

Benfield School
Attendance Policy
Headteacher Richard Carr

Named personnel with designated responsibility for Attendance:

Academic year	Head teacher	Deputy Head	Attendance Officer	Chair of Governors
2018 - 2019	Richard Carr	Ingrid Robertson	TBA	Elizabeth Bohill

Policy review dates

Review Date	Changes made	By whom	Date Shared
September 2018		Maria Irving, Assistant Headteacher	October 2018

Our school aspirational target is 97%

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Benfield School in association with Newcastle East Academy Trust (NEAT) aims to maximise attendance levels with the intention of enabling all students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available and to ensure they are safe.

Benfield School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Our aim is to encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality.

Our policy applies to all students registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers on our school website or available from reception for those without access to the internet.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, our Head teacher and Governors work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Aims and Objectives

Benfield School ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. We expect students to attend school regularly and arrive on time in a fit state to learn. We will promptly investigate all absenteeism and lateness and will work closely with parents should attendance become a cause for concern.

Through this Policy, we aim to:

- Improve students' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all students, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and students of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with students, parents, staff and the Attendance Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.

- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Ensure all staff play a key role in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and students.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping students with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, students, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting students who have been experiencing difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Procedures

Our school will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Maintain appropriate registration processes.
- Generate and use appropriate attendance data.
- Communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and students.
- Have consistent and systematic daily records, which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Process in term holidays as unauthorised absence and to inform the Local Authority as necessary.
- Work with parents to improve students attendance and punctuality
- Refer to the Attendance Service or appropriate agencies of any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- Report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE when requested.
- Members of staff will raise concerns relating to attendance or punctuality to the key person.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Form tutors and class teachers are responsible for:

- Maintaining class/ form registers and completing them accurately in accordance with school policy
- Informing the nominated person where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Emphasising with their groups the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Ensuring appropriate school staff are informed of additional information provided by the student so it can be recorded in line with school policy
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary
- Provide background information to support referrals

The Head teacher/Assistant Head teacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Responding to trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where serious concerns have been raised
- Supporting referrals to the Attendance Service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's LA Attendance Officer
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence and recording the information on SIMs and notifying relevant year leader
- Ensuring the Absence/Lateness is completed
- Recording details of students who arrive late after 9.05am or go home early
- Notify staff of incomplete registers
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- First Day Response: Sending E safety text to regarding absent students where no notification has been received

Welfare team/Attendance Officer (TBA) are responsible for:

At Benfield School we have employed an Attendance Officer to offer additional support to parents / carers and students. Furthermore, as part of our Trust support, we have a central attendance officer and intensive family support lead. This includes support in relation to:

- Improving school attendance by carrying out home visits, attending meeting with the parent / carer
- Identifying, with parents, the reason for poor attendance and work with parents to achieve improved attendance and reduce exclusions
- Monitoring attendance levels & punctuality
- Offering parent contracts and attendance support plans
- Identifying and responding to patterns of absence
- Talking to pupils on a 1:1 basis regarding attendance related matters

- Offering group work sessions to remove the barriers to attendance including friendship groups
- Referring to outside agencies for additional support for families including School Health, CYPS, Attendance Service, Police, Youth Offending Team & Social Care

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment
- Contacting the school office each morning of absence
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist (appointment card/letter
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, for exceptional circumstances, as these are not automatically authorised
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child’s reluctance to come to school so that problems, can be dealt with.

Authorised absence

An absence, is classified as authorised when a student has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a student is away from school without the permission of the school.

Schools determine whether absence is authorised or unauthorised in exceptional circumstances, considering factors such as frequency, duration, attendance patterns, i.e. within reason. Staff will be observant of situations where absence is continually condoned by parents.

Registers

1. Registers are legal documents and are marked for morning and afternoon sessions as well as every lesson

Examples:

Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
Illness	Absence without a valid reason

Medical appointment / dental (For the time of appointment including travelling) Please provide appointment card	Occasional latecomers (after the register has closed). A late detention must be completed at 3.00pm on the same day
Family Bereavement	Persistent lateness within the first 30 minutes of the day
Religious Observance	Babysitting children including siblings.
Interview / Work Experience	Shopping during school time.
Excluded Children	Special occasions, e.g. birthday.
Sports / Music / Exams	Holidays
Agreed other educational activity at the discretion of the Head teacher	

Reintegrating Long Term Absentees

Following a long period of absence, a student may feel vulnerable. To support this, we may arrange a phased or gradual return, allocation of a 'Key Worker', consider whether additional support is appropriate, ensure that all staff are aware of the situation and nominate a key person to monitor the child's reintegration into school. It is our intention to ensure all students feel welcomed back and where to get help.

Breakfast club

A free breakfast club, open to all, operates in the dining hall from 7.30am. All students must access this provision via the Cherrywood entrance.

