



Attendance Policy

Updated: JANUARY 2024

For children to get the most out of their school experience, it is essential that they attend school regularly and receive a full-time education.

'The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all children want to be, are keen and ready to learn (Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022). Our dedicated staff team strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels valued and secure.

We understand that some children find it harder than others to attend school. Therefore, at all stages of improving attendance, we work with children and parents/carers to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Although, we prioritise a supportive approach to improving attendance, we will challenge the behaviour of those children and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To manage and improve attendance effectively, we will:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all leaders, staff, children and parents/carers understand.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify children or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance

- The school employs a part time Parent Support Advisor (PSA) with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. The PSA liaises closely with the Headteacher and the SLT. **Our PSA is Mrs Vicky Brooks**
- The school recognises the interplay between attendance and factors such as attainment, behaviour, SEND support, supporting children with medical conditions, safeguarding, peer relationships and support for disadvantaged children. By continued school improvement in these areas, there is likely to be a positive impact of attendance.
- Teachers and non-teaching staff understand the importance of good attendance. They are consistent in their communication with children and parents.
- High expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all children are set from the very earliest point. Attendance information is included in new starter packs and within the new starter induction meeting.
- The benefits of good attendance are visibly demonstrated throughout school life. This includes displays, the fortnightly school newsletter and assemblies.
- Good attendance/improved attendance is praised and rewarded at a class level and individual level. A range of reward systems are in place, for example trophies, certificates, and end of half term/year prizes.
- Systems, processes and strategies are continually reviewed and updated.
- Attendance is included in the half termly headteacher's report for governors.
- The Attendance Policy is reviewed regularly.
- The Attendance Policy is available to parents/carers on the school website. Paper copies can be requested at the school office.

Roles and responsibilities

- Class teachers/HLTAs promptly and accurately complete attendance registers twice a day.
- PSA to monitor attendance on a day-to-day basis, e.g., checking absence line and following up any unauthorised absence. Report any immediate concerns to the Headteacher.
- PSA and headteacher to meet half termly to review attendance and identify children who are a cause for concern.
- PSA to communicate concerns with parent/carers at the earliest stage and support families where attendance is a cause for concern.
- PSA to liaise with the Education Welfare Service and/or Local Authority for advice and/or where attendance becomes a significant concern.
- Headteacher to report attendance data at half termly governors' meetings.
- Headteacher to regularly review the Attendance Policy.

School Procedures

Reporting absence

If a child is absent from school, **school requires a telephone call**. The call must clearly state the reason for absence. If the school telephone is not answered, a message must be left on the absence line (school answer machine). The message must clearly state the child's name and reason for the absence. The reason for absence is logged on Arbor (the system used to log child attendance).

Dojo messages or emails **must not** be used to report a child's absence from school. Verbal messages should not be sent via siblings or other parents.

If there has been no telephone call or message left on the absence line from the parents/carers, the PSA will make contact with parents/carers on the first day of absence.

A 'Safe and well' home visit by the PSA may take place if contact cannot be made with a parent/carer. First day absence 'Safe and well' home visits will be carried out for vulnerable families following consultation with the Head teacher. For children not identified as vulnerable, 'Safe and well' home visits will be completed after 5 days absence (if no contact has been made with a parent/carer), however earlier if there are any concerns.

Punctuality

The school day starts at:

8.50am Reception (Foundation Stage 2) to Year 6

Any child arriving at school after 9.00am must report to the school office. If the child has not had a medical appointment, they will be recorded on the register with a late mark. The system is monitored regularly by the PSA. Children with re occurring late marks are discussed with the Head teacher and parents will be notified of the school's concerns.

Unauthorised Holidays/Unauthorised Absence

In law, an offence occurs if a parent/carer or person with parental responsibility fails to secure a child's attendance at the school at which they are a registered child, and that absence is not authorised by the school.

Any request for leave must be made in advance. Any leave of absence in exceptional circumstances cannot be authorised retrospectively. If any leave of absence is taken, it will be referred to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice. This is likely to result in a fine of £60 for each child. If you don't pay this within 21 days, it will be increased to £120. You'll need to pay the increased fine within 28 days or court action can be taken against you.

Unauthorised Absence

If a child has 10 sessions or more unauthorised absences in a term parents/carers may be liable to a Fixed Penalty Notice for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

School strongly believes that if children are to get the greatest benefit from their education, good attendance and punctuality are imperative. School will do all that we can to encourage and support children, parents, and carers to fulfil their expectations.

