



Attendance Policy



THE BRIDGE SCHOOL

Forward Education Trust	September 2024
Date of Adoption:	
Review date:	September 2025

Rationale

The Bridge School places a high priority on achieving standards and feel that excellent pupil attendance and punctuality are essential. Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

In order for children to achieve their potential, pupils must be highly motivated to learn as well as keen and eager to attend school. Regular, punctual attendance will establish good habits that will support them throughout their lives.

To achieve this, The Bridge School is committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that maximum attendance is achieved, whilst discouraging any form of unauthorised absence. Parents/carers will be informed regularly of the requirements on attendance.

Statistics show that, in general, the higher the percentage of sessions missed, the greater the impact on learning;

Attendance during one school year	equals this number of days absent	which is approximately this many weeks absent	which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

Pupils are admitted to the school only after request for a placement from the Local Authority (SENAR). Pupils have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).

Aims

This policy aims 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:

1. To improve the overall attendance of pupils at the school.

2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents/carers, all staff and governors.
3. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
4. To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
5. To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
6. To implement an effective monitoring and intervention strategy.
7. To promote and follow the City's 'Support First' School attendance framework and guidance.
8. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence through illness.

Registration

We keep an electronic admissions register (school roll) and place all pupils onto this register.

A register of attendance for all pupils on the school roll is taken twice a day: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. For each pupil, the register will be marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site, absent or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. If the pupil is absent, the register will say whether or not the absence has been authorised by the school.

Register Times and Coding:

Registrations begins at 9.00am (for all pupils) and at 1.15pm.

Registers close at 9.30am and 1.45pm.

A mark will be made in respect of each pupil during registration. Any pupil who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. School staff will amend the registers to indicate lateness if a pupil arrives after the register closes. (See Appendix A)

In the case of unavoidable delay for pupils using school transport, a late mark will be issued, although parents will not be penalised in these circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Authorised & Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be absent or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for absence e.g. illness. Only the school may authorise the absence.

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from an authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.

Authorised absences may include the following:

- Illness, medical and dental appointments
- Religious day observance (parents/carers are requested to notify the school well in advance)
- Dual registration
- Exceptional compassionate circumstances
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

(Further details in Appendix A).

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Our definition of 'exceptional circumstances' is outlined in Appendix B.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the 'Exceptional

Circumstances Pupil Term Time Leave Request Form', accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

If an 'Exceptional Circumstances Pupil Term Time Leave Request Form' is rejected, then the absence; should the parent still proceed with the removal of their child during term time; maybe dealt with under the Support First and Leave of Absence Penalty processes.

Holiday in Term Time

The Bridge School follows the Local Authority Guidance, and this does not allow absence for holidays.

First Day Contact and Persistent Absence

Parents/carers will be contacted by telephone on the first day of absence if no message has been sent into school giving reasons for the absence. Attendance which falls below 90% during a term, will trigger investigative action by the school. If further action is required, a model of escalation will be followed, beginning with a supportive phone call, followed by a possible meeting with the strategic lead for attendance and the family support worker. During this process, agreed strategies will form an action plan for improving attendance, or attendance contract where appropriate. Where structured intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the school may consider taking legal action where this is deemed necessary.

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.

Attendance monitoring

Attendance is monitored regularly through individual summary sheets and analysis of data trends. Regular attendance reports will be provided to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families. Parents/carers are encouraged to communicate with the school via telephone or the home school book. Transport escorts may provide the first point of contact between parents/carers and the school.

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual level. Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be assessed regularly and securely. The school will benchmark its attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

Data will be analysed to identify patterns and trends as well as identify pupils, whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence. Strategies and targeted interventions will then be developed to address identified needs. Data will be utilised to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parent's – have a legal responsibility to send their child to school and to inform school of a child's absence. It is a parent/carers responsibility to contact school directly when their child is absent.

Where possible parents should:

- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the school office.

Teachers:

- To record attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis within allocated timeframes
- To inform administration staff if no message has been received regarding a pupil absence
- To highlight concerns or patterns regarding attendance to the Leadership team.
- Promote attendance with parents, during formal and informal interactions
- Support families with strategies to support their child at home
- To create culture of belonging within the class.
- To create wow experiences and opportunities for pupils to access fun engaging lessons at school.

