BENWICK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

School Name: Benwick Primary School
Date Agreed at FGB: 19/10/26
Next Scheduled Review: September 2028 (or sooner if statutory guidance changes)

Principles:

At Benwick Primary School, we recognise that for every child to achieve their full potential, excellent attendance and punctuality are essential. We promote a culture where attendance is valued, celebrated and understood by all members of our school community.

This policy has been developed with regard to:

- Department for Education *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (Statutory Guidance).
- Education Act 1996.
- Children and Families Act 2014.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition).

We aim to work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly and punctually, unless absence is unavoidable. We expect all children to achieve the highest possible level of attendance, whilst recognising that some children may experience medical, emotional or exceptional circumstances that require additional support.

At Benwick Primary School, our mission statement, **"Together We Can"**, reflects our belief that excellent attendance is a shared responsibility between pupils, families, staff and governors. Through our values of **Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, Resilience and Community**, we promote a culture in which every child feels valued, connected and supported to attend school regularly.

We recognise that regular attendance is fundamental to children's achievement, wellbeing, personal development and future success. By working together, we aim to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The school has a safeguarding duty towards all pupils. Ensuring children attend school regularly forms an important part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

Expectations:

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school prepared for the school day, punctually and in time for registration. Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Inform school in advance of any medical appointments during school time. Parents may on occasion be asked to provide supporting information from the hospital, doctor or dentist, such as appointment details card/letter/text message in relation to the time requested. Where possible, medical appointments should be arranged outside of school hours.
- Ensure that they contact the school before **8.40am** if their child is unable to attend school, citing the reason.

- 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.
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details, and ensure school has more than one name, address and telephone number as an emergency contact.
- Engage with early interventions designed to support the family and their child's attendance at school.
- Discuss attendance where necessary face to face or on the telephone – conversations are preferable to messages or emails.

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that children of statutory school age (the 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.

We expect that school will:

- Provide a safe learning environment.
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor individual children's attendance and punctuality.
- Contact parents/carers when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers. Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, information from a GP or other relevant body may be requested to assist school in offering appropriate support.
- Promote and celebrate good attendance and punctuality, for example through assemblies, social media, displays and parent/carer communications.
- Meet regularly with the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Local Authority Attendance Service.
- Provide intensive and bespoke support to children at risk of persistent absence.
- Work alongside other services and teams to support children's attendance. E.g. other schools in a multi academy trust, the Local Authority, Early Help, Social Care, Virtual School and the local community (including volunteers).
- Share attendance data with parents/carers and make it clear what good attendance and success looks like for their child.
- Communicate clearly and consistently with parents/carers and children regarding attendance.
- Follow the Local Authority Medical Needs Policy for children who are failing to access education in school due to medical and behavioural needs. This goes hand in hand with Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.
- Consider an Individual Healthcare Plan for children with medical needs.
- Work alongside the Access and Inclusion team to identify and support children with medical needs preventing them from attending school.

The Attendance Champion for our school is Mrs Talbot, she is the Headteacher and can be contacted on: 01354677266

All members of the school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness; with the Headteacher having overall responsibility for 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.

We expect that all children will:

- Attend school every day.
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that governors will:

- Promote the importance of good attendance through the school's vision, ethos and policies.
- Monitor attendance, persistent absence and severe absence data at least termly.
- Provide support and challenge to school leaders regarding attendance outcomes, including those of vulnerable groups.
- Ensure sufficient resources, systems and staff training are in place to promote excellent attendance.
- Receive regular reports from the Senior Attendance Champion regarding attendance trends, actions and outcomes.
- Hold the Headteacher to account for the effective implementation of this policy and compliance with statutory guidance.

We expect that the Local Authority will:

- Provide support, information and guidance to school by having regular meetings to discuss attendance.
- Act as a partner with school to support in some cases of persistent absence.
- Work with schools in the enforcement of penalty notices, fines and prosecutions in cases that require legal involvement.
- Identify suitable provision and reasonable adjustments for pupils unable to access education due to prolonged ill health.

