

Bengeworth CE Academy

Attendance Policy



The aim of this policy is to encourage excellent attendance by all of our pupils throughout the school year.

Introduction

Children in England and Wales are required by law to attend school for just 190 days out of 365 each year. These days are organised into six periods or terms, with 13 weeks of designated holiday and an additional 5 days when school is closed for staff to undertake In Service Training (INSET).

The *intention* for all members of our school community should be that of full attendance (100%) for the academic year, with a whole school attendance target of **96%** for children, which we define as good attendance.

Full attendance ensures that children do not miss out on creative, differentiated, individual learning activities which have been carefully planned by school staff. Additionally, punctuality and attendance are the most basic requirements placed on any individual in school or the workplace, and we expect parents and staff to support this position so that children develop this mind-set early on in their lives.

Timekeeping

Children should arrive in good time for school in the morning and specifically before the bell goes for the beginning of the school day. A late arrival can be distressing for the child and disruptive to the whole class. Children arriving late for school and after registration has been taken, will be marked as absent on the register and parents should therefore formally notify the school of the reason in writing.

Absence through illness

We accept that occasionally children will be poorly, with most recovering from illness within a couple of days. Whilst we use the Public Health Agency guidance for reference, we apply a 'common sense' approach and expect parents and staff to make sensible judgements about whether a child suffering from a common illness is well enough to be in school. Parents are also expected to arrange non-urgent medical and health appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.

- When a child is unable to attend school eg due to sickness, parents should contact the school on the first morning of absence
- On the child's return to school, parents should send in a letter or email the school, formally notifying the dates of absence and the reason for the absence
- Where a child needs to take time out of school to attend an unavoidable appointment (eg to visit a doctor or dentist), the class teacher should be notified in writing in advance

National figures show that it is **highly unusual** for any child to be absent for more than 5% of the year through illness. Therefore, we will treat this as such and may seek evidence for medical appointments or make referrals to the School Nurse and Education Welfare Officer if we are concerned about regular bouts of illness. Parents should keep the school informed of any known ongoing medical conditions so that school attendance can be supported.

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Leave during term time

It is the policy of Bengeworth's Governing Body to discourage parents from taking children out of school during term time, as there is sufficient time (13 weeks) within the academic year to allow family holidays and other activities to take place. The detrimental impact on pupils of missing lessons within the week is proven and something we seek to avoid. However for some pupils it will have less impact, depending on environmental factors, which parents do have a degree of control over.

Parents who wish to take their child out of school **must** notify the school at least **6 weeks** before the proposed absence, using a 'request for leave of absence' form available from the school office or website. The following points clarify how school absence is considered:

Leave will be authorised if the following criteria are met:

- a pupil has a history of excellent attendance (over 97%) and leave will not take their attendance below 96% for the academic year
- a pupil is achieving well in Reading, Writing and Mathematics and leave will not be considered to affect their attainment in the long term
- activities for which leave is taken offer educational value or advantages, which extend learning and/ or impact positively on child development
- the leave is a unique event causing minimal interruption to education

Leave will be unauthorised in the following circumstances:

- pupil attendance has been (or will fall) below 96%
- achievement in Reading, Writing or Mathematics is below that expected and leave will be considered detrimental to 'closing the gap'
- leave is holiday taken for financial reasons
- leave is an appointment and should have been arranged during school holidays
- leave is taken in September or May

Prosecution and Fines

Unauthorised absence **does not mean that a fine will be automatically issued** for leave taken during term time. However, if records show families repeatedly taking unauthorised leave during term time, or if a child has a poor attendance record (below 95%) for any reason and the school feels that this is impacting on their learning, they may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer. The EWO can make a request for the Local Authority to issue a fine or consider prosecution of parents based on low attendance, unauthorised or unexplained absences.

This policy makes the importance that the school places on pupil attendance explicit and clarifies the specific circumstances surrounding decisions made regarding leave of absence. The Governing Body will review this policy annually.