Registration

The school doors open at 8.30. All students must be in their registration classroom/assembly by 8.50am.

The Form Tutor is responsible for morning registration. The register has to be completed by 9.05am. Any student who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning session. Teaching staff will register students in all 5 lessons throughout the day.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs, which is supported by the Local Authority.

Lateness

Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of 1996 Education Act. The school seeks to improve general punctuality and to improve attitude of persistent offenders by:-

- a. Informing parents of our expectations and offer ways of helping combat lateness
- b. Informing parents on a daily basis relating to lateness via text message
- c. Operating a daily sanction for students who are late to school and lessons
- d. Ensuring all students and parents understand that lateness is actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases

- e. Inviting parents and students to a meeting to discuss reasons for persistent lateness

The Cherrywood entrance is closed at 8.40am, students who arrive after this time must enter via the main entrance on Benfield Road.

Any student who arrives after 8.50am is marked as late in the attendance record using (Lateness code L) with late minutes recorded.

Students who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M) providing they provide proof of appointment and at the discretion of the Head teacher.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Where we have not received reasons for a student's absence staff within school will contact the parent to clarify the reason for the absence. This may be in the form of a phone call or a home visit.

Parents are encouraged to keep open lines of communication with school over absence as persistent absence can be considered a safeguarding matter.

First Day Contact

Where a student is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, we will initiate a first day contact process. Year Leaders will check registers from 9.05am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify absent students. After the registers have been checked an E-safety text is sent to parents of students where no notification has been received. Welfare staff will then contact home or conduct a home visit if necessary.

Illness

When students have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send learning resources home, so that they can keep up with their school work. Schools can contact a GP where there are concerns around overall attendance to seek clarity on the absence.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, we may have to discuss an alternative arrangement (for example, reduced timetable) with the Local Authority.

Where over the course of an academic year, a student has repeated periods of illness, we will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card/letter or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you so we can make our own enquiries. Alternatively, we may make a referral to the School Health Advisor to ask for support. We will work with parents to seek this support.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

Parents wishing to take students on holiday during term time must notify school using a holiday request form. Absence due to holidays **WILL NOT BE AUTHORISED**.

The Head teacher will only grant leave of absence if he is satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

If a parent or guardian chooses to go ahead with a holiday that is not actually considered exceptional circumstances, the school may notify the Local Authority of the intention to initiate legal proceedings. This may result in a penalty notice being issued.

If a student has attendance in the 'green zone' (currently 96%+) for three terms prior to a holiday and the holiday is up to a maximum of 5 days, the school may not make a decision to prosecute.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is the responsibility of the Head teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. It is the role of the parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore, when we become concerned about attendance we will inform parents/carers of our concerns. If attendance does not improve after a conversation, a parent contract or attendance support programme will be offered. This is an agreement / action plan which looks at ways to work together to improve attendance. (See Appendix A) There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a student attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service.

The Attendance Service will look at each case and may issue fixed penalty notices to parents where there is poor attendance.

The Local Authority Attendance Service working jointly with Legal Services may also consider:

- Applying for a Parenting Order
- Applying for an Education Supervision Order
- A School Attendance Order (If parent has not registered their child in a school)
- A Community Order

The Local Authority Attendance Officer can remotely check and monitor attendance levels. The LA Attendance Officer regularly carries out register checks to identify children with low attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

Year Leaders have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on SIMS. Regular meetings are held with the Assistant Head teacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Monitoring stages:

Through monitoring of registers by Year Leaders, students will be highlighted as a concern when they:

- Have 3 consecutive days of school
- Attendance falls below 94%

Process to rectify poor attendance: (See appendix 1)

- Parenting contract meeting offered where student, parent and Year Leader meet to discuss attendance issues. Targets and support intervention agreed, and reviews dates set.

Failure to attend parenting contract meeting or failure of parenting contract:

- **Step 1:** Informal monitoring letter sent: students' attendance will be monitored for a period of **4 weeks** by Year Leader with an expectation to have a minimum of 96% attendance during the monitoring period.
- **Step 2:** If student has not met monitoring target, a further **4 week** monitoring period will be undertaken by the Year leader.
- **Step 3:** If student has not met the second target a Legal Referral (Lower Offence) will be completed by the Year Leader and sent to the Local Authority. The Local Authority will monitor student's attendance for an agreed period.
- **Step 4:** If the student fails the legal monitoring period set by the Local Authority, the Year Leader will refer for a Re-Legal Referral (Higher Offence).

We follow a traffic light system to help staff, parents and students have a clear understanding of our expectations. (See appendix 2)

Red Zone: Under 90%

Students in the red zone are more likely to underachieve, have difficulties making friendships and feel pressure due to the amount of lost learning. Parents will be offered intensive support to address the absence. Legal action may be taken against parents/carers of Red Zone students. Parents will be referred to LA if attendance doesn't improve; this may result in the local authority taking legal action.