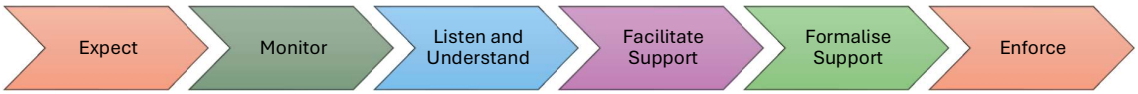
School Attendance Strategy

Whilst the Headteacher is the school's Senior Attendance Champion, attendance is everyone's responsibility.
The Senior Attendance Champion reports attendance patterns, priority groups, persistent absence, severe absence and the impact of attendance interventions to governors on a termly basis. Attendance remains a key safeguarding and school improvement priority and is regularly scrutinised by school leaders and governors.
The school is responsible for monitoring attendance and punctuality for all pupils and works in partnership with families, the Local Authority and other agencies to promote excellent attendance.
Attendance data is analysed regularly to identify patterns, trends and emerging concerns.
The school is committed to early intervention and will seek to identify attendance concerns before pupils reach the threshold for persistent absence. Attendance data is used proactively to identify

emerging barriers and provide support at the earliest opportunity so that attendance difficulties do not escalate.
Children whose attendance is falling or whose attendance is identified as a concern will receive graduated support through the school's attendance procedures. This may include discussions with families, attendance monitoring, support plans, attendance contracts, referrals to external agencies and, where necessary, legal intervention.
Children whose attendance falls below 90% are classified as Persistently Absent. Pupils with attendance below 50% are classified as Severely Absent. These pupils will receive enhanced support and monitoring in line with statutory guidance.
The school maintains a strong attendance culture through positive relationships, clear communication, celebration of good attendance, and support for families experiencing barriers to attendance.

Supporting Attendance

As a school, we aim to work collaboratively with parents/carers to improve school attendance. This means that we will **listen, empathise and support with attendance. However, if this is unsuccessful, legal sanctions will be considered where appropriate.**



When required, 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 Team 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.

Lateness and attendance are monitored daily by the **school attendance officer** who will:

- Scrutinise the registers daily, monitoring authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons provided for pupil absence and lateness.
- Raise concerns with parents/carers of identified patterns of lateness with an initial 'Late Letter'.
- Contact parents by telephone, email, or letter to establish a reason for a pupil's absence if the reason is unknown.
- Raise concerns with parents/carers once attendance has fallen below an acceptable level.
- Offer support or signpost to other areas of support within the community.
  Early intervention process:
  Step One. Telephone call advising parent/carers of our concerns regarding the level of their child's attendance/lateness, and offering support.

  Step Two. Send a letter to offer support and further explain the effect the absence/lateness is having on the child.

Step Three. Send an invitation to attend a meeting to enter into an Attendance Contract. This is a supportive meeting, entered into voluntarily to discuss the needs of a pupil and family and identify ways that barriers to attendance can be removed.

Step Four. Should the Attendance Contract fail to improve attendance, or should there be no engagement with interventions and support despite every attempt by the school to support the family, a request for the issue of a penalty notice/fine or prosecution could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team for children of statutory school age.

At Step 3 or 4, school might consider using a Notice To Improve letter, a strategy used in partnership with the Local Authority to set targets for improved attendance. This is a final attempt to improve attendance when parents/carers are failing to engage with support being offered by school, before referring parents for legal sanctions.

