BLENHEIM SCHOOLS

# PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

AKELEY WOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL & NURSERY

# Pupil Attendance Policy


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## Terminology

- “Our teams” and” “team member/s” include everyone working in Outcomes First Group’s settings and services in a paid or unpaid capacity, including employees, consultants, agency staff, trainees and contractors. For Blenheim schools, volunteers are included in this definition.
- “Parents and carers” refer to the person or -people with legal parental responsibility for the child/young person
- “Child/children” refers to all children and young people being educated and supported at the setting or service

## 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

For pupils to benefit fully from the educational opportunities provided by the school, they must have high levels of attendance and punctuality. An inclusive ethos is at the heart of our approach. We seek to understand and support our pupils to help them enjoy and achieve the best outcomes from school.

We recognise that attendance difficulties are often a symptom of underlying need rather than the primary difficulty itself. Attendance concerns may be linked to emotional wellbeing, neurodivergence, special educational needs and disabilities, mental or physical health needs, family circumstances, previous educational experiences, trauma or safeguarding concerns. Understanding and addressing barriers is therefore central to improving attendance.

Regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Missing learning time leaves children and young people vulnerable to falling behind and it is well-known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the pupil, beginning from the early years.

It is important that team members, parents/carers and pupils are familiar with this policy. Regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Promoting consistent and high attendance and punctuality is an integral part of the school's day-to-day vision, values, ethos and culture, alongside positive behaviour. Our school has high expectations of attendance and considers good attendance to be that **above 96%**.

We also recognise the importance of understanding the context of a pupil's absence from school and the impact of language used. We therefore differentiate between:

- Truancy- which refers to a young person's deliberate or unauthorised absence from school without a valid reason. It is often associated with disengagement or a lack of value placed on education. Addressing truancy typically involves a structured approach that includes understanding underlying barriers, re-engagement strategies, and clear expectations around attendance.
- Barriers to Attendance - We recognise that attendance difficulties are often complex and multifaceted, arising from an interaction of emotional, developmental, relational, health, family, educational and environmental factors. Whilst some children and young people may experience **Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)**, others may face barriers linked to neurodivergence, trauma, attachment needs, mental or physical health difficulties, adverse childhood experiences, or previous educational experiences. Attendance difficulties should not automatically be viewed as a matter of choice, refusal or disengagement. Instead, schools should adopt a compassionate, trauma-informed and curiosity-led approach that seeks to understand the underlying reasons for non-attendance and work collaboratively with children, young people, families and professionals to identify the most appropriate support

## 2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all children and young people in the school, including those in Early Years (including registered provision where offered).

## 3.0 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The school maintains its Attendance Registers in accordance with legislation and statutory regulations and adheres to Statutory Guidance when dealing with Children Absent from Education. The school will work in a collaborative way with external agencies, in accordance with the principles of the UK government guidance.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the relevant government legislation and guidance, including:

School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders (England) Regulations 2007

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026

Working Together to Improve Attendance (Department for Education)

Attendance: why it matters, key data and guidance

Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK

Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department for Education)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (Department for Education)

The Education Act 1996, which specifies the legal responsibility of parents/carers of children of compulsory school age to ensure that they receive a suitable full-time education, either through regular attendance at school or otherwise. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient full-time education appropriate to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs. In implementing this policy, the school will also have regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The school is required to maintain both an Admission Register and an Attendance Register. All registered pupils must be entered on both registers, which are legal records and must be maintained in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage requires providers to maintain a daily record of the names of children being cared for on the premises and their hours of attendance.

The Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 require certain maintained schools, academies and other state-funded settings to provide specified pupil information, including attendance information, to the Secretary of State. These requirements do **not** apply to independent schools unless they are academy

schools. Consequently, independent schools are not required under these Regulations to provide daily attendance data to the Department for Education and do not have access to the Department for Education's attendance monitoring tools.

