

Ben Jonson Primary School



Attendance Policy

Date reviewed: September 2022

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Statement of intent

Ben Jonson Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.

At Ben Jonson School we have an attendance team to support the Headteacher and school community to achieve the best attendance for all our children. This team consists of the Pupil Data Manager, the Attendance and Family Support Worker and the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) Attendance Lead.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2022) 'Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities'
- DfE (2022) Working Together to improve school attendance
- DfE (2022) Summary Table of responsibilities for school attendance
- (Ofsted 2022) Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- And in line with statutory government guidance regarding Children Missing Education

2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The Headteacher is responsible for informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Are being educated from home. The Local Authority will be informed if a parent elects home education.
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.
- Have been permanently excluded.
- Started at another school.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to class when at school.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school emergency contact numbers, where possible.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Calling school with an update regarding a child's absence each morning before 9am.

3. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency.

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.

Persistent absenteeism:

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

4. Training of staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training.

Teachers and support staff will receive training on this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern and know how such concerns should be managed.

5. Pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA)

The school will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary.

The SLT supported by the attendance team will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
 - Sending letters to parents.
 - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
 - Creating attendance meetings.

The Governing Body will engage in attendance panels to reinforce messages if necessary.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care.

Where a pupil becomes at risk of PA, the school will:

- Welcome pupils back following any absence and provide the required support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Lead weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.

- Make regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups, including:

- Children in need/child protection.
- Looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM.
- Pupils with EAL.
- Pupils with SEND.

6. Absence procedures

Parents will be required to contact the school office via telephone by 9am on each day of their child's absence. They will also be required to contact the school on the first day that their child returns to school with an explanation of why they were absent. This is required even if the parent has already contacted the school. Alternatively, parents may call into school and report to the school office where arrangements will be made to speak to a member of staff.

A telephone call will be made to the parent of any pupil who has not reported their child's absence on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 85 percent, the Attendance Lead and or Headteacher will be informed, and an formal meeting will be arranged with the pupil's parent.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries and all procedures within the **Children missing education (DfE)** guidance have been followed.

7. Parental involvement

The school will build respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

Parents will be expected to:

- Treat staff with respect.
- Actively support the work of the school.

- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

8. Attendance register

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

9. Attendance Welfare Advisor

If they are persistently absent, pupils will be referred to the Attendance Welfare Advisor who will attempt to resolve the situation through a parent agreement. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the attendance officer has the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices to parents.

The Attendance Welfare Advisor will support the Attendance Team to monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence and will provide regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures.

10. Lateness

The school will regard punctuality as of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated.

The school gates are open from 8.45am. The school day starts at 8.55am. Pupils should be in their classroom at this time. Registers are taken as follows throughout the school day:

- Registers are marked by 9.00am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- The register closes at 9.10am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.
- After lunch, registers are marked by 1.30pm. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- The register closes at 1.40pm. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present.

11. Term-time leave

The school will require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed; therefore, the Headteacher will be unable to authorise holidays during term-time in most cases. The Headteacher will be only allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Applications will be made in advance and the Headteacher will be satisfied by the evidence, which is presented, before authorising term-time leave. The Headteacher will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school during term-time. Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

Any parent who would like to request leave of absence for their child must complete the 'Application for and Record of Leave' form and submit to the Headteacher in advance of the requested leave.

12. Leave during lunch times

Parents may be permitted to take their child away from the school premises during lunch times with permission from the Headteacher – it is at the Headteacher's discretion as to whether a pupil will be allowed to leave the premises.

Parents will submit a written request, outlining the reasons for their child to leave the premises during lunch time – this request will be submitted to the Headteacher. The Headteacher or attendance lead will consider the request and will invite the parent into the school for a discussion regarding any concerns, as well as the timely return of their child at the end of lunch time and their child's behaviour when not on the school premises. The Headteacher reserves the right to grant or refuse a request and will inform the parent in writing of their decision within one week of the request. Our lunch time hours are 11.30am – 1.30pm, depending on year group.