Administration Staff:

- Input attendance data on BROMCOM and CPOMs
- Print off reports weekly for monitoring purposes
- Managing the Pupil Signing in/out book.
- Make the first day absence calls and record reasons for absence
- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Follow up absent pupils with attendance calls
- To highlight concerns or patterns regarding attendance to the Leadership team.

Strategic Lead for Attendance (Senior Attendance Champion):

- To act as 'attendance leader' with responsibility for the strategic management of the attendance agenda, leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- To set clear, challenging and realistic targets as part of the school self-review
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed, intervening early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Monitor patterns of attendance and lateness
- Inform/meet with parents/carers where there are attendance concerns
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Take legal action following BCC 'Support First' School attendance framework and guidance if and when necessary
- Strategic use of Family Support Worker
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

The senior attendance champion is Miss Jaques, who can be contacted via 0121 464 8265 or enquiry@bridge.fet.ac.

Family Support Worker:

- Follow up absent pupils with attendance calls
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Offer support to families including referrals, home visits, liaising with external professionals when necessary
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Work collaboratively with other school staff (senior attendance champion, admin team, teachers) to ensure joined up approach to supporting pupil attendance
- Assist in communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels
- Assists in celebrations of pupils attendance activities

Should you require any support please contact our Family Support Worker via the school office on 0121 464 8265 or enquiry@bridge.fet.ac.

Head Teacher

- Inform the Local Academy Council of attendance issues and records.
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Considering and responding to exceptional leave of absence requests.

Local Academy Council:

- Monitor whole school attendance half-termly and take appropriate action should it affect standards.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognise and promote the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

Promoting Good Attendance

At The Bridge School we believe in celebrating fantastic attendance and appreciate the support we receive from families in this aim through the following methods:

- Home/School Agreement
- School Newsletters
- Attendance Newsletters
- Class Attendance Displays
- Reward Certificate's for pupil's achieving 96% or more attendance during the term
- Improved Attendance Certificate and reward (Improved attendance compared to the previous half term)
- Letters/texts are sent to parents/carers congratulating them on their child's improved or outstanding attendance
- Attendance tokens and rewards

Staff will promote the culture of 'The Bridge is the place to be!!' Where everyone belongs, is included, has fun and achieves; through home school communication channels.

Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

A small minority of pupils may contract severe illness or, because of the nature of their disability, be susceptible to longer or more regular periods of illness. In these circumstances we will follow the 'Support First' framework and guidance. This may include referrals to supportive services such as the special school nursing team and the disabled children's social work team.

Where this is a known factor, school and the health team have proactive plans in place to ensure the continued education, which are implemented each time a period of illness

occurs. When children are ill for extended periods of time regular contact will be made with the parent/carer and referrals to external provisions will be considered. This ensures support and guidance is offered by the school in consultation with the medical professionals.

When pupils are absent due to mental ill health referrals to appropriate supporting agencies such as Forward-Thinking Birmingham will be discussed with parents.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, Penalty notices and Notices to improve (outlined in Appendix C) – to tackle poor attendance and persistent lateness. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

School attendance, Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff will follow the Local Authority procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education (see appendix D). All Schools are required to make the local authority aware of every registered pupil who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 5 school days. This attendance policy is part of broader suite of Safeguarding policies including the schools Safeguarding Policy and the Behaviour and Welfare Policy which support the wellbeing of our children.

Appendix A

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a ‘mobile child’ who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school

Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence

U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix B: Examples of exceptional circumstances

Head Teachers may, on rare occasions, make a judgement that there are genuine and exceptional circumstances pertaining to an application to take a pupil out of school during term. Head Teachers should not operate a blanket ban on all term time leave and should consider each application on its merits.

Examples of exceptional circumstances could include:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil • parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)
- leave for armed forces personnel who are prevented by operational duties to take their leave at any other time

It is not always in the best interests of the pupil nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. School and school relationships can provide pupils with stability and care during difficult times. If leave is granted, the Head Teacher is the person who determines the number of school days a child can be away from school.

Appendix C: Sanctions further details

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Appendix D: CME Flowchart

