



Beardall Fields Primary and Nursery School Attendance Policy

September 2024

Review Date: September 2025

Attendance Policy

Attendance officer: Mrs Campsall (can be contacted through our office or in school Wednesdays 8.30 – 4pm)

Aims

For all children to attend school as often as possible (97% or better).

For the average attendance to be above 97%.

All staff have a responsibility to improve or maintain excellent attendance for all pupils. Adults in school should model these expectations as well as encouraging them (i.e. by not being late to class or to pick up the children from the playground).

Daily Actions

School starts at 8.45am for Years R-6, children are dropped off by their parents/carers at the classroom doors. To encourage a smooth, calm and orderly start to the day, the classroom doors open at 8:35am for children to be dropped off to their class teacher. (Reception doors open at 8.45)

Morning Nursery Sessions are from 8.30am-11.30pm, with afternoon nursery sessions being 12.15pm-3.15pm.

It is parents/carers responsibility to get their children to school, and pick them up, on time or make alternative arrangements to.

Class teachers will stand at each classroom door to greet your children.

All staff must be at their classroom door consistently at the correct times and ensure they are prompt in collecting and dismissing children. Classroom doors will be closed at 8.50am.

Registration is done online on Scholarpack from 8.45am to 8.50am. Registers must be submitted at 8.55am so that children arriving between 8.45am and 8.50am are not marked late. A single member of staff will stay on each classroom door until 8.55am.

Please note that while every effort is made to ensure the school systems are at GMT/BST exactly, we will use the school's system to decide if children are late or not. This system is checked weekly by site staff to keep it as accurate as possible.

Any child arriving after 8.55am needs to be brought to the school office so that they can be signed into the late register and the reason for their late arrival recorded. They also need to let the office know what they are doing for lunch. These children will be given a late mark (L) in the register.

Any child arriving more than 30 minutes after registration has started (9.20am) will be given a U mark denoting a 'late after the register has closed'. This counts as an unauthorised absence from school.

If a child is absent, school should be informed as soon as possible (using the methods detailed below) so that the reason for their absence is known and can be recorded in the register correctly. If you are able to, you should give an expected date of return to school, otherwise please inform us each day of their continued absence.

You can report your child's absence via phone (by either speaking to a member of the office team or using our dedicated absence messaging option) or by email to office@beardallfields.org.uk. Please do not just tell a teacher on the door that a child is absent – you must contact the school office as well.

If we do not hear why a child is absent by 9:20am, the school office will begin to make calls or send text messages to find the reason for your child's absence. It is vital we know that your child is safe with you or an appropriate carer and not in a situation that may endanger them, as well as the reason for the absence.

The class teacher is responsible for the correct administration of the register and must put the correct mark in wherever possible. They should also check correct information has been entered when doing the next register and take steps to correct it if not. Failure to complete the register correctly may result in disciplinary action.

If you call school or we call you to find out the reasons for absence, we may ask if there is any support or help we can provide to help your child attend school or any difficulties we should be aware of in the interests of your child's safety and attendance at school. If we feel it is appropriate, we have an obligation to suggest when a child should really be at school rather than keeping them off school.

The school does not have to accept reasons given for absence and may ask for proof of medical or other appointments. Even when provided with a reason or evidence we may record absence as unauthorised if we believe it to be the correct course of action in line with guidance from the DfE and NCC.

Please note regular appointments such as dentists should be taken outside of school hours and may not be authorised during school hours unless they are unavoidable.

For the afternoon sessions (which start at 12:15 for Nursery), (12.45 for Reception and Y1 and 1pm for all other year groups) all these actions are repeated with the same time gap durations (e.g. 5 minutes after, 30 minutes after) from the start of the afternoon sessions. We will not call you again unless we were told a child would have been present in the afternoon and isn't present.

At all times we will act in a fair and consistent manner, adhering to the principles within Nottinghamshire's Code of Conduct and their Improving School Attendance Toolkit.

