



Bellingham Middle School Attendance Policy

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Bellingham Middle School believes that a high level of attendance is directly linked to a student’s achievement, life chances and future employment. Parents, staff and students all have a responsibility to ensure that students achieve excellent attendance.

Introduction

Excellent attendance promotes excellent learning. Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

We believe that regular school attendance is crucial to allowing children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

We value all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties which may be affecting this.

We believe attendance is a shared responsibility, involving the whole school community and local community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a thread that runs through all aspects of school improvement, and is supported by Bellingham Partnership Schools policies on safeguarding, anti-bullying, and behaviour. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and DfE School Attendance Advice as well as Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016.

Key levels of attendance are defined as:

Attendance	Description	Approx. days lost per year	Approx. weeks lost per year
98 – 100%	Excellent	0 to 4	Less than 1
95 – 98%	Good	5 to 9	1 to 2
93 – 95%	Satisfactory	10 to 13	2 to 3
90 – 93%	Unsatisfactory	14 to 19	4 to 6
>90%	Persistent Absence	More than 19	More than 4

Principles

We believe the following important principles underpin our approach to managing attendance:

- Pupils and parents/carers understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality.
- All school staff, including governors, administrative and ancillary staff understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality.
- Clear procedures for enabling pupils to come to school are in place.

- Attendance issues are addressed in the curriculum.
- Parents/carers and pupils having the opportunity to raise their concerns around attendance and feel comfortable to discuss with school.
- Allocating resources e.g. time, people, space to fully implement the policy .
- Rewarding students who have excellent and good attendance and those who strive to improve their attendance.
- Identifying patterns of absence and intervening early. Research shows that patterns of attendance are established early in a school career. Children who miss significant amounts of their education in primary or middle schools are more likely to truant later on. We will work with the school partnership to identify vulnerable students and families so we can give them early support.
- Sanctions for failing to ensure regular attendance are fully understood by the whole school community and parents/carers.

Rights/Roles/ Responsibilities

There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement. Of pupils who miss more than 50 per cent of school only three per cent achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including Maths and English

We believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents/carers, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is recognised and promoted to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Ensure there is a governor who is the link lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation are complied with
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings in the Head Teachers' report.
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time
- Have clear systems in school to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are frequent procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is analysed, understood and used to devise solutions and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Make staff aware of the Attendance Policy and are adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Have systems in place to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Collate and analyse attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to develop solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Involve Education Welfare and develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Pastoral Staff and Form Tutors will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve. A positive learning climate is essential for promoting good attendance.
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with the Education Welfare Officer and other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

The school expects Parents/Carers to:

- Talk to their son/daughter about their experiences in school and what take a positive interest in their son/daughter's learning and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations

- Contact the school on the first day of absence to let them know the reason for the absence and the expected date of return. Although verbal explanations may be acceptable, this should be followed up with a note.
- Avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home. For example ,appropriate bedtimes, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Support our school policy on holidays by avoiding taking any leave of absence during term time as per the home school agreement (See Appendix 1)

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. This responsibility is undertaken by Education Welfare.

The Education Regulations 2006, expect schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Categorising absence

Where students of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation and/ or evidence for the student's absence is received.

Parents/carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written

note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness

In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent/carer informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Where there are repeated absences due to reported illness parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription or medical authorisation slip provided by the school (see appendix 2).

Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents /carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

Excluded (No alternative provision made)

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The student's class teacher/form tutor/Head of Year will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Leave of absence during term time.

Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted

Leave of absence during term time is entirely at the discretion of the Head Teacher and is not a parental right.

All decisions in relation to whether leave of absence is granted (authorised) or not (unauthorised) will be applied consistently and equitably.

We will follow this application process

- A parent/carer requesting leave of absence during term time should make the application in writing at least two weeks in advance (see appendix 3)
- School may invite the parent/carer into school to discuss the reasons for the application and the impact the absence may have on the child's education
- The school will reply to all applications in writing stating the decision, signed and dated by the Headteacher.

- If the leave is granted, the length of authorised absence will be clearly stated along with the date the child is expected to return to school.
- If a parent/ carer removes their son/daughter from school without requesting leave of absence or without authorisation from the Head teacher the parent/carers will be informed in writing that a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Officer who may take further action
- If the child fails to return on the expected date and after following the protocol to contact the parent/carers, we cannot ascertain a reason why, we may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education Regulations, 2006. This means that the student will lose their school place

Religious Observance

We acknowledge the multi-faith nature of British society and recognise that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent/carers to request their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's/carers' religious body.

Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their son/daughter to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents/carers from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Northumberland, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Bellingham Middle School is regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at BMS will be kept open for them

whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

We can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents/carers must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

We will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

Late Arrival

- BMS - Registration begins at 8.45 a.m. but students are expected to be on the site by 8.40 a.m. . Students arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. (L) The register will close (*no more than half an hour after the opening of the register*) students arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late after registration(U), this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

Absence will only be **authorised** if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, evidence of attendance at a medical appointment or the school has agreed this with the parent/carer.

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late.