This policy must be read and implemented alongside the school's other policies, in particular:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Child Exploitation Policy
- Protecting Children from Radicalisation Policy
- Parent-School Communication Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Relational and Inclusive Behaviour Policy

Our policies are underpinned by the understanding that attendance, behaviour, wellbeing, belonging and engagement are interconnected and influenced by a range of developmental, relational, environmental and contextual factors. The school therefore adopts a relational, inclusive and trauma-informed approach that prioritises understanding, support, belonging and positive outcomes.

## 4.0 LINK BETWEEN ATTENDANCE, WELLBEING AND ACHIEVEMENT

Missing learning time through having unexplained, persistent and/or prolonged absence, leaves children vulnerable to falling behind in their learning and it is well known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement, which reduce longer-term opportunity. Furthermore, poor attendance can also impact a child's social and emotional development.

DfE evidence demonstrates a clear association between attendance and attainment. At Key Stage 4, pupils who did not achieve grades 9 to 4 in English and mathematics had a higher overall absence rate than pupils who achieved grades 9 to 4. Pupils who miss between two and four weeks of school during Year 11 have approximately half the odds of achieving grade 5 in English and mathematics compared with otherwise similar pupils who attend regularly.

Attendance data should not be used to make assumptions about an individual pupil. The school will use attendance information alongside its knowledge of the pupil's needs, circumstances, progress and support arrangements.

Children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

A strong sense of belonging is a protective factor for attendance, engagement, wellbeing and achievement. The school therefore prioritises emotionally safe environments, positive relationships, trusted adults, pupil voice and meaningful participation in school life. Supporting pupils to feel known, valued and connected is a key part of promoting attendance and engagement.

Poor attendance can be habitual; therefore, prevention and early intervention is crucial. Absence is often a symptom and improving pupil's attendance is part of improving the pupil's overall welfare. Individual pupils' barriers to attendance, however, often go far beyond the school gates. Persistent, prolonged and/or unexplained absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues in a pupil's life, and barriers to attendance are often specific to local contexts.

Attendance, therefore, cannot be seen in isolation and the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils can learn and thrive, plus a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child, beginning from the Early Years.

The school adopts a child-centred and coordinated safeguarding approach. Attendance concerns will be considered alongside all available welfare, pastoral and safeguarding information, recognising that no single practitioner is likely to hold the full picture of a child's circumstances. Relevant information will be shared appropriately and proportionately to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

## 5.0 STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL DAY AND REGISTRATION

The attendance register will be taken at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session, at the same time for all registered pupils. This includes pupils who are subject to an individualised or temporary part-time timetable.

The school will publish its morning and afternoon register opening and closing times and apply them consistently.

**Morning registration** will take place between 8.45am – 9.00am

**Afternoon registration** will take place at 12.55pm (EYFS & KS1), 1.25pm (KS2)

- A pupil who arrives after the register has begun to be taken but before it has closed will be recorded using Code L.
- A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be recorded using Code U, unless another statutory attendance or absence code more accurately reflects the pupil's circumstances.
- Different lesson, tutor or programme start times for particular year groups do not alter the school's statutory registration times.

**Schools must use the current statutory codes and must not use superseded codes.**
The full list of absence codes can be found on pages 81-98 of Working together to improve school attendance

## 6.0 ATTENDANCE MONITORING AND REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

Attendance rates are reported regularly to the Blenheim Board. Proprietorial Governors report on pupil attendance, as well as any patterns or trends of persistent absence from school. Representatives of the Proprietor scrutinise Admissions and Attendance Registers for compliance and safeguarding purposes.

Attendance data will be analysed at individual, group and cohort level. This will include monitoring the attendance of pupils who may face additional barriers, including pupils with SEND or health needs, pupils with a social worker, looked-after and previously looked-after children, young carers, pupils eligible for pupil premium, sponsored international students and any other locally identified vulnerable cohort. Monitoring will be undertaken sensitively and will be used to identify support needs, not to make assumptions about an individual pupil or family.