The School day finishes at 3.15pm and parents should arrive for a prompt pick up.

Weekly actions

Every week, our attendance officer goes through attendance data to look for pupils whose attendance or punctuality is causing concern, these are identified and the parents contacted and sent letters (see below). They check reasons given for absence and may make follow up calls with parents/carers and do direct work with pupils where needed.

Every week attendance is totalled and the best class is announced in Monday's assembly. If a class has a child with very significantly poor attendance that child is excluded from the weekly totals so as not to discourage the rest of the class.

Other actions

Children with attendance is below 95% will be highlighted by staff at parents' evenings (from a list given by the office). Staff are not meant to talk in detail about attendance but should point out the impact this will have on the child's progress. If the parent wishes to discuss attendance further at parents' evenings they should make an appointment to meet with the attendance officer as soon as practical.

Attendance email / text at February half term will be sent to all parents to inform them of the percentage attendance of their child so they are aware and, if necessary, can take actions to improve it.

The end of year report will show the attendance for the year.

While attendance is not statutory at Nursery, we follow the school's policy to get children ready for their future school attendance but we are not able to issue fines for absence. We reserve the right to make referrals if we are concerned about attendance however.

Authorised and unauthorised absences and illness.

In line with guidance from the DfE and LA, school will not routinely ask for all absences to be authorised.

However, we still have a responsibility to act promptly and robustly to raise attendance.

In light of both these directives, school will authorise clearly diagnosable conditions (e.g. chicken pox, measles etc.) as illnesses without requesting evidence unless the child's attendance is causing concern or we have cause to question the reason given.

For parents reporting symptomatic conditions, (e.g. headache, feeling under the weather, got a cough / cold etc.) we will authorise the first three days each year as illness but then will ask for evidence to support getting the correct code for any further absences.

In line with the Department of Education's guidance 'Mental health and behaviour in schools', we take the mental health and wellbeing of all pupils seriously. For children who have a diagnosed mental health condition we will treat this in line with the disability act (where it applies) and offer structured help and support either within school or externally.

Where parents are reporting symptomatic mental health conditions (e.g. such as anxiety and stress) without a diagnosis from a medical professional, we will work in partnership with you to improve attendance and help resolve the issues causing the condition. Please note we may not be able to authorise these absences in excess of three days within a rolling 12 month period without a medical diagnosis or substantive engagement from parents/carers to resolve the issues.

Parents health is usually not a reason that allows us to authorise a pupil's absence from school, certainly not on an ongoing basis. If you have health issues, physical or mental, please speak to school staff in confidence to see if we can support you further or direct you to external support such as Early Help or health professionals.

School office staff are best able to support you in knowing whether pupils need to be absent so please speak to them if you are unsure.

Where we decide an illness is authorised we will record it as 'I' in the register. Where we decide it will not be authorised it will be recorded as an 'O' code.

Both of these codes count as absences and will impact on your child's overall attendance, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

We will monitor illnesses that are both authorised and unauthorised and, if pupils are suffering regularly from medical conditions that are not diagnosed by a medical professional, we will contact you to see if there are actions we can take to improve attendance. This may be followed up with a letter if we have concerns.

Governance and staffing

Our governors value high attendance of pupils at Beardall Fields Primary School and are a key part in the monitoring and challenge within school.

As part of the school's strategic use of attendance data, previous years and current attendance levels are reported to governors in each head teacher's report and discussed openly with governors. A narrative is also written in the HT report to explain the attendance and if there are particular concerns or successes to note. This narrative also benchmarks our attendance against latest national figures. Pupil Premium and SEN children are also always discussed as a vulnerable group that has historically had lower attendance at our school.

Our governance arrangements are robust and the governing body

- Takes an active role in attendance improvement,
- Supports our school to prioritise attendance
- Works together with school leaders to develop our whole-school attendance culture.

