

BENWICK PRIMARY SCHOOL



Attendance Policy

School Name: Benwick Primary School

Date Agreed at FGB:

Date shared with staff: 23/6/23

Date published on school website: 19/6/23

Why do we have this policy?

Benwick Primary School aims to work together with Parent/Carers and the Local Authority Attendance Officers (LAAOs) to ensure that all children registered at school attend every day and on time, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Regular attendance at school is vital. Absence means missed learning and without good attendance the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. It is a legal requirement that students of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to students missing important learning and therefore not fulfilling their true potential.

Failure to attend can occasionally indicate that all is not well at home so there is a welfare aspect to attendance as well. We therefore take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our students.

Parent/Carers Responsibilities

Parent/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that children of statutory school age (term after the child turns five) attend school on a regular and full time basis. Permitting an absence from school without good reason is an offence. A pupil whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed the equivalent of two whole terms of learning.

Parent/Carers must:

- Ensure all children registered at Benwick Primary School attend regularly and punctually everyday unless prevented from doing so by illness or medical appointment.
- Inform school in advance of any medical appointments during school time, parents will be asked to provide supporting evidence from the hospital, doctor or dentist, such as appointment details card/letter/text message in relation to the time requested.
- Ensure their child arrives at school in time for registration. Lateness is monitored and will be recorded as unauthorised after 8.55am.
- Inform the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that any problem can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Follow application procedures regarding a request for leave of absence during term time, which should only be taken if absolutely necessary. Leave is not automatically authorised unless considered an exceptional circumstance. Any leave taken during term time, that has been unauthorised, could be subject to a penalty notice/fine.
- Report any changes to the contact details to the Office to ensure the school has the most up to date contact information.

Registration

- The gate is opened at 8.40am.
- The gate is locked at 8.45am.
- Once the gate has been locked, entry to the school is via the office entrance.
- Registers are open at 8.40am and closed at 8.45am. Pupils who arrive at school after this time will be recorded as L, late on the register.
- Pupils who arrive at school after 8.55am, without an unavoidable reason, will have their lateness recorded as U, unauthorised late which then impacts on their overall attendance level.

Lateness

Registration takes place 8.40am to 8.45am. Pupils who arrive after the registration period and up to 8.55am will be marked as late. Any pupil who arrives after 8.55am will be marked as an unauthorised late. Children who are persistently late to school will miss a significant amount of their education.

Where pupils show a persistent pattern of lateness, Parent/Carers will initially receive a letter informing them of the school's concerns. This will advise Parent/Carers to speak to a member of staff to help address the issue. Should the lateness continue, Parent/Carers will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss their child's lateness.

If there is no improvement, despite the school's attempts to address unauthorised absences, a referral could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAEO) for pupils who are of statutory school age.

Reporting a Pupil Absence including Illness

Parent/Carers must contact school on the first and every subsequent day of absence by 9am. A message can be left on the absence line giving the student's name, class and reason for absence or can be emailed to office@benwick.cambs.sch.uk.

For any pupil not present at the close of registration, and the reason is still unknown, a member of staff will attempt to make contact with the Parent/Carers once the registers have closed.

The member of staff will ring every contact, starting with the priority contact, until a reason for absence is known. Failure to make contact with the Parent/Carers to establish a reason for an absence will result in an unauthorised absence if there is no response from a Parent/Carers.

For absences relating to a medical appointment, supporting evidence will be requested to authorise this absence. This can be an official text message e.g from hospital which clearly identifies who the appointment is for, a letter that is headed from the medical professional or an appointment card. A period of absences will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment and reasonable travelling time to and from. Children who fail to return to school within a reasonable time following their medical appointment could result in an am/pm session being unauthorised.

Illness; children who are unable to attend school due to diarrhoea and sickness can return after they have been 48 hours clear.

Children with mild coughs, colds, sore throats, sneezing and runny noses who are otherwise well can continue to attend school. However, if they develop a high temperature they should stay at home until their temperature has reduced and are well enough to return to school.