Parents will be required to meet their child at the school office when taking them off the premises – the pupil will be signed out and back in using the lunch time register at the school office. A member of staff will be available at the school office before the pupil leaves the premises and upon their return to sign them back in. No pupil will leave the premises before the member of staff has given their permission.

The Headteacher reserves the right to withdraw their permission at any time – this may occur, for example, where there are attendance concerns. Any decision to withdraw permission will be in writing, explaining the reasons for the Headteacher's decision. If permission is withdrawn, parents will not be entitled to appeal the decision. Parents will be able to withdraw their request at any time – the request will be submitted in writing to the Headteacher.

Permission will be updated on a termly basis – at the beginning of each term parents will need to confirm whether they would like their request to continue.

13. Truancy

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of pupils and understand the importance of continuity in each pupil's learning.

All pupils are expected to be in their classes by 8.55am and 12.30pm/1.30pm, where the teacher will record the attendance electronically. Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must sign out and be collected from the school office and sign back in again in their return.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- The school will seek advice from the local authority about the possible action to be taken

where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school.

14. Missing children

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the Headteacher immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the Headteacher.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
 - All classrooms
 - All toilets
 - The library and group rooms
 - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The missing pupil's teacher will complete an entry on the school's recording system (green form), describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

The Headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

15. Religious observances

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals. Parents will be required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

16. Appointments

As far as possible, parents will be encouraged to book medical and dental appointments outside of

school hours. Where this is not possible, an email with the appointment card/letter will be required to be sent to the school office via email to admin@benjonson.towerhamlets.sch.uk

If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out by a member of staff. Pupils will be expected to attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

17. Modelling, sport and acting performances/activities

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances/activities (whether they, or another person, receives payment or not), which requires them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school's absence(s).

Additional arrangements will be made by the school for pupils engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education. These arrangements will be approved by the LA who will ensure that the arrangements are suitable for the pupil.

The pupil will receive education that, when taken together over the term of the licence, amounts to a minimum of three hours per day that the pupil would be required to attend a school maintained by the LA issuing the licence. This requirement will be met by ensuring a pupil receives an education:

- For not less than six hours a week; and
- During each complete period of four weeks (or if there is a period of less than four weeks, then during that period), for periods of time not less than three hours a day; and
- On days where the pupil would be required to attend school if they were attending a school maintained by the LA; and
- For not more than five hours on any such day.

Where a licence has been granted by the LA and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the school. Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the LA, it is at the discretion of the Headteacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day. The Headteacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a pupil's attendance would fall below 96 percent. Where a licence has not been obtained, the Headteacher will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

18. Young carers

The school understands the difficulties that face young carers and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as through their time at the school. A caring and flexible approach will be taken to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

The school, in conjunction with relevant authorities, will implement support for pupils who are young carers, to encourage their sustained and regular attendance at school in line with the school's expectations.

19. Rewarding good attendance

A range of rewards are in place to support good attendance such as a cinema trip for children reaching 100% attendance; non-uniform day for children reaching 96% attendance or above; personalised certificates and assemblies. Children with SEND or medical needs are rewarded for achieving the best attendance they can.

20. Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is 96%. This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Headteacher and Governing Body. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2025. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

21. Attendance Monitoring Procedures

Ben Jonson Primary School adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

1. The Attendance Team monitor the attendance weekly. Attendance reports are discussed each half term and actions to address poor attendance are planned.
2. Attendance is also monitored by classroom teachers. Attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are passed immediately to the Attendance Support Team.
3. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided; these N codes are reported to the Attendance Support Team.
4. Contact is made to the parents of any pupils marked using the N code. Any N codes not established after a week are recorded as an unauthorised absence.
5. If a pupil's attendance falls below 96 percent for the term, a letter is sent home at the end of the term raising concerns that their attendance has fallen below the school's expected standard.
6. If a pupil's attendance falls below 90 percent, a letter is sent home explaining that the pupil's attendance is now being monitored, and the Headteacher or Senior Leadership Team Attendance Lead contacts the parents to discuss this.