- Following use of one of the two pathways above, if attendance does not improve, school will refer to the Local Authority for legal sanctions.
- Liaise with other external organisations in relation to a pupil's attendance/lateness.
- Monitor pupil attendance within specific and identified groups.
- Monitor and respond to pupil absences for those with additional medical needs.
- Monitor pupils and follow procedures for pupils who are 'Children Missing in Education'.
- Follow reporting procedures for parents who have requested to home educate their child.
- Follow statutory procedures when deleting a pupil from roll.
- Monitor absences for illness and requests for leave to attend medical appointments.
- Reporting pupils to the Local Authority when they have 10 consecutive 'O' coded (unauthorised absence) sessions in school.
- Report pupils with unauthorised term-term leave absences (10 consecutive sessions of 'G' codes) to the Local Authority for issuing of a legal sanction to parents/carers.
- Report pupils with 15 consecutive days of 'I' (illness) codes to the Local Authority.

Registration

Reception to Year 6**:**

- School gates are opened at 8.40am.
- School gates are locked at 8.45am.
- Once the external gates have been locked, entry to the school is via the main entrance.
- Registers are open at 8.45 am and close at 8.55am. Pupils who arrive at school after the register has been taken, but before it is closed, will be recorded as 'L' - late on the register.
- Pupils who arrive at school after registers close at 8.55am, without an unavoidable reason, will have their lateness recorded as 'U' - unauthorised late which then impacts on their overall attendance level.

It is a legal requirement that a register of attendance is taken during the morning and afternoon at school. Any unexplained absence must be coded as unauthorised until a reason is given by parents/carers. This must be no later than 5 days after the session. Only the Headteacher may authorise or unauthorise an absence. The register can only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are made, the register will show the original entry, the amended entry,

the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment. Registers are kept for three years as a record.

Lateness

When children arrive late at school, they disrupt routines, affect other children's learning, miss the teacher's instructions to the lesson and may also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late. They may also miss important intervention programmes and the opportunity to practice key learning skills. Where pupils show a persistent pattern of lateness, Parents/carers will receive contact from the school advising them of the concern and offering support to resolve the issue. Should the lateness continue, parents/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 Team for pupils who are of statutory school age.

Reporting a Pupil Absence

Parents/carers must contact school on the first and every subsequent day of absence by 8.40 am.

For any pupil not present at the close of registration, and the reason is still unknown, a member of the office staff will attempt to make contact with the parent/carers once the registers have closed at 8.55 am.

The member of staff will ring every contact, starting with the priority contact, until a reason for absence is known. Messages will be left on voicemail requesting parents to contact school regarding their child's absence. Outcomes of any phone conversations will be logged on the pupil's electronic school record. Staff will complete the registers in accordance with the correct use of registration codes (see appendix 1).

Any unexplained absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence if there is no response from a parent/carers to an enquiry regarding their child's absence from school.

At times we may decide it is necessary to conduct a door knock to establish the safety and wellbeing of a child who is absent without explanation from a parent/carer.

For absences relating to a medical appointment, supporting information may be requested to authorise this absence. This can be a text message which clearly identifies who the appointment is for, or an appointment card. A period of absence will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment.

Illness

Children who are unable to attend school due to diarrhoea and/or sickness can return after they have been 48 hours clear.

Children with mild coughs, colds, sore throats, sneezes 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 they are well enough to return to school. We expect children to attempt to come to school unless they are too unwell to complete basic tasks. We will contact you if they need to return home.

Medical Needs and SEND

When children are prevented from accessing school due to physical or mental ill health, the school will work proactively with families and external professionals to identify barriers to attendance and establish appropriate support and reasonable adjustments.
The school recognises that emotional wellbeing, anxiety and mental health difficulties can significantly affect attendance. Where these factors are identified as barriers to attendance, staff will work collaboratively with pupils, families and relevant external agencies to understand individual circumstances and develop tailored plans that support a successful return to, or continued engagement with, education.
The school will seek to balance high expectations for attendance with an understanding of individual needs and circumstances, ensuring that support is proportionate, inclusive and responsive to each pupil. Attendance difficulties may be linked to SEND, mental health needs, medical conditions or family circumstances, and support will be tailored accordingly.
Where appropriate, the school may:

- Implement reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
- Develop an Individual Healthcare Plan.
- Work with health professionals and specialist services.
- Liaise with the Local Authority Access and Inclusion Team.
- Work closely with SEND services and SEN caseworkers.
- Consider alternative arrangements in accordance with statutory guidance.

