



Attendance & Punctuality Policy

September 2026

Aims

The purpose of this policy is to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting, improving and maintaining good attendance and the benefits of good attendance of pupils at Birtley House
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Clarifying the staged procedures for staff, Directors and parents
- Ensuring the accurate recording of attendance and absence by teachers
- Providing advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils
- Setting targets for improvement
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

Attendance at Birtley House School

Our attendance target for 2022-2023 was 90%. Actual achieved was 93%

Our attendance target for 2023-2024 was 90%. Actual achieved was 95%

Our attendance target for 2024-2025 was 90%. Actual achieved was 96%

Roles and Responsibilities

The Directors have responsibility for:

- Ensuring the implementation of this policy
- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance.
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues

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- The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

Senior Leadership Team has responsibility for:

- Close monitoring of pupils causing concern
- Ensuring the implementation of this Policy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Directors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing letters of concern, where necessary
- Working with the parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Setting targets for the improvement of attendance as required by the LA
- Authorising absence
- Authorising requests for leave of absence for family holidays
- Communicating with the Local Authority when a pupil with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents

The Office Staff are responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Senior Leadership Team
- Advising the Senior Leadership Team when to issue letters of concern
- Working with Local Authorities to tackle persistent absence
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absences, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Senior Leadership Team where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Class Teachers have initial responsibility for:

Staff at Birtley House understand that children with poor attendance tend to achieve less and that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk.

- Expecting good attendance and punctuality from the children in their class
- Conveying the importance of regular and punctual attendance to parents
- Recording attendance, absence and lateness appropriately and accurately in the register
- Referring concerns to the Headteacher

Parents have responsibility for:

- Calling the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Ensuring that they do not allow a child to have time off school unless it is really necessary
- Making appointments outside school time wherever possible.

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- Informing the school if a child appears reluctant to attend school to ensure that maximum support is available
- Providing the school with more than 1 emergency contact for their child

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that a child is safe and that their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

Please note the Education Welfare Service do not support Independent Schools.

Recording Attendance

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

Registers are done on line using the iSAMS system.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Please see Appendix 1 for attendance marks.

Lateness

School gates open at 8.45am and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration by 8.55am. **Any child arriving in class after 9am is late.** After 9am pupils must report to the office. A child arriving after 9.30am receives an unauthorised late mark unless medical / other reasons are provided and verified. Reasons for lateness and the time arrived are noted in the on-line register.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, further action may be taken.

Absence

There are two types of absence:

- **Authorised** – where the school approves the pupil absence
- **Unauthorised** – where the school will not approve absence.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.30am or as soon as practically possible.

We operate a system of First Day Calling whereby a member of staff will contact parents and carers of children who are absent without explanation. Reasons for absence are recorded on the on-line register.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term time. Parents do not have the automatic right to take their child out of school for such a holiday. Headteachers are no longer allowed to authorise absences for holidays. Leave of absence forms can be obtained from the School Office and **all requests must be submitted at least two weeks before** the first date of intended absence. All requests for such absence are referred directly to the Headteacher. Authorisation cannot be granted retrospectively.

In considering whether or not to authorise leave, the school will consider each case individually, taking into account a child's overall attendance. A date must be set for return to school. A child who is absent longer than ten days after an agreed return date can legally be removed from the school roll after consultation with the Local Authority.

In exceptional cases where it may be necessary for longer planned absence, all such requests should be discussed in advance with the Headteacher.

Persistent Absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school consider to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions

Where there is cause for concern about a pupil's absence further appropriate action is taken:

- Contact is made with parents and carers and/or the Local Authority;
- Daily monitoring of a child's attendance may be set up;
- The Child Missing in Education Team and/or Social Care may be informed

The school wishes to support parents and carers who are finding it difficult to ensure regular and punctual attendance.

If no evidence of improvement is seen after this intervention, then formal procedures will follow. These are:

- Referral to the Local Authority and/or Social Care.

Encouraging Good Attendance

At Birtley House we encourage good attendance by:

- Recording and reporting class attendance to pupils termly in assembly.
- 100% badges for pupils with 100% attendance
- Awarding Gold Attendance Certificates.

Implications of Poor Attendance

Poor attendance disadvantages children. To this end, high regard is placed on regular and punctual attendance at Birtley House. Children are expected to attend school for the full 180 days of the academic year unless there is a good reason for absence

Attendance Targets

The school has set its attendance target at 90%. The school aims to reach this by rigorously implementing this policy, taking action where necessary and by seeking the support of outside agencies where appropriate.

Review

This Policy will remain under constant peer review and formally updated every two years taking into account experience, National and Local frameworks and opportunities for co-operative working with the main school.

Appendix 1 - Attendance Codes

DESCRIPTION	MEANING
Present	Present
Absent (Approved – Educational Activity)	Authorised Absence
Absent (Authorised)	Authorised Absence
Absent (Funeral)	Authorised Absence
Absent (Illness)	Authorised Absence
Absent (Medical)	Authorised Absence
Absent (Not Authorised)	Unauthorised Absence
Closed Bad Weather	Authorised Absence
Covid Testing	Authorised Absence
Educated at Home	Authorised Absence
Exclusion	Unauthorised Absence
Inset Day	Not counted in possible attendances
Late (Authorised)	Present
Not Present	Unauthorised Absence
Religious Activity	Authorised Absence
Unable to Attend o/a exceptional circumstances	Authorised Absence

KEY

Present
Authorised Absence
Unauthorised Absence
Not counted in possible attendances