The school will seek the views of pupils and parents/carers when reviewing and implementing its approach to attendance. Feedback will be gathered at least as part of the policy review process and may also be obtained through pupil voice activities, parent surveys, meetings, forums, attendance support reviews and other appropriate consultation arrangements.

The school will consider whether its attendance expectations, communications, procedures and support arrangements are understood, accessible and effective. Particular care will be taken to hear from pupils and families who experience barriers to attendance. Relevant themes and resulting actions will be reported through the school's governance arrangements, while maintaining individual confidentiality.

## 7.0 EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 7.1 Parent/carer(s)/those with parental responsibility

- Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school as soon as concerns arise that may affect their child's attendance or wellbeing. Early communication allows the school and family to work together proactively to identify support needs, remove barriers to attendance and prevent difficulties from escalating.
- Encourage regular and sustained attendance for the child in their care, being fully aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the child in their care arrives at school punctually, prepared for learning.
- Provide clear reasons for any absence for the child in their care which ensures the school can code the absence properly and accurately.
- Contact the school on the first day of the child in their care's absence as early as possible and preferably before the start of the school day (no later than 9 am).
- Avoid making arrangements to remove children in their care from school during term time.
- Respond helpfully and positively to any enquiry made by the school to ascertain the reason for any absence of the child in their care, including any safeguarding matter.
- Provide the school with at least two emergency contact numbers
- Update the school with any changes to circumstances/contacts so that the school can amend the Admissions register as required (including rare circumstances where it is agreed that a child is dual -registered)
- Inform the school of the child's next educational setting and address if they choose to end their contract, especially mid-year, so that the register can be updated. If this is not supplied, the school may need to seek advice from the local authority.

### 7.2 The School

- All team members will contribute to a positive school culture where attendance is everyone's responsibility. The school does not incentivise attendance through rewards, competitions or prizes linked solely to attendance percentages, recognising that absence may be linked to factors outside a child's control, including illness, disability, emotional distress, SEND, safeguarding concerns or other underlying needs. Instead, the school focuses on identifying barriers to attendance, strengthening belonging, celebrating engagement and recognising individual progress towards agreed goals.
- The school has a nominated Attendance Champion who is a senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance, and who has responsibility and oversight of attendance matters, supported by other team members
- The **Attendance Champion** is Leanne Brydon, Headteacher.
- The team members supporting the Attendance Champion on a day-to-day basis are: Administration Team: Kirsty Sterrett – Morning Receptionist, Jennifer Gayton – Afternoon Receptionist and Nikki Gowton – Office Manager - juniorschool@akeleywoodschool.co.uk
- The Attendance Champion has a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance, establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all team members. They have a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school, regularly monitoring and evaluating progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes. In addition to the Attendance Champion, on a day-to-day basis, parents/carers are able to gain information around attendance from the form tutor or head of phase.
- School team members will listen to children and their parents/carers to understand the barriers to the child's good attendance, working jointly with families to understand and support any barriers wherever possible
- All team members will work together to identify patterns/changes in attendance at an early stage to prevent any further absence, including addressing unexplained, persistent, or prolonged absence (deemed as attendance below 90%).
- All team members will work to ensure every pupil has good attendance so they can access the education they are entitled to, being particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide them with additional support.
- The school will seek to identify and support young carers, recognising that caring responsibilities may affect punctuality, attendance, wellbeing and engagement. The school will work with the pupil, their family and relevant services to understand and, wherever possible, reduce barriers to attendance.

## 8.0 INDIVIDUALISED TIMETABLES AND FULL-TIME PROVISION

The school may provide an individualised timetable to meet a pupil's educational, developmental, therapeutic, pastoral or preparation-for-adulthood needs. An individualised

timetable does not necessarily constitute a part-time timetable.