Unauthorised absence.

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms/shoes
- Having hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes

- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Leave of Absence taken without the authorisation of school

We will contact parents/carers on the first day of absence to ascertain the reason for their son/daughter's absence. If a student's absence falls below 90% they are classed as a student with persistent absence and as such will be discussed with the education Welfare Officer.

Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority

We follow Northumberland County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

Using Attendance Data

Student's attendance is monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

The Headteacher has regular meetings with the attendance officer to monitor student's attendance using the data collected to see if attendance has improved, stayed the same or deteriorated. This student data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the school attendance protocol. Meeting with EWO when necessary.

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school/partnership strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

We will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the local authority as required.

All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Support Systems

Schools recognise that poor attendance is often a sign that there are more serious issues going on in a child's life. This may be linked to problems at home and or in school. Parents/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Pastoral Support spotting patterns and setting targets
- Following our home school agreement
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- PSCH
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and pupils.

Where parents/carers fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, we will refer to Education Welfare and the use of legal sanctions will be considered

Parenting Contracts (Used in conjunction with Fast Track to Attendance) (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Northumberland County Council's Protocol

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school, the parent/ carer and the Local Authority (EWO). It can also be extended to include the child depending on age.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Northumberland County Council's Protocol

Legal Sanctions Prosecution.

Where intervention by school and the Education Welfare Officer fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide Education Welfare / Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are; Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

Penalty Notices

(Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered in accordance with Northumberland County Council's Protocols

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £60 fine is paid within 22 days or £120 if paid within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE (Appendix1)

% Attendance	Key Person	Action(s)	Support Entitlement
100% -98%	Form Tutor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage attendance • Ensure all absence is followed up. • First Day Call • Accurate and consistent marking of registers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postcards/letters home for positive attendance • Photos displayed
98% -95%	Form Tutor Attendance Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage positive attendance • Remind students of attendance targets • Inform Headteacher of of any deteriorating attendance patterns and follow up. • Contact parent/carer • Fully support inter-form and attendance challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued school support
95% -93%	Head Attendance Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact parent/carer • Interview pupil • Letter home and/or arrange meeting with parent/carer • Agree attendance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for students in school - target set
93% -86%	Head Attendance Officer Education Welfare Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter home-Review action plan • Meet with pupil and parent/carer • Advise parent /carer no further absence due to illness will be authorised without evidence • Letter home advising referral to EW.(90%- 88%) • Attendance panel • Fast Track • Referrals to other agencies if appropriate • EW referral 1st EW • 2nd EW letter(if no improvement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visit • Discussion at a student meeting as appropriate. • EHA if appropriate.
90% and below			
85% and below	Head Education Welfare Officer/ Attendance Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EW case work undertaken • LA Action including: • Warning Notice • Penalty Notice • Education Supervision Order • Prosecution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued support from school/EWO and student support and other agencies where appropriate

ALWAYS RECORD PHONE CALLS, MEETINGS AND ACTIONS

Appendix 2 EXAMPLE ONLY

Bellingham Partnership Schools ATTENDANCE CONTRACT

Name of Child:	DOB: AGE: School Year Group:
Home Address:	
School : Address:	
Parent/Carer (1):	
Parent/Carer (2):	

CONTRACT:-

For your child to gain the greatest benefit from her education it is vital that he/she attends regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that Name attends regularly.

WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT

Any absence affects the pattern of your child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect her learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring NAME regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

UNDERSTANDING ABSENCE

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (NOT BY THE PARENTS), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained

- children who arrive at school after registration has closed.
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If NAME is reluctant to attend, it is not acceptable to cover up his/her absence or to give in to pressure to excuse him/her from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. If NAME attendance at school is affected by persistent illness the school will not authorize the absence until they are satisfied the absence is valid.

PERSISTANT ABSENTEE (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year FOR WHATEVER REASON. Absence at this level damages your child's educational prospects and we need your fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. If NAME is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark you will be informed of this immediately.

PROCEDURES

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in to school on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence and the dates of the absence – you should do this even if you have already telephoned.
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child's attendance deteriorates we will:

- Write to you.
- invite you in to school if absences persist to discuss the situation with the appropriate staff
- Refer you to the Education Welfare Service

CONTACT DETAILS

There are times when the school and Education Welfare need to contact you about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact details at all times. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, Education Welfare will become involved. The service will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve NAME attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, then sanctions such as Penalty Notices,

Education Supervision Orders or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court will be used. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Education Welfare Service/ Local Authority.

LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If NAME misses the start of the day he/she can miss work and time with his/her class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

The school day starts at? And we expect NAME to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by twice a day and NAME will receive a late mark if he/she is not punctual.

In accordance with the Regulations, if NAME arrives after the close of registration she will receive a mark that shows her to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with staff in school to resolve the problem, but you can approach staff at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time

Leave of Absence in term time.

Any applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the head teacher. In making a decision the Head Teacher will consider the exceptional circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave or absence in term time.

Full details of policy and procedures are available from the school.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the School Attendance Contract.

Signed PARENT/CARER

SCHOOL

Date