The head teacher is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance within the school, the School Office is the best point of contact for queries about attendance and the Attendance Officer the best person for parents to contact for support

Positive rewards

Each week every class's attendance is calculated and the class with the best attendance that week is announced in assembly. Teachers should encourage their class to win the best attendance each week and can use the school's positive behaviour rewards to help with this where appropriate.

Each half term, the class with the best attendance will be rewarded with a non-uniform day on the last day of the half term. This will be calculated on the Wednesday before the end of the half term.

Each term, pupils with attendance at **97% or above** will get a certificate to celebrate their good attendance.

All the above rewards should not penalise children with regular medical appointments and, as such, any absences recorded as 'M' will not count against rewards. However, this does not mean dentist appointments and other appointments that could have been made out of school hours will be encouraged and parents should make every effort to make those appointments at other times.

Actions taken when attendance/punctuality is causing concern (Excluding holidays)

Attendance is beginning to cause a concern when a child is absent for a number of sessions that would lead to attendance below 95%, has an identifiable pattern of absence (e.g. most Fridays), is often late (3 or more times in a half term) or attendance patterns change suddenly without explanation.

For the Autumn Term we calculate how many sessions a child would have to miss in the entire term to end with 95% (7 sessions, 3.5 days) so that a very short absence at the start of the year doesn't automatically trigger absence procedures. For the rest of the year we use percentage absence to set the threshold and send letters out as appropriate.

At this point a letter (Letter 1) and a copy of the detailed attendance record will be sent home to parents to inform them of their child's current attendance and how this may impact upon their learning. This letter will be sent regardless of whether the absences are classed as authorised or unauthorised as it is only designed to ensure you are aware of poor attendance.

We will then start monitoring their attendance more closely. If there are more than 6 unauthorised sessions of absence within a rolling 10 week period following this letter, we will issue a letter requesting the parents contact school to arrange a meeting to discuss attendance (Letter 2). Please note this letter will be sent as soon as 6 unauthorised absences occur – we will not wait for the end of the 10 week period.

This meeting is the chance for you to speak with our attendance officer to clarify any part of the attendance process and the support available for you and your child. At this meeting, our attendance officer will also discuss the reason(s) for the child's absence, if the school can help with improving attendance in any way and the help available from the Early Help Team or other agencies and whether a referral is required. At the meeting we will also give you a letter detailing possible further actions should attendance not improve where appropriate (Letter 3).

If the parents do not reply to the letter (Letter 2) within 10 working days then a further letter (Letter 3a) will be sent detailing the possible further actions that can be taken and informing the parent that a lack of engagement will leave the school with no option but to refer to Early Help and/or issue a penalty notice (fine) unless they contact the school as soon as possible after receipt of the letter.

If there is no contact within 5 working days after the further letter (Letter 3a), then a final letter (Letter 4) will be sent if there are a further 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absences in a rolling 10 week period after letter 3a have been issued, notifying the parents that the school has requested the Local Authority issue a penalty notice. If the school has sent a referral to Early Help or other agencies then the parents will be informed of that either verbally or in writing.

If, at any time, there are wider concerns about the child's welfare then safeguarding procedures will be started immediately in line with our child protection policy and referrals made if appropriate.

Fixed penalty notices (Fines)

After issuing letter 3 or 3a, if attendance does not improve, the school may issue a fixed penalty notice. The first monitoring period will be 10 weeks after the issue of the warning letter (letter2). A fixed penalty notice will be issued as soon as 5 days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence are recorded in a continuous 10 week period. After the initial monitoring period, our informal monitoring will continue for the rest of the three year rolling period.

If a child ends the year with attendance below 95% we may continue to monitor them closely the following academic year if we have cause to be concerned. All children who end the year with attendance below 90% will be monitored closely from the start of the year.

Please note a 10 week monitoring period can stretch either side of a school holiday and is 10 school weeks – not including school holidays.