A pupil may continue to receive full-time education through a personalised combination of classroom teaching, supervised private study, therapeutic or specialist provision, approved off-site education, educational visits, sporting activities, work-related learning and other planned educational opportunities. Examples may include swimming, enrichment activities, external tuition, motor sport or other specialist programmes appropriate to the pupil's needs, interests and intended outcomes.

Where education takes place away from the school site, the school will satisfy itself that the activity is educational, appropriately supervised and safeguarded, and will use the statutory attendance code that accurately reflects the provision. The school will monitor the pupil's attendance at, engagement with and progress through the provision.

An individualised full-time programme must not be recorded or treated as a reduced timetable merely because part of the pupil's education takes place off site or through a different mode of delivery.

## 9.0 REDUCED OR PART-TIME TIMETABLES

A reduced or part-time timetable is an arrangement under which a pupil of compulsory school age temporarily receives less than full-time education. It is distinct from an individualised timetable through which the pupil continues to receive full-time education across school and other approved educational activities.

A reduced or part-time timetable will be used only in very exceptional circumstances, where it is in the pupil's best interests and is necessary to meet identified individual needs. It must not be used as a behaviour management measure or as a means of managing staffing, placement or resource pressures.

The arrangement must be agreed with the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally lives and, so far as is appropriate, with the pupil. It must form part of a wider support, healthcare or reintegration plan, include clear attendance expectations and review dates, and have a proposed end date. The objective will be for the pupil to return to full-time education as soon as is reasonably possible.

Where the pupil has an education, health and care plan (EHCP), the Local Authority will be consulted so that the pupil's provision and support can be reviewed. Where the pupil has a social worker, the social worker will be kept informed and involved. All sessions of agreed absence will be recorded using the appropriate statutory attendance code.

- These timetables are intended to provide a temporary, structured and supportive pathway towards increased engagement in education and should not be viewed as a long-term reduction in a pupil's educational entitlement.
- They will be:
  - be agreed in writing by the school and the parent/carer;
  - have a clear rationale linked to the pupil's identified needs and barriers to attendance;

- form part of a wider support, healthcare, attendance or reintegration plan;
- include clear objectives, planned support strategies and arrangements for maintaining engagement with learning;
- be reviewed regularly with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant professionals;
- include a clear plan to gradually increase attendance, participation and access to learning, in line with the pupil's readiness and progress;
- have an identified review and proposed end date, with the expectation that the pupil will work towards accessing a full-time education appropriate to their needs as soon as reasonably possible.

- In a small number of cases, pupils with significant long-term physical or mental health needs may require an individualised timetable for a longer period. In these circumstances, appropriate medical evidence and involvement from relevant professionals will be required, and the arrangement will remain subject to regular review.
- Where such adaptations results in agreed periods when the pupil is not expected to attend school, attendance will be recorded in accordance with current DfE guidance and the appropriate attendance codes will be used.
- The school will keep accurate and efficient records (electronic) of attendance and registration at school, including attendance at all after school and before school activities.

We achieve this in the following ways by:

- Teachers providing parent/carer(s) of children in their care with the timings of the school day and the calendar via the school website and any other usual method(s) such as the school newsletter, in advance
- taking a register at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon;
- Those taking the register marking all children who are not present by the designated time, taking account of absence notes
- Following up un-notified first day absence with a telephone call to the parent/carer(s) by 9:30 am; children who are vulnerable must and will be prioritised (safeguarding, medical, and learning needs). Children on sponsored visas are also a priority
- Teachers Providing parent/carer(s) of children in their care with the timings of the school day and the calendar via the school website and any other usual method(s) such as the school newsletter, in advance.
- taking a register at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon;
- Those taking the register marking all children who are not present by the designated time, taking account of absence notes;
- Following up un-notified first day absence with a telephone call to the parent/carer(s) by 9:30 am; children who are vulnerable must and will be prioritised (safeguarding, medical, and learning needs). Children on sponsored visas are also a priority.
- Where the reason for absence cannot be established promptly, the school will make further reasonable enquiries using all available emergency contacts and will consider the pupil's known vulnerabilities and safeguarding context. Where appropriate, the

matter will be escalated to the DSL and/or relevant external agencies. If there is reason to believe the child is in immediate danger or at risk of significant harm, an immediate referral will be made to Children's Social Care and, where appropriate, the Police.

