consider a home visit or contacting the police depending on the circumstances
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving Pupil Entitlement Investigation.
- If a child fails to attend or appears to have disappeared and the period of absence is unusual, then the Headteacher and other education practitioners will make every effort to trace the child. We make every effort to safeguard all our children. We will follow up all concerns about an absence for vulnerable children if no message has been received to explain an absence. Any concerns will be passed to MASH and for support and logged in accordance with our Safeguarding policies.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels during parents evenings. Attendance letters are sent half termly to those pupils where attendance has dipped to below 90% or are at risk of being a Persistent Absentee. Attendance certificates are sent out annually along with the child's written end of year report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a child during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the child is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and in advance of the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Some valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 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/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

5.2 Legal sanctions

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice 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 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for West Sussex. They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

6. Attendance monitoring

6.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual child level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

The School pupil-level absence data will be collected via Wonde and shared with the DfE dashboard and FFT attendance dashboard. This allows data to be shared and compared with national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

6.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these children and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. The impact of EBSA on young people and schools is far reaching. We know that for young people who display EBSA they can have poor academic attainment, reduced social opportunities and limited employment opportunities. We recognise EBSA and have a pastoral team that we can access to support the partnership between home and school to help close the gap.

6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The School will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to year leaders and class teachers to facilitate discussions with children and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

6.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education

- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Listen and understand the barriers to attendance with parents/carers and explain the help that is available to parents alongside explaining the potential consequences and sanctions for persistent and severe absence
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance including the DST.
- Pupils that are at risk of being persistently absent or are persistently absent will be monitored closely and letters will be sent at appropriate points and/or half termly. If necessary meetings will be held to discuss barriers and reasons for absence. Any actions or interventions will be reviewed regularly.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Amanda Dingwall (Headteacher) At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

8. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy; and
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

| Attending the school | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| / \ | Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session |
| L | Late arrival before the register is closed |
| K | Attending education provision arranged by the local authority |
| V | Attending an educational visit or trip |
| P | Participating in a sporting activity |
| W | Attending work experience |
| B | Attending any other approved educational activity |
| D | Dual registered at another school |
| Absent – Leave of absence | |
| C1 | Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad. |
| M | Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment |
| J1 | Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution |
| S | Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination |
| X | Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school |
| C2 | Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable |
| C | Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance |
| Absent – other authorised reasons | |
| T | Parent travelling for occupational purposes |
| R | Religious observance |
| I | Illness (not medical or dental appointment) |

| | |
|---|---|
| E | Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made |
| Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes | |
| Q | Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements |
| Y1 | Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available |
| Y2 | Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel |
| Y3 | Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed |
| Y4 | Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed |
| Y5 | Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention |
| Y6 | Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law |
| Y7 | Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause |
| Absent – unauthorised absence | |
| G | Holiday not granted by the school |
| N | Reason for absence not yet established |
| O | Absent in other or unknown circumstances |
| U | Arrived in school after registration closed |
| Administrative Codes | |
| Z | Prospective pupil not on admission register |
| # | Planned whole school closure |

| Committee | Signed by | Date |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| FGB | CoG – A Markwell | 23 Nov 2023 |

Review Date
Autumn 25 or as guidance changes