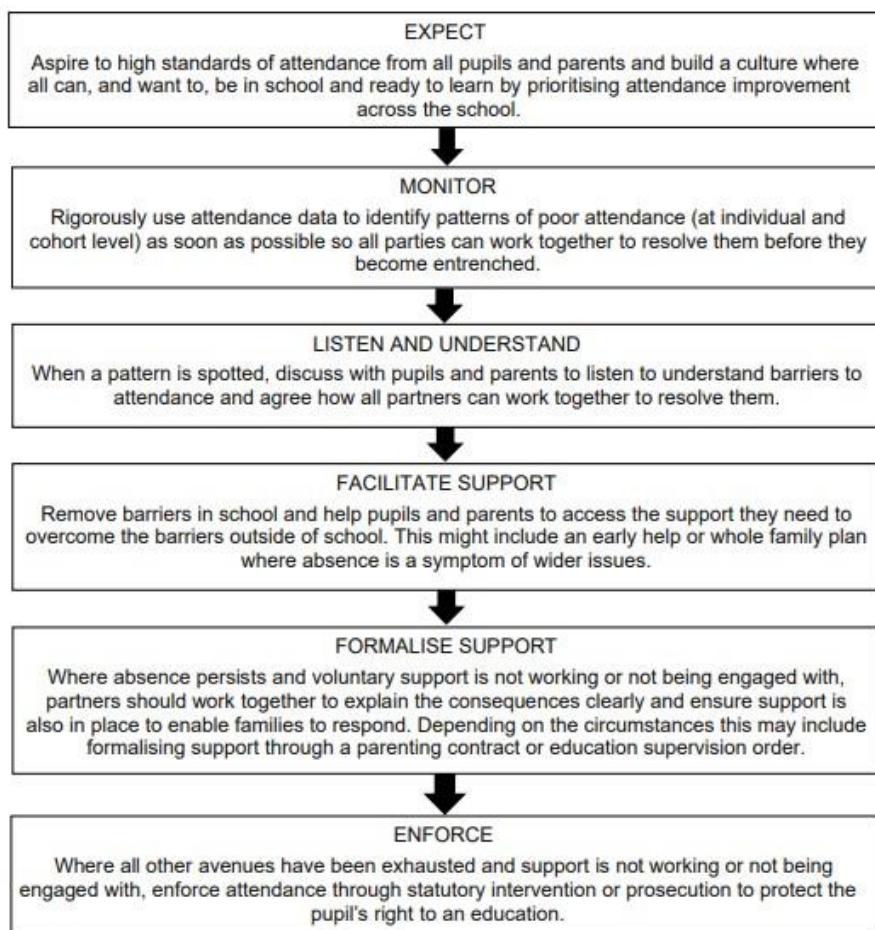
Please do not hesitate to contact the school office for further advice and assistance if required.

Medical appointments

If a child has a medical appointment (doctor, dentist etc) it is the expectation that these will be made outside of school hours/during school holidays where possible. However, where a child needs to attend an appointment in school hours, a letter or appointment notification must be shown to the school office prior to the appointment date and arrangements made for the child's collection. Appointments can then be noted on the school register. Medical appointments will affect their attendance percentage.

Working with families

- The following flow-chart (taken from Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022) illustrates how we will work with families to identify the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance:



Monitoring attendance

Attendance percentages are checked daily and weekly for each class. Class attendance is shared with children at the end of each week. Governors and St Mary's Academy Trust are informed of attendance figures at half termly governing body meetings. Parents/carers are informed of class attendance figures through the weekly newsletter. They are informed of their child's attendance at the end of each term (unless it has become a cause for concern prior to this). Parents and carers can also monitor their child's attendance via our online app Arbor.

A meeting, attended by the PSA and Headteacher, is scheduled half termly to discuss attendance, particularly persistent absentees and lateness.

Warning letters

Early intervention is essential. Where a child's attendance drops below the school target of 96.5%, a 1st warning letter will be sent out to parents/carers. This letter is to raise awareness of a potential attendance issue.

Stage 1 attendance meetings

If attendance continues to drop following the initial warning letter (dropping below 94%), parents/carers will be asked to attend a Stage 1 attendance meeting in school with the Parent Support Advisor. The aim of these meetings is to establish barriers to attendance/punctuality and work together to identify possible solutions. If parents/carers, do not attend these meetings, the PSA will have this discussion over the telephone.

Stage 2 attendance meeting

If attendance continues to drop following the Stage 1 attendance meeting (dropping below 92%), parents/carers will be asked to attend a Stage 2 attendance meeting in school with the Parent Support Advisor and the Headteacher. The aim of this panel is to raise parental awareness of their child's attendance and stress the need for their child to attend regularly if they are to take advantage of the education on offer. The panel will also give parents/carers the opportunity to discuss why their child has been absent. An action plan may also be put in place to help improve attendance.

If attendance has not improved, and drops below 90% (persistent absence), school will seek guidance from the Education Welfare Department (see below).

It is hoped that through this early intervention process, the need for formal procedures can be avoided. Where there has been no significant improvement in attendance, formal procedures will then be taken, as by law, parents are required to send their child to school on a regular basis.

Return to school meeting

Where a child is absent from school, due to a family holiday, a return to school meeting will take place. This will allow us to discuss the learning that has been missed and if any additional support is required at home.

Education Welfare Officer

If your child has an unacceptable level of attendance at school, which the school can't resolve, the school may refer your child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). The EWO will provide support to you and your child, and to the school, to make sure that your child gets a full-time education appropriate to their needs, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

You could be fined up to a maximum of £1,000 (for each child) for failing to make sure that your child attends school regularly. If you've already been found guilty of failing to make sure that your child attends school regularly, your fine could be increased to £2,500 or a three-month prison sentence.

Further legal steps which could be taken:

- Parenting order
- School attendance order
- Education supervision order (ESO)

For further information [School attendance and absence \(barnsley.gov.uk\)](https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/school-attendance)

Rewarding Good Attendance/Most Improved Attendance

The school has clear systems for rewarding good attendance.

- Each week, the class with the highest attendance 'wins' the attendance trophy.
- Children with an attendance above 96.5% have their name entered into a half termly raffle. At the end of a half term, the raffle is drawn. Prizes have included tickets to local indoor play areas and activity centres.
- Where attendance has been identified as a cause for concern, and improvements are seen, children are rewarded through verbal praise and a letter is sent home.

- At the end of each term, parents/carers of children above 96.5% receive a text message to acknowledge this and thank them for working with school to promote the importance of good attendance.
- Children who have achieved above 96.5% attendance in an academic year receive a certificate and an individual trophy. These are presented in our end of year celebrations assembly.
- If we have a 100% attendance day in school, all children will receive a treat at the end of the week.

The law

Where parents/carers decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their 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 (Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022).

Equality and Diversity

If on reading this policy you feel there are any equality and diversity issues, please contact the headteacher who will, if necessary, ensure this policy is reviewed.