- Monitoring and analysing attendance and lateness and implementing strategies for promoting improved awareness of attendance such as year groups or vulnerable children, as required, including the use of formal letters home; for those on sponsored visas, see the *Safeguarding Policy* for requirements and Appendix 1
- Reporting on patterns of attendance at Governance Meetings to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils
- Specifically monitoring any unexplained, persistent and/or prolonged absence (individual attendance below 90%) and addressing any concerns at an early stage with the parents/carers of those children
- Using the DfE national codes to record and monitor attendance and absence (from regulation 10 of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 in a consistent way which complies with the regulations, including preservation of the entries on both the Admissions and Attendance Registers for a period of six years after it was made;
- Authorising absences only in specific circumstances according to government guidance- authorisation to be undertaken by the Headteacher or an agreed nominated team member in their absence.
- All team members and Attendance Champions(s) closely liaising with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to identify children whose attendance is emerging as a serious concern, including talking with children and their parents/carers regarding any unsatisfactory attendance, listening and understanding to find out the barrier (s) to good attendance and offering in- support;
- All team members and Attendance Champions(s) closely liaising with the where there are significant concerns about children having prolonged absence with/without parental co-operation, especially where there have/currently are safeguarding concerns – the DSL should seek advice from safeguarding@ofgl.co.uk where needed;
- Implementing any agreed improvement strategies, such as referral to the local authority attendance services and/or children's social care in accordance with the *Safeguarding Policy).*

## 10.0 UNEXPLAINED, PERSISTENT AND/OR ABSENTEES

The school considers pupils with attendance **below 90%** as persistent absentees.

The school will contact the parent/carer(s) to have a supportive formal meeting if their child's attendance approaches this threshold to listen and understand the reasons for declining attendance, discuss any concerns, and to plan a positive way forward, both in terms of in school support and/or a referral to the local authorities via Family Help, Early Help or other specialist support as required.

If attendance does not improve after this meeting, the school will arrange a follow up supportive meeting with the child's parents/carers to further discuss the concerns.

Where attendance concerns indicate emerging welfare or safeguarding needs, the school may consider school-led support, Family Help, Early Help, local authority children's social care involvement or other specialist support, as appropriate. Decisions will be based on the child's needs, the level of risk, information already known to the school and any advice received from safeguarding partners

Attendance concerns may be escalated before persistent absence thresholds are reached where there is a concerning attendance pattern, repeated partial absence, a deterioration from previous attendance levels, known safeguarding concerns, vulnerability indicators, or concerns raised by the pupil, family or professionals.

## 11.0 LATE ARRIVAL

If a pupil arrives late for **morning or afternoon registration**, they must sign in at the school office so that school systems remain fully updated in case an evacuation of the school is necessary and in order that we know exactly where every pupil is at all times. Repeated lateness will be discussed with the child's parents/carers to listen and understand the barriers to arrival on time.

## 12.0 LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY DURING THE DAY

- With the exception of Sixth Form Students, Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by a known parent/carer for a specified reason. If a pupil has to leave the school during the day for illness or a parent is required to collect them for a medical appointment, they must sign out at the School Reception. Where there are known medical appointments, parents must notify the school in advance.
- Students in Years 12 and 13 are able to leave the school site during permitted times and must sign out via the school's InVentry system.
- Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by school team members (written agreement by the Headteacher) to attend a school visit, an off-site scheduled lesson, or a sporting fixture.