The school is committed to ensuring that pupils with SEND or medical needs receive equitable support to maximise attendance and educational engagement.

Children with a Social Worker and Other Vulnerable Pupils

Attendance forms an important part of the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

The attendance of pupils who:

- Have a social worker;
- Are subject to a Child Protection Plan;
- Are subject to a Child in Need Plan;
- Are Care Experienced;
- Are previously looked after;
- Are Young Carers; or
- Have other identified vulnerabilities;

will be monitored particularly closely.

The school will work collaboratively with families, social care professionals, the Virtual School, health services and other relevant agencies to identify and remove barriers to attendance and ensure pupils receive appropriate support to engage successfully with their education.

Where attendance concerns arise for vulnerable pupils, support and intervention will be prioritised before enforcement measures are considered. Attendance planning for vulnerable pupils will form an integral part of safeguarding and pastoral support arrangements.

Definitions of Leave

We expect 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 or a medical appointment. There is an expectation that the pupil will be in school for registration or return to school after the appointment, depending on where the appointment falls within the school day and the health of the pupil.
- Religious Observance - only day(s) exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong to.
- 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, taking part in a protest or birthdays.
- 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.

Coding is always at the Headteacher's discretion.

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 for headteachers agreeing to term-time leave. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted **before** the leave is taken. Parents must complete a Term-Time Leave Request Form (Appendix 2) 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 parents/carers have not completed a Term-Time Leave Request Form, we will write to the parents/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.

Exceptional circumstances (*definition of exceptional*: *rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis. 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/prosecution 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 lifetime.
- 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 it does not meet grounds for an exceptional circumstance.
- Leave taken due to potential travel disruption.
- Leave taken to try and relieve travel distress for family members with additional needs

Penalty Notices

Where support, intervention and engagement have not secured improvement, the school may request that the Local Authority considers legal action in line with statutory guidance.

Unauthorised absence of 10 sessions or more within a rolling 10-school-week period may result in consideration of a Penalty Notice in accordance with the National Framework for Penalty Notices.

Under the National Framework, Local Authorities may also consider legal intervention where there is evidence of repeated unauthorised absence or deliberate attempts to avoid the penalty notice threshold. Each case will be considered individually in accordance with statutory guidance and Local Authority procedures.

The school will always seek to work constructively with families before requesting legal intervention wherever this is appropriate.

Children Missing in Education

If a pupil fails to attend school for 10 consecutive days, without explanation, the school will refer the pupil to the Local Authority as a Child Missing in Education. After a further 10 days of absence with no explanation, your child is at risk of losing their school place with us.

Elective Home Education

It is a parent's right to be able to withdraw their child from school to educate them at home if they wish to. There are legal responsibilities parents/carers must fulfil if they wish to educate their child at

home, which are monitored by the Local Authority. Please speak to the headteacher in the first instance if you are considering this option.

The Governing Body will review attendance information at least termly, including:

- Overall attendance.
- Persistent absence.
- Severe absence.
- Punctuality.
- Attendance of vulnerable groups.
- Impact of attendance interventions.

Governors will evaluate the effectiveness of attendance strategies and ensure the school continues to meet its statutory responsibilities while promoting a culture of excellent attendance.

Attendance data will be reported regularly to governors through Headteacher reports, safeguarding reports and school improvement monitoring processes, enabling governors to provide appropriate support and challenge to school leaders.

This policy will be reviewed biennially, or sooner if changes to legislation, statutory guidance or Local Authority procedures require an earlier review

Appendices

Examples of the following can be obtained from the school office:

Lists of Register Coding

Term-time Leave Request Form

Examples of absence letters