Amber Zone: 90.1% - 95.9%

Students in the Amber Zone are still at risk of underachieving for the same reasons as students in the Red Zone. Evidence shows, students who miss school regularly are more likely to suffer from school related stress. If a student is in in the Amber Zone, we will contact parents and support will be offered to help improve attendance. Parents will also be invited to complete a Parent Contract to set targets to help avoid falling into the Red Zone.

Green Zone: 96% - 100%

We expect all students to have Green Zone attendance throughout their time at Benfield School. Students in the Green Zone are more likely to do well in examinations, have a broader range of experiences, develop strong friendships, have better job opportunities and offers from employers. Outstanding attendance and punctuality are top priorities for employers.

Rewards & Recognition

Although good attendance is an expectation Benfield School seeks to improve whole school attendance by offering incentives, these include:

- **Spot prizes**
- **Form of the Week Award**
- **Activities Day for students achieving our school target of 96% (every term)**
- **I-pad prize draw for 100% attendance (every half term)**
- **NUFC match tickets prize draw for 100% attendance**
- **Other awards including certificates and badges (for further details see Benfield School website).**

Parenting Contracts for attendance – guide for parents

What is a parenting contract?

A parenting contract is a formal written agreement between a parent or carer and either the school and / or the local authority. A parenting contract may be offered if your child has failed to attend school regularly.

A parenting contract is meant to support you, the school and the LA to identify and address the issues surrounding your child's irregular attendance at school and encourage a positive working relationship to improve attendance. It is not intended to be a punishment.

What does it involve?

Everyone signed up to the contract will agree to take certain actions which are realistic and which address the issues of non-attendance for a specified period of time. You might agree to do things like getting your child up on time, signing a daily report card and reporting any difficulties to school as soon as possible. School might agree to inform you if your child does not arrive at school, deal quickly with any problems and involve other agencies that might be able to offer you additional support. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

Do I have to enter into a parenting contract?

Entry into a parenting contract is voluntary but it does provide you with an opportunity to get support to improve your child's attendance at school. If you do take up the offer of a parenting contract and try to comply with it, this may assist your case if the local authority decides to take legal action against you for your child's irregular attendance. If you refuse the offer or don't comply without good reason this may also be presented as evidence.

If you decide not to enter into a contract, you will need to try to find other ways of improving your child's attendance and it may be worth discussing how you intend to do this with the school or local authority.

How is a parenting contract arranged?

You will be invited to a meeting in school with a school representative. The local authority Area Attendance Officer may also attend. Depending on their age and understanding, your child can attend part or all of the meeting.

At the meeting you will be asked your views on your child's attendance and whether there are any underlying issues. Try to think about the reasons behind your child's absences, any particular difficulties you are experiencing at the moment and what would help you to improve your child's attendance. Also think about what you can do to improve attendance.

School will explain what support they can offer and whether any other agency including the local authority might also be able to help you and your child. You will be able to discuss what is expected of both you and the school and then agree the actions that will support improved attendance. If you choose to accept the offer, the final contract will be signed by you, the school representative and in some cases the area attendance officer.

National contacts

www.direct.gov.uk School attendance, absence and your child

www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport Behaviour and attendance - Parental responsibility

familylives.org.uk Truancy Helpline: 0808 800 2222

Local contacts

www.newcastle.gov.uk Schools – Attendance

You can phone the Attendance Service on 0191 277 4500 or

Email attendanceservice@newcastle.gov.uk

If you require this information in audio, Braille or large print, please contact the Attendance Service to arrange.

APPENDIX 1

Student has had 3 consecutive days absent from school or falls below 94%.

Send out to Parents/carers a Parenting Contract (PC) offer & 'What is a PC Offer?'

E.g. A child has had 3 or more absences with no contact from parents/carers.

Step 1

Send out Informal Monitoring (Letter 1).

E.g. this internally monitors the students' attendance for 4 weeks, as the students' attendance is at an unsatisfactory level. At this stage we hope to make an impact before it gets to Legal Monitoring.

Step 2

Send out Informal Monitoring (Letter 2).

E.g. this internally monitors their attendance for 4 weeks. Strongly worded letter outlining the implications of poor attendance. If there is no improvement with the students' attendance then pursue a Legal Referral to the Local Authority (LA).

Step 3

Letter to be sent out to Parents/Carers explaining that a Legal Referral will be made to the LA due to persistent absences.

- SCHOOL TO COMPLETE LEGAL REFERRAL ONLINE

(ADDRESS & Number)

Step 4

Letter to be sent out to Parents/Carers explaining that a Re-Legal Referral will be made to the LA due to pass/fail Original Legal Monitoring period.

- SCHOOL TO COMPLETE LEGAL REFERRAL ONLINE

(ADDRESS & Number)

Benfield Attendance Process

School Response

Local Authority Response