## 13.0 REQUESTS FOR ABSENCE FROM PARENT/CARER(S)

- Schools, not parents, authorise absence. Requests to the school for granting permission for leave of absence to a pupil during term time must be made in writing directly to the Head directly in advance. The Head/other nominated team member in the Head's absence is only able to authorise leave of absence where exceptional circumstances relate to the application. Authorised leave is unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday.
- We ask that parents make contact with the school when a child is going to be absent for ill health (mental or physical) reasons in order that the school can keep records updated and, importantly, so that the school can be kept informed of their progress to full health and anticipated return date. If necessary, the school may ask for medical evidence of any illness. We expect any absence for illness to be evidenced by a note from the parent/carer(s) as soon as possible.

- An absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without the permission of the Head /other nominated team member in the Head's absence, in advance.

## 14.0 MAINTAINING RECORDS AND REPORTING TO THE AUTHORITIES

The school's Attendance Register is kept electronically and is backed up in the form of an electronic copy at least once a month.

Where an entry in the admission or attendance register is amended, the register will retain the original entry and record the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name of the person who made it. Register entries will be preserved for six years from the date on which the entry was made.

## 15.0 LOCAL AUTHORITY ABSENCE NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

**The school will make all statutory notifications and returns to the relevant Local Authority within the required timescales. These include:**

- **sickness returns:** where a pupil is recorded using Code I and the school has reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will be **absent because of illness for 15 consecutive school days or more, or that the pupil's cumulative sickness absence during the current school year will reach or exceed 15 school days.** Only one sickness return will be submitted for each continuous period of illness within the school year;
- **admission register returns:** when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the admission register, and when the school receives or becomes aware of the prescribed changes to a pupil's or parent's details; and
- **attendance returns:** where a pupil of compulsory school age has been **continuously absent for 10 school days and the school has recorded one or more of the absence codes specified** in the statutory guidance.

Notifications and returns will contain the required information and will be submitted to the Local Authority in whose area the pupil normally resides, or to any other Local Authority specified by the applicable regulations or statutory guidance. The school will retain an appropriate record of each notification or return made.

At the beginning of each academic year, the Headteacher, DSL and Attendance Champion will confirm the reporting routes, forms, portals and contact details required by each relevant Local Authority. Local procedures support, but do not replace, the school's statutory reporting duties. Failure to identify the appropriate local authority process does not remove the school's responsibility to make the required notification.

The school will work together with the Local Authority to identify and agree any educational provision required to ensure continuity of learning for pupils who are unable to attend school because of health needs, in line with Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school statutory guidance.

## 16.0 CHILDREN ABSENT FROM EDUCATION AND MISSING FROM EDUCATION

**Children Missing in Education** are:

'Children who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing from education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.' (DfE Children Missing Education, September 2025)

Children 'missing' in education are therefore different to those who are 'absent' from education.

The school will follow DfE's Children missing education statutory guidance, including the requirement to work with the relevant local authority and make reasonable enquiries where a child's whereabouts or education are unclear.

