

Dean Bank Primary and Nursery School



Attendance Policy

Headteacher: Mrs. P. Northcott
Chair of Governors: Mr. J. Davison
Responsible Person: Mr. C. Murphy

Date: July 2022
Date for Review: July 2023



Dean Bank Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all pupils benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn. When children are routinely absent from school it immeasurably harms their life chances.

From September 2020, it will once again become a parent's legal duty; to ensure their child(ren) attend school regularly and on time. As a school we will work with pupils and their families to support parents to meet these legal duties and to ensure children can benefit from attending school regularly.

The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and we will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in line with the DfE 'School attendance Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (October 2014), 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015) and DfE 'Guidance for full opening of school' 31 July 2020.

This policy is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

Attendance and Attainment

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our pupils is linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All pupils have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Pupils will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other pupils.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

The Law

You need to make sure your child attends school regularly and on time. Because parents are responsible for this duty in law, you will be **breaking the law** if you do not do this and there are no good reasons for missing school.

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.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require 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 School and Local Authority **want to help you if you have a problem.**

If attendance does not get better or you do not accept help and support offered, the Council may issue you with a warning notice (formal warning), Penalty Notice or ask you to attend an interview, under police caution, to ask you questions about whether you have broken the law.

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.

If you go to court and are found guilty of an offence, you could be fined up to £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious.

In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison. Once you have a criminal record, this will have serious implications when you apply for a permanent or temporary job.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

“Absence” as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Regular attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils

An “authorised absence” as:

- An absence for sickness supported by appropriate medical evidence (medicine with prescription label, doctor’s appointment card/letter etc.)
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency or unavoidable cause

An “unauthorised absence” as:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day
- Minor illnesses or frequent minor illness –unless medical evidence has been provided

“Persistent absenteeism” (PA) as:

- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason (Attendance has dropped below 90%)

“Parent” as

- Any natural parent, whether married or not (their name is on the birth certificate)
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person such as foster carer
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (they are living with someone who has a child attending school)

Attendance Procedures

On the first day of absence

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers **must** phone the School Office or send a message via Dojo to the School Office, giving a reason for the child's absence and expected date of return. If a child is absent from school and there is no contact from home, then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why. If there is still no contact School will send a message via class Dojo. Any illness will be considered **unauthorised** unless medical evidence is provided to support the reason for absence.

On the second day of absence

If a child is absent for a second day parents or carers **must** phone the School Office or send a message via Dojo to the School Office, giving a reason for the child's absence and expected date of return. If a child is absent from school and there is no contact from home, then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why. If there is still no contact, then an email will be sent to parents as well as a message via Dojo.

On return from absence

If a child was absent for any period of time and no reason was provided, on return to school they will bring home a reason for absence letter. This **must** be filled in and returned to school as soon as possible.

Periods of extended absence

If a child's absence continues parents are **must** notify the school **each day** to update them. If a phone call is not received, then the school will contact home to verify the absence.

If the school receives no medical evidence to support the reason for any absence, then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time). See appendix A for further details.

Doctor's and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

Categorising Absence and Attendance

The table below shows the national codes which enable all schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way, and comply with the regulations.

Absence and Attendance Codes	
Present at School	
/ \	Registration code / \ : present in school / = am \ =pm
L	Late arrival before the register has closed. Dean Bank keeps the registers open for 15 minutes each morning until 9am. A pupil arriving after the register has closed will be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.
Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity	
B	Off-site educational activity. This code is used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school.
D	Dual Registered – at another educational establishment.
V	Educational visit or trip. School trips, residential or an organised trip
Absence codes when pupils are not present in school	
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school. Only very exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence.
E	Excluded (Suspension)
H	Holiday authorised by the school.
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments). Parents are to notify school on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness –There is the expectation that parents will inform the school of absence before 8:45am on the day of absence.
M	Medical or dental appointments are counted as an authorised absence However, we strongly encourage parents to make routine GP and dental appointments after 3:15pm. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
R	Religious observance. An authorised absence, when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence. This code would be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school prior to absence. It would not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.
Unauthorised Absence from School	
G	Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher. If Dean Bank does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Depending on the amount of time absence occurs the school will submit a Fixed Penalty Notice.
N	Reason for absence not yet provided.
O	Absent from school without authorisation. If Dean Bank Primary School is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, we will record it as unauthorised.
U	Arrived in school after registration closed. We actively discourage late arrival. We are alert to patterns of late arrival and will seek an explanation from the parent.
Administrative Codes	
X	Not required to be in school.
Y	An enforced closure – example snow
Z	Pupil not on admission register.
#	School closed to pupils

Help & Support:

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it, and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

School recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school 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.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Parent Support advisor (Mr Murphy)
- SEMH Support worker (Miss Lockett)
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- 1 to 1 mentoring
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages
- Attendance panels with Governors
- Parenting contracts
- Engaging the support of other agencies (e.g. Early Help)

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, the Head teacher will consider the use of legal sanctions following consultation with the Local Authority (see Appendix A).