Appendix A

APPLICATION FOR AND RECORD OF LEAVE

Part 1 - to be completed by the parent/carer

Pupil's name(s): _____ Class(es): _____

Date(s) of birth: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Leave dates: _____ Date of return to school: _____

Please give your reasons for this leave of absence:

Parent's/carer's signature: _____ Date: _____

Part 2 – to be completed by the school

LEAVE REFUSED: ☐ This application for leave of absence has not been approved because Governors agree with the local authority not to authorise leave in term time as it ALWAYS disadvantages children.

This leave means that this family are missing _____ days of school; there has been a discussion with parents to talk about the detrimental impact of this leave.

LEAVE APPROVED: ☐ (This is very unlikely).

Headteacher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Taking of Unauthorised Leave in Term Time

Where parents/carers choose to take pupils on unauthorised leave in term time then the pupils will be referred to the Attendance & Welfare Service for follow-up and consideration for action using the LBTH Penalty Notice Scheme to address Attendance-related Concerns. A Penalty Notice may be served on an individual parent/carer per individual child basis when the child has had 6 sessions (3 days) of unauthorised leave in term time. Where 2 parent/carers take 1 child on unauthorised leave in term time then they will receive 1 Penalty Notice of £60 each per parent so £120 in total for one child.

Losing the school place

Parents are responsible for returning their child to school on time. After 4 weeks (20 school days) of unauthorised absence, the pupil's name may be removed from the register. Parents will then have to re-apply for admission when they return but it may not be possible for the pupil to return to this school.

GOVERNING BODY POLICY ON APPLICATIONS FOR HOLIDAYS AND LEAVE IN TERM TIME

The Department for Education has issued guidance to schools and Local Authorities in relation to holidays and leave in term time and this policy reflects the requirements of this guidance. The School Governing Body has authorised the Headteacher to act on its behalf in ensuring that the school fully complies with the requirements.

Applications for Holidays or Leave in Term Time

Any applications for leave in term time must be submitted in advance to the school office. Parents/Carers must provide supporting evidence of any exceptional circumstances and why the leave must be taken in term time instead of in the school holidays. All applications will be considered carefully, including how the pupil's educational progress could be affected. Where the request for leave involves travelling abroad parents are asked to produce the return tickets before the leave.

Holidays in Term Time

The guidance from the Department for Education states that applications from parents/carers for pupils to take leave in term time for the purpose of a holiday should not normally be authorised. Parents/carers are expected to arrange holidays during school holiday periods when children can enjoy them without their education being disrupted. This position is fully supported by the Local Authority and the School Governing Body.

Any applications for holidays in term time will be refused by the Headteacher unless there is evidence of very exceptional circumstances and of why the leave must be taken in term time instead of in the school holidays.

Leave in Term Time for Other Reasons

Requests for leave in term time for other reasons can only be agreed in exceptional circumstances and for the shortest possible period. The school Governing Body also expects applications for leave in term time other than for holidays to normally be refused. However, in exceptional circumstances discretion may be appropriate, although this will very rarely happen.

When considering an application for leave in term time for exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher must be convinced that:

The exceptional circumstances are justified by supporting evidence provided by the parents/carers related to the circumstances and that the supporting evidence is valid;

And

The evidence necessarily warrants the child being absent from school in term time - does the child have to be absent in term time due to the circumstances or can it wait until the school holidays?

Taking of Unauthorised Leave in Term Time

Where parents/carers choose to take pupils on unauthorised leave in term time, the pupils will be referred to the Attendance & Welfare Service for follow-up and consideration for action using the LBTH Penalty Notice Scheme to address attendance-related concerns.