The first fine issued for absence will increase in cost to £160 per pupil, per parent as defined in the Education Act – not just a biological parent. This can be reduced to £80 if paid within the first 21 days.

If a second fine is issued within a rolling three-year period (not academic year), the fine will be £160 per pupil, per parent and there is no reduction if it is paid promptly.

If there is a third period of absence that would have been fined within the same three-year period, the case will be referred straight to magistrates court for prosecution – there is not an option to pay a penalty notice.

The rolling three-year period will not be back-dated to before September 2024.

The school follows the "Nottinghamshire Local Code of Conduct for penalty notices issued in respect of truancy and suspension of pupils" and this is available on the local authority's website.

Incorrect reasons for absence given by parents

The school has a legal obligation to complete the register for each child accurately. To do this we rely on accurate information from parents/carers.

If the school believes that a parent/carer has given incorrect information, we are entitled to ask for evidence for that absence. If it cannot be provided, we will ask that evidence is provided for all future absences.

The most common instance of this is a parent reporting their child as being ill when they are actually on holiday, believing it will avoid a fine. If we think you have been on holiday but you have said otherwise and you cannot provide evidence to support the illness we reserve the right to not authorise the absence and issue a fine as if the absence was an unauthorised holiday.

Fines for holidays

The number of children being taken out of school for holidays in term-time continues to be high. We understand that the disproportionate cost of holidays during school holidays is unfair on families but we also have a duty to ensure high attendance for all pupils.

Recently the Department for Education has issued new guidance which means school is unable to authorise any term time holidays and must issue penalty notices. Exceptions can only be granted where commanding officers or employers can evidence in writing that they have exceptional, changed circumstances. This could be things such as a change in deployment overseas, cancellation of all emergency service leave, etc. These exceptions only generally apply to emergency services and the armed forces.

These changes will have to be applied to any holiday forms for academic year 2024-25 that have already been submitted. If you need to change any holiday forms you have already submitted then please speak to the office or our Attendance Officer.

Requests for Leave

We ask all parents/carers/wider family members to ensure they have requested and submitted a holiday/leave form **BEFORE** booking any leaves. Ideally this should be submitted at least 4 weeks before you go on holiday so your request can be properly reviewed and replied to, before you start your holiday.

We may ask to discuss your leave application with you if any of the following reasons apply:

- Extended leave request
- Mention of special ceremony/party
- Child concerned about holiday
- Conflicting information about the holiday

These measures form part of our schools' commitment to safeguarding pupils and preventing them missing too much school, being put in a potentially dangerous situation or undergoing outlawed practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Absence in exceptional circumstances

The school will only be able to authorise a very restricted range of absences. These will be things such as funerals of immediate family, certain sporting events or national training or religious observations. These will require evidence so we can accurately document the reasons and be coded under a 'C' code where appropriate. We will only be able to authorise the day(s) of any ceremony/competition/training and required travel time, not any associated days in between or if you have chosen to travel over multiple days where it is not required.

Home visits

It is the policy of our school that staff only make home visits to see parents or pupils we have been unable to contact, not a long-term solution to a parent's inability to get their child to school. Home visits are usually not undertaken alone.

It is not school's responsibility to collect children from home as this is a parent's responsibility.

If parents do not attend the meetings detailed in Letters 2 and 3a above then referrals may be made to Early Help requesting support for the family without parental consent.

Recording

All meetings will have notes taken and dated on our school management system (Scholarpack). Any contact with the parents regarding this matter will be noted and dated. All letters will be dated and signed and sent through the post, not handed to children. All these will be retained in the child's record and notes made on our school management system. Messages from parents may be retained for safeguarding reasons if appropriate.

These will be stored in the confidential section of our SMS. If Early Help become involved the child will have a child protection file kept in accordance with the school's child protection policy and the attendance documentation may be kept in there.

As with all school meetings, we do not authorise any recording of meetings by parents and will take action if school staff are recorded without their consent. School will also not make or retain recordings of meetings.