**Children Absent from Education** are:

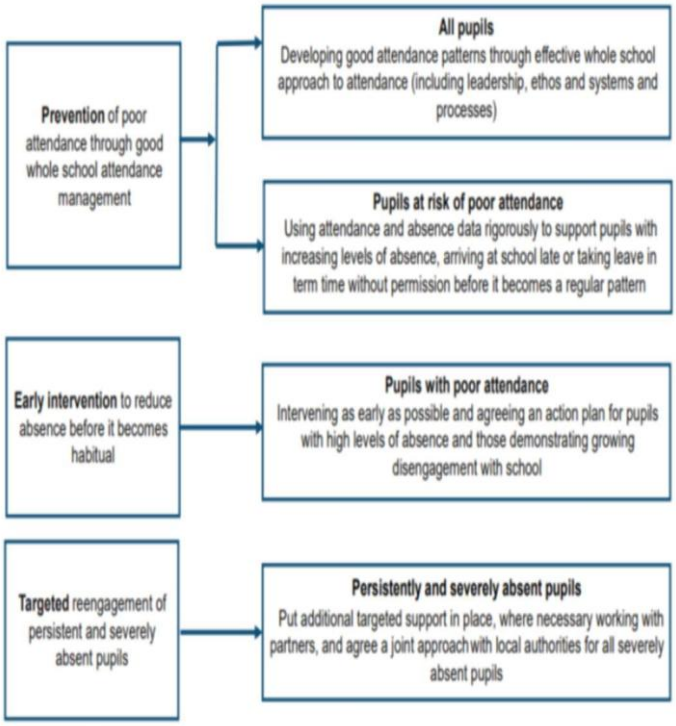
Children may be persistently absent from school or have prolonged absences for satisfactory reasons, such as for medical reasons, for example, the child is having operations/treatments. Where a pupil is unable to attend school for a prolonged period for an authorised reason, the school will consider how the pupil can remain engaged with education and connected to the school community. This may include work provided for completion at home, online learning through TUTE or, exceptionally, school-led remote lessons delivered through Microsoft Teams.

Remote education will be considered only as a last resort, after appropriate support **and** reasonable adjustments have been considered, and must form part of a wider, time-limited plan to support the pupil's reintegration and return to in-person education. It will not ordinarily constitute a permanent alternative to attendance at school.

A pupil receiving remote education because they are absent from school will continue to be recorded as absent using the statutory code that most accurately reflects the reason for the absence. Engagement with remote education will be monitored separately and will not be treated as attendance for registration purposes. Any arrangement will be regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parent/carer and will take account of the pupil's health, wellbeing, workload and educational needs.

As stated above, it is mandatory that children of a compulsory age attend school, but of most importance, frequent absences impact on a child's development across all domains, not purely cognitive.

## 17.0 EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF CHILD ABSENCE AND PROCEDURES




### Step 1- Prevention

The Attendance Champion, alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and all team members will work together to identify patterns/changes in all pupils' attendance at an early stage to prevent any further absence, including addressing unexplained, persistent, or prolonged absence (deemed as attendance below 90%). Schools must address all attendance concerns with both parents/carers and child as soon as challenges emerge.

School team members will listen to children and their parents/carers to understand any 'in school' /external barriers to the child's good attendance, working jointly with families to remove those barriers wherever possible. They will agree actions and interventions, such as referrals to services or organisations that can support. These actions will be regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families. Where interventions are failing, all parties will work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach. If the attendance does not improve, then the next step will be taken.

### Step 2- Early Intervention

Where absence intensifies, so will the support provided, which may require the school to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners. Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment. The DSL and/or Attendance Champion should seek advice from the safeguarding@ofgl.co.uk where needed at this stage.

**Step 3-Targeted Support**

Where engagement in support is proving challenging, the school will continue to hold formal conversations with the parents (and pupils where they are old enough to understand). This meeting is likely to be led by the school's Senior Attendance Champion, the DSL, and *may* include the school's point of contact in the local authority School Attendance Support Team.

**School Attendance Support Team (Local Authority)**

All local authorities are expected to have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in its area, including independent schools. There is no requirement for a specific service delivery model or name, but each local authority is expected to provide four core functions outlined below free of charge to all schools: communication and advice; targeted support meetings; multi-disciplinary support; and legal intervention. In cases where a pupil lives in one local authority area and attends our school in another, the overarching principle is that both the local authority in whose area the pupil attends school (the 'School LA') and the local authority in whose area the pupil lives (the 'Home LA') work together to support the pupil and family. Assessing and putting in place any early help or multi-agency family support plan in cases where local authority action is needed sits with the Home LA. Where schools are completing the single assessment or acting as the lead practitioner (but with local authority involvement) the school will need to work together with the Home LA.

