

# THOMAS A BECKET JUNIOR SCHOOL



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

## 1. Aims

We provide a broad, balanced, creative and inclusive curriculum which we believe all children have a right to enjoy. In order for all children to access the opportunities provided, it is necessary for them to attend school regularly and punctually. We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting and maintaining a strong attendance rate
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil is safeguarded and has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfill expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### 3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Referring fixed-penalty notices to West Sussex County Council, where necessary

### 3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school, offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and providing staff training as necessary
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Using the services of PEI and other agencies as necessary to assist with attendance matters
- Supporting and working alongside the inclusion team to create intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers when appropriate.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Liaising with TAB Infant, and other locality schools, when there are concerns around absences across families, to track patterns and address safeguarding concerns.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Zoe Borley and can be contacted via telephone 01903 202268 or email [zborley@thomasabecketjunior.org.uk](mailto:zborley@thomasabecketjunior.org.uk).

### **3.4 The attendance officer**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Scanning registers daily, ensuring that all children are accounted for and contacting parents with regard to absence if necessary.
- Ensuring all data within the attendance module of BROMCOM is kept up to date and all attendance administration processes kept up to date in line with relevant guidance.
- Producing weekly/termly attendance reports for designated senior leader for attendance as requested
- Updating weekly headline attendance figure document
- Monitoring of children's absences, lateness, and requests for holidays liaising with class teachers and designated senior leader for attendance and ensuring these are recorded within BROMCOM
- Attending meetings to discuss children's attendance and lateness and any action to be taken and attending the locality meetings
- Administration of fixed penalty notices.
- Administration of absence request forms and letters to parents and make low level telephone calls to parents.

The attendance officer is Ali Kirby and can be contacted via 01903 202268.

### **3.5 Class teachers**

Class teachers will

- record attendance accurately on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information in a timely manner.
- understand and implement the school's policy on attendance;
- encourage high attendance and punctuality;
- liaise with the designated senior leader for attendance about children whose attendance is a cause for concern and follow up as appropriate.
- Discuss attendance matters with parents as necessary and promote strong attendance and punctuality.

### **3.6 School office staff**

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system CPOMS and the attendance officer will record attendance codes on Bromcom.
- Pass on information, calls and emails to from parents/carers to the class teacher or assistant heads in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

### 3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence (and ideally each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Organise and book holidays and Leave From Learning during the 175 days of school holidays and non-school days, and not during the 190 days of learning time.

### 3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

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

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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school between 8:30am and 8:40 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken by 8:45am and will be kept open until 9:15am. The register for the second session will be taken as the children come in from their lunch break before the start of the afternoon sessions.

### 4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

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

Where the absence is longer than [e.g. 5] days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school may ask for 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.

### **4.3 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 should complete a leave from absence request form which is available from the school office.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

### **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)

Regular analysis of lateness is completed and formally discussed monthly. Letters, phone calls or meetings will take place when pupils have an increasing number of lates or have missed a large proportion of learning due to lateness.

### **4.5 Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may consider a home visit or contacting the police depending on the circumstances
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving Pupil Entitlement Investigation.
- If a child fails to attend or appears to have disappeared and the period of absence is unusual, then the Headteacher and other education practitioners will make every effort to trace the child. We make every effort to safeguard all our children. We will follow up all concerns about an absence for vulnerable children if no message has been received to explain an absence. Any concerns will be passed to MASH and for support and logged in accordance with our Safeguarding policies.

### **4.6 Reporting to parents/carers**

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels during parents evenings. Attendance letters are sent half termly to those pupils where attendance has dipped to below 90% or are at risk of being a PA. Attendance certificates are sent out annually along with the pupil's written end of year report.

## **5. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

## 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be '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.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

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

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and in advance of the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Some valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

## 5.2 Legal sanctions

The school can refer to the local authority who can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be referred to the local authority by a headteacher, and issued by a local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

# 6. Attendance monitoring

## 6.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

The school pupil-level absence data will be collected via Wonde and shared with the DfE dashboard and FTT attendance dashboard. This allows data to be shared and compared with national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

## 6.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families

- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. The impact of EBSA on young people and schools is far reaching. We know that for young people who display EBSA they can have poor academic attainment, reduced social opportunities and limited employment opportunities. We recognise EBSA and have a pastoral team that we can access to support the partnership between home and school to help close the gap.

### 6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to year leaders and class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### 6.4 Reducing persistent and severe 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.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance including the DST.
- Pupils that are at risk of being persistently absent or are persistently absent will be monitored closely and letters will be sent at appropriate points and/or half termly. If necessary meetings will be held to discuss barriers and reasons for absence.

## 7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Zoe Borley (assistant headteacher) At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## 8. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

### Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

<b>L</b>	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
<b>B</b>	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
<b>D</b>	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
<b>J</b>	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
<b>P</b>	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
<b>V</b>	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance



<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day