School Responsibilities

All members of the school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness; with the Head teacher having overall responsibility in the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil. Where there are concerns, parents will always be informed by letter and or telephone conversation and given an opportunity to come into school to meet with designated staff.

If applicable, support strategies with a monitoring period will be put in place to help improve the attendance or lateness of a pupil. Should a pupil's attendance or lateness continue to be a concern despite the support strategies in place, with no improvement to the expected level set by school, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) for statutory aged pupils. This could result in a penalty notice/fine, or prosecution being issued by Cambridgeshire County Council, as per section 444 Education Act 1996. This may result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

Definitions of Leave:

Benwick Primary School expects attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

Authorised leave:

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason such as illness, subject to pattern of illness or a medical appointment where supporting evidence has been provided to cover the period of absence. However, there is an expectation that the pupil will be in school for registration or return to school after the appointment, depending where the appointment falls within the school day.
- Religious Observance - only date (s) exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong to, evidence may be required to authorise
- The leave of absence has been authorised due to a short and exceptional, unavoidable circumstance.

Unauthorised leave:

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school, even with the support of the Parent/Carers, such as shopping, hair appointments, visiting family or birthdays.
- Medical appointments where supporting evidence of appointment details have not been provided when asked for.
- There has been no reason provided by the Parent/Carers to support an absence.
- Failure to follow school procedures or inform the school when taking a pupil out of school during term time.
- A leave of absence that has not been authorised due to not being considered an exceptional circumstance.

Guidance for Parents – Term Time Leave

Parents do not have the right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term time holiday. Recent government guidelines have removed the discretion on head teachers agreeing to term time leave. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted before the leave is taken. Parents must complete a Leave of absence form and provide any

supporting evidence, if applicable, with their request. This also applies to parents requesting to take their child out of school during the school day.

If the school suspect Term Time Leave has been taken but the parent/carers have not completed a leave of absence form, we will write to all parent/carers giving them an opportunity to clarify the reason for absence and provide supporting evidence. Failure to respond to or provide supporting evidence will result in a referral to the Local Authority for unauthorised leave from school and could be subject to a penalty notice/fine for pupils of statutory school age.

Exceptional circumstance (*definition of exceptional: rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis, such as

- day of religious observance
- exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement
- visits with a prospective new school

The following examples of requests for leave of absence that do not meet the criteria of an exceptional circumstance and will not be authorised and could be subject to a penalty notice/fine for pupils of statutory school age are:

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term
- Trip of a life time
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad
- Relatives coming to visit
- Extension of leave if a pupil has not returned to school after an agreed absence if does not meet grounds for an exceptional circumstance

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave **for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more**, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice.

Schools may also request prosecution, in exceptional circumstances where a parent takes a child out of school during term time for an extended period (20 days or more).

Penalty Notice

The fine for a penalty notice is £60 per child, per parent/carer, increasing to £120 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child (ren) this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent.

Parent/Carers who take unauthorised leave during term time or whose child has a pattern of unauthorised absence over any 4 week period could be subject to the issue of a penalty notice or prosecution.

The definition of parent in relation to a Penalty Notice includes any Parent or Step-parents who have parental responsibility.

It all adds up – absence and learning hours lost

Attendance of student	Actual attendance over a school year	Equivalent whole days absent	Equivalent learning hours lost	
100%	190	0	0	Excellent
99%	188	2	10	Good
98%	186	4	20	
97%	184	6	30	
96%	182.5	7.5	37.5	
95%	180.5	9.5	47.5	
94%	177	13	65	Cause for concern
92%	175	15	75	
90%	171	19	95	Risk of penalty notice and/or legal proceedings
89%	169	21	105	

Children Missing from Education

We enter students on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which we have agreed, or been notified, that the student will attend the school. If a student fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, we will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Where a student has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the student can be removed from the admission register when we and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if we do not have reasonable grounds to believe that the student is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

We have a safeguarding duty in respect of our students, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences.

Elective Home Education

Local authority guidance on elective home education is available at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/elective-home-education-ehe>