**Introduction**

Section 7 of the [Education Act 1996 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/7) states that:

*“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*

*(a) to age, ability, and aptitude and*

*(b) to any special educational needs he/she may have,*

*either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”*

This means that it is the *legal responsibility* of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by *regular* attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

DfE statutory guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance__applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf) aimed at schools and local authorities (LA) provides clear evidence linking regular attendance at school to improvements in a child’s attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances as well as reducing their exposure to harms like crime or violence. Throughout this document reference has been made to the DfE statutory guidance.

The statistics tell us that children who attend school regularly are more likely to:

* Build a firm and secure knowledge and understanding across all curriculum subjects.
* Ensure they consistently meet and build upon expectations for their age or developmental stage.
* Develop good habits and important life skills.
* Maintain friendships.
* Gain better qualifications.
* Have access to a wider range of opportunities when they leave school.

This school understands that improving attendance is everyone’s business; that barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates; and that they are often specific to individual pupils and families. We recognise that good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be – a calm, orderly, safe and supporting environment.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school so at all stages of improving attendance, we are committed to working in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. This Policy seeks to explain how, and it has due regard for relevant legislation, and statutory and non-statutory guidance including, but not limited to:

* The [Education Act 1996](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/part/VI/chapter/II)
* The [Education Act 2002](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/part/3/chapter/3)
* The [Equality Act 2010](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents) and the [Human Rights Act 1998](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights/what-are-human-rights) (HRA) which sets out the fundamental right and freedoms that everyone is entitled to, and the [UN Convention on the rights of the child](https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf)
* The [Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/38/section/19)
* The [School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/contents/made)
* The [Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/210)
* The [Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/209/contents/made)
* Statutory guidance on [School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance)
* Statutory guidance [Keeping children safe in education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2)
* Statutory guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)
* Statutory guidance [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school)
* Non statutory guidance [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3)

This Policy should be read alongside other school Policies and procedures as follows:

* Child Protection Policy
* Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policy
* Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
* Equality Objectives
* Special Educational Needs Policy
* Admissions Arrangements
* Complaints
* Registration Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on:

a) What might be defined as ‘exceptional circumstances’; and

b) the procedures for applying for leave of absence.

c) The importance of good attendance

**Responsibilities**

**Local Authority Responsibilities**

* To provide appropriate advice to parents, pupils, schools and other agencies.
* Produce supportive material for use in or by schools (i.e. behaviour support materials/attendance workshops).
* Support our whole school response to attendance through regular Targeting Support meetings, monitoring of individual pupil’s attendance, and support with specific attendance, access, or inclusion issues as they arise.
* Investigate and assess referrals for unauthorised absence.
* Take appropriate action to ensure pupils return to school, including where appropriate taking legal action.
* Enforce the law regarding school attendance.

## Governors

Our Governors are responsible for:

* Recognising the importance of school attendance and promoting it across our school’s ethos, policies, and procedures ensuring that they also help us meet our Equality Objectives and do not discriminate.
* Ensuring school fulfils expectations and statutory duties.
* Evaluating effectiveness on attendance by regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing, and challenging trends, and helping school leaders to focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts and year groups (including their punctuality) who need it most.
* Ensuring school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
* Nominating a Governor responsible for the monitoring of attendance
* Dealing with representation by parents or carers if their application for an authorised absence is refused and handling complaints regarding this.

## Head teacher

The Head teacher is responsible for:

* Ensuring that effective systems are in place to accurately reflect individual pupils, groups, and whole school attendance and punctuality patterns.
* Providing Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of this policy and practice.
* The day-to-day implementation and management of the school Attendance Policy and procedures.
* Having effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance.
* Ensuring that all staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, understand their responsibilities for following the Attendance Policy, modelling good attendance behaviour, and ensuring pupils follow the policy as well and that it is implemented fairly and consistently.
* Making parents and carers aware of the school Attendance Policy and procedures by making them available on the school website and on request from the school office.
* Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
* Monitoring and evaluating the progress of individual pupils, groups and whole school attendance and punctuality and ensuring useful data is reported to the Governing Board at each meeting.
* Contact and work with parents or carers regarding concerns about their child’s attendance.
* Arranging meetings with parents or carers to discuss support and set targets for those experiencing attendance difficulties. These will involve the pupil where they are old enough to understand.
* Supporting office staff in offering initial challenge and support when pupils are late or absent and working with key partners if attendance and/or punctuality becomes an issue.
* Processing all legal documentation regarding attendance monitoring including penalty notices to the LA.

## Staff

Teachers and other staff who take the register in the morning or afternoon are required to:

* Provide an accurate record of the attendance of each pupil in their class. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
* Respond promptly to any issue raised in the weekly analysis of registers by office staff.
* Arrange for appropriate work and resources to be sent home to pupils who have missed lessons and who are expected to be absent for an extended period of time.
* Record the reasons for absence given to them on the appropriate record.
* Raise any attendance or punctuality concerns.

## Office staff

Our administrative staff are responsible for:

* Recording pupils arriving late or leaving early on a daily basis.
* Preparing, managing, and coordinating use of Scholarpack for pupil registration.
* Monitoring and tracking attendance patterns for all pupils and preparing relevant attendance reports when necessary, using an electronic attendance register with the correct coding, which includes statutory reporting to the DfE.
* Contacting any parent who has not told us why their child is absent on the first day of their absence.
* Requesting the reason for an absence from parents.
* Ensuring that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each pupil.
* Making a judgment together with the Head Teacher about whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

## Local Authority Access and Inclusion Officer

Our LA provides us with an Access and Inclusion Officer, whose job it is to:

* Enforce the law regarding school attendance.
* Support our whole school response to attendance through regular Targeting Support meetings, monitoring of individual pupil’s attendance, and support with specific attendance, access, or inclusion issues as they arise.

 Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of morning session and once during the afternoon session; these are done by the class teacher using the school’s electronic registration system. The register must show whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised. It is the school and not the parent who authorises absence. Parents must inform the school on the first day of any absence.

**It is illegal to take children out of school during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to any leave of absence**

**during term time.**

**Criteria for Exceptional Circumstances**

It is not possible to define all exceptional circumstances, but examples of what might be considered as such are:

**a) Where it is company or organisation’s policy for an employee (who is a parent/guardian) to take compulsory leave of absence at specified times of year, and there is no opportunity for a family holiday during school holidays. This must be supported by documentary evidence from the relevant company/organisation.**

**b) Service personnel returning from, or shortly embarking upon a tour of duty**

**overseas.**

**c) Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent/guardian or child’s**

**rehabilitation programme, supporting their recovery from a medical or emotional issue. Documentary evidence must be provided from a qualified healthcare professional, such as a doctor.**

Where other factors exist which the Head teacher believes may constitute ‘exceptional circumstances’ this will be referred to the Local Authority for advice.

**Procedures for Applying for Leave of Absence**

* Applications for leave of absence should be made in advance using the correct form or by letter. Forms can be obtained from the school office.
* The nature of the exceptional circumstances that apply and which prompt the request for leave of absence during term time should clearly be stated.
* The head teacher will decide whether the leave of absence can be

 authorised and will contact the parent to inform them of the outcome

Even where there are exceptional circumstances no leave of absence will be

granted during any period of external exams such as SAT’s, which are usually taken in May and June. Multiple or conflicting requests from separated parents or other relatives such as grandparents will not be considered.

**Authorised Absence from School**

If a child is ill or unable to attend school for some reason, parents should provide an

explanation for this non-attendance.

 In the following situations the school will determine whether the child’s

absence will be authorised or not.

* Genuine sickness for up to ten days (continuous or intermittent), after which the school may contact parents to discuss the situation if this has not already been done. For repeated or regular periods of illness the school will request verification, such as a medical certificate from the family doctor, is provided prior to authorising any absence.
* “Unavoidable causes”, which cover unexpected crises in the child’s circumstances (e.g. the sudden death of a close relative), major domestic upsets (eg flood, fire) or severe weather conditions, which make travel impossible.
* Religious observance, involving significant holy days or festivals of their faith.
* School beyond walking distance (i.e. 2 miles) and regular mode of transport is unavailable at short notice (eg breakdowns).
* Advance permission should be sought for:

 a) approved public performance or external examinations.

 b) extended visits overseas for family reasons (up to a term), with

 arrangements about the return agreed with the school.

 c)  **exceptional** family reasons. (e.g. hospital visits, funeral of close relative).

 d) interview at another school.

Routine medical appointments, such as sight and dental checks should be made out of school hours whenever possible.

**Cumberland Council’s Enforcement Policy**

Cumberland’s policy is that if attendance falls below 96% parents may receive a warning letter and/or a fixed penalty notice.

If a child continues to not attend school, the family court may issue an Education Supervision Order, which can lead to prosecution in a Magistrates' court.

Where schools can evidence clarity and due process to communicating with

parents and the child already has poor attendance (as agreed by the school and the

 Access and Inclusion Officer), and parents have failed to attend meetings or have disregarded school advice, the school can request the Access and Inclusion Officer to consider issuing a penalty notice.

**PENALTY NOTICE/PROSECUTION**

The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £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 issue of the first and therefore alternative action would be taken- this may lead to prosecution.

**Promoting Good Attendance and Improving Poor Attendance**

Boltons C of E School will:

* Work closely with families to offer support and advice.
* Encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to inform school of the reason for absence the same day.
* Through the School’s home school agreement encourage parents to adopt a positive attitude by showing an interest in their child’s day at school.
* Contact parents on the first day of any absence if no telephone call has been received.
* If contact cannot be made by telephone school will send a letter home.
* Actively encourage good communication between school and parents to promote punctual and regular attendance.
* Keep up to date and accurate records of reasons for absence and meetings with families.
* If attendance drops close to 85% parents will be contacted by class teacher to discuss the reasons for absence.
* Support the family in trying to improve attendance. The format of support will depend on the reasons for poor attendance. Requests for support may be made to outside agencies eg school nurse, health visitor, GP, Access and Inclusion team.
* Report attendance levels to parents and promote good attendance.

School is aware that some pupils have severe difficulty attending school due to emotional factors and, in such instances, we would work with parents and external agencies to support pupils and their families and to put plans in place.

**Lateness**

Lateness after school closes the register (i.e 15 minutes into the session) will be regarded as “unauthorised” absence.

**Reports**

All individual absences will be placed on the pupil’s yearly report, denoting authorised and unauthorised absence.

The school’s figures for unauthorised absences will be published annually on the school website.

 Established October 1997

Reviewed annually

February 2011 – No changes

January 2012 – No changes

January 2013 – Minor changes

Rewritten October 2013

January 2014 – No Changes

January 2015 – Minor Changes

January 2016 – No Changes

January 2017 – Minor changes

January 2018- No Changes

January 2019- No Changes

January 2020- No Changes

March 2021 – Minor change.

July 2022- No Change

January 2022- Minor Changes

January 2023- No Changes

January2024- Minor changes

September 2024- Major changes