Communication:

All parents must report and explain the reasons for absence. They can do this by calling the school office or by sending a Dojo message to the school office account. It is also essential to make sure your contact details and at least 2 emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The School will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to hospital appointments and/or long-term medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

If a child is absent, the following will be initiated by the school:

- The first day calling procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register at 9:00am and where no reason for absence is known.
- If there is still no contact made from the pupil's parents, a further telephone call home and a DOJO message will be sent that morning.
- School will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission

In certain circumstances the School may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil or request a welfare check to be made by the police
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement
- Refer to an external agency / support service to offer support, guidance and advice
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan, implantation of Fast Track to Attendance proceedings or referring to Children Services, where there are safeguarding concerns.

Enforcement Action:

If, following the school's attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or you have not co-operated with the school's attempts to improve the situation the school are required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action. The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Punctuality:

Registration times are as follows:

Reception: 8:40am

Year 1 – 6: 8:45am

Nursery: 12:30pm

At 9:00am, the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 15 minutes after this time, **before 9:00am**, then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 15 minutes late, **after 9:00am**, will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks **will** contribute to further action being taken).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs).

1. If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions:

A letter will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Pastoral Lead will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to pupils e.g. improving their punctuality over 2 weeks to earn a reward.

2. If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason:

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with Pastoral Lead for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality.

3. If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality:

Then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

In order to promote attendance and punctuality the school will give out a weekly certificate for the class with the best attendance. Further to this, any children who achieve 98-100% attendance over each half term will receive a certificate in assembly. Attendance percentages will be shared with parents on a weekly basis on Class DOJO, on the school newsletter, at termly parents' meetings and also annual reports to parents will contain a record of individual pupils' attendance.

Children Missing from Education:

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. **It is vital that you keep school informed of any change of details and regularly update them if details change.** Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents and staff.
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and pupils to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure regular meetings of the behaviour and attendance sub-committee take place and they will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance. The governor's meetings will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site.
- Ensure that the Regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with.
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school.
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governors' meetings.
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time.
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance.
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

School Leadership Team:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with pupils and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- 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.
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to the Behaviour and Attendance Governors Sub Committee meeting each term on attendance records, data and provision.

- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

Teachers and support staff:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with pupils and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- 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.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to pupils that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents, carers, pupils and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each lesson and session.

Alongside Mrs Northcott, the Head teacher, Mr. Murphy, Pastoral Lead, is responsible for attendance and will work to further develop relationships with families to bring about improved attendance. This may involve seeking multi-agency support. Staff responsible for attendance will support good attendance, respond to concerns and promote improvement in attendance by:

- Monitoring / analysing pupil attendance data weekly referring concerns to Mr. Murphy
- Implementing the identified strategies for promoting good whole school attendance
- Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance
- Managing individual pupil casework files
- Ensuring first day calling procedures are adhered to, if a child is absent from school without contact from parents
- Taking an active lead in delivering whole school initiatives such as awards assemblies and reward schemes
- Making referrals to appropriate external agencies

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, their parents/carers/guardians, and the school's communications such as weekly newsletter, texts and display boards.
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class
- Follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance.

This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

Parents / Carers:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents / carers will:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.
- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return (we ask that unless exceptional circumstances do not allow this, you contact the school before 9am)
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their school work or home and family life
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues

Attendance Procedure and Reward System

Reward systems

- Percentage boards inside or outside each classroom.
- DOJO points are awarded for attending morning and afternoon sessions.
- Each week the class with the best attendance receives a certificate and £10.00.
- Attendance updates in newsletter and on Class DOJO.
- Pupils with 98%+ are entered into a draw for a £5.00 reward each half term.
- The families with 100% each term are entered into a draw to receive a £30.00 ASDA voucher.
- The school presents pupils with 98%+ attendance certificates at the end of each half term.
- All children who achieve 100% attendance for the school year will have Afternoon Tea with Mrs Northcott and Mr Murphy.
- All children who achieve 100% attendance for the school year are entered into a draw for the chance to win a new bike.

Traffic light attendance sheets sent to parent's half termly.

96% - 100% ~ Outstanding (Green)

90% - 95% ~ Requires Improvement (Yellow)

Below 90% ~ Unsatisfactory (Red)

Attendance procedures

100% - 96% - Great attendance

95% - 90% - Parents receive a letter requesting a meeting with the school.

Under 90% - All pupils whose attendance level falls below 90% will be contacted by the school and where needed will be subject to an action plan to support their return to full attendance.

Medical evidence

At times it is necessary for us to request medical evidence from parents to allow us to authorise their children's absence from school. Below is what the school will accept as medical evidence

- Medical appointment card (named), letter from a professional such as a hospital Consultant or Psychologist
- Evidence of a consultation with NHS 111
- Medication prescribed by a GP
- Copy of a prescription
- Print screen of medical notes
- Letters concerning hospital appointments
- Slip with date, pupils name and surgery stamp signed by a receptionist.

Related Policies

To underpin the values and ethos of our school and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential the following policies are integral to this approach:

Safeguarding including Child Protection

Anti-bullying

Special Educational Needs

Teaching and Learning

Behaviour and Rewards

Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

School attendance, DFE (2020)

School attendance parental responsibility measures: statutory guidance, DFE (revised March 2019)

Children Missing Education: statutory guidance, DFE (2016)

'Keeping Children Safe in Education', DFE (2021)

Working Together to Safeguard Children DFE (2019)