These above meetings will clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future but will also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences. If a particular form of support is refused or does not work initially, schools and partners are expected to provide further opportunities to engage in that support, try something else or ultimately take legal action if support is not appropriate.

**Step 4 – Legal action by the local authority**

The local authority may, in accordance with the regulations, decide to:

- Put formal support in place in the form of an attendance contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a Notice to Improve and/or penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parent's/carers' behaviour.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
- Where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate, prosecute parents/carers. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent/carer is convicted to secure engagement with support.

**Reasonable enquiries to locate a suspected child missing education**

If a new pupil fails to attend at the beginning of first day of the agreed or notified admissions date, the school should undertake *reasonable enquiries* to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. Schools must monitor all pupils' attendance through their daily register.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the Admissions Register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child under regulation 9(1)(h) or (i) of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to try to find out where the pupil is. The type of enquiries may include the school/local authority checking with relatives, neighbours, landlords – private or social housing providers – and other local stakeholders who are involved.

**No home visits must or will be undertaken by the school unless agreed by the RSL and risk assessed.**

The school will make a written record that they have completed these procedures on their safeguarding systems under regulation 9(1)(h) or (i) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to try to find out where the pupil is. In conducting these enquiries, the school and the school local authority are also expected to liaise with the home local authority and if, following those enquiries, the pupil's name is deleted from the school's register, the home local authority should investigate whether the child is a Child Missing Education.

## 18.0 SAFEGUARDING - PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE

Attendance concerns should always be considered through a safeguarding lens. Changes in attendance patterns, repeated lateness, part-day absence, persistent absence, severe absence or sudden disengagement from school may indicate unmet need, emotional distress, family difficulties, neglect, exploitation, mental health concerns or other safeguarding risks. Attendance information should therefore be routinely considered alongside wider safeguarding information to support early identification and intervention.

The school recognises that repeated, prolonged, part-day or unexplained absence, and children missing education, may indicate a range of safeguarding concerns, including neglect, child criminal exploitation (CCE), child sexual exploitation (CSE), serious violence, mental health difficulties, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), unmet special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), family difficulties or other vulnerabilities. Such concerns will be reviewed promptly by the DSL or Deputy DSL and responded to in accordance with the school's *Safeguarding Policy*, including consideration of Early Help, Family Help, referral to Children's Social Care or other specialist support as appropriate.

Ensuring that attendance improvement is prioritised, and that strategies and action plans are implemented for pupils with persistent and severe absence, is crucial to safeguarding and improving pupils' overall welfare in both the short and long term. Attendance concerns will always be considered within the wider safeguarding context.

It is important that the school's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports the identification of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation and, in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming children missing education in the future. This includes when concerns are first emerging, but also where children are already known to Children's Social Care, have an allocated social worker, are subject to a Child in Need Plan or Child Protection Plan, are looked after, previously looked after, or otherwise assessed as vulnerable, where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or community.

Where there are safeguarding concerns about any child's absence, whether this is persistent, prolonged, repeated, part-day or unexplained absence, the school will always seek to speak with the child and their parents/carers to understand the barriers to attendance and any underlying welfare concerns. The school will also follow its *Safeguarding Policy*, which includes notifying local authority attendance services and referring to Children's Social Care where appropriate.

Where a child is absent for an extended period and there are safeguarding concerns, the school will seek regular welfare contact and maintain visibility of the child through agreed means, which may include online meetings (e.g. MS Teams), telephone calls, home visits and/or multi-agency arrangements, according to the level of risk and the child's circumstances. If parents/carers do not engage with reasonable requests for welfare contact, the school will consider seeking advice from, or making a referral to, Children's Social Care.

The school will work proactively and collaboratively with parents/carers, local authorities, health professionals, social care, Virtual School Heads and other relevant agencies where absence is a significant concern, in order to identify and address barriers to attendance and reduce safeguarding risks.

Where there are existing or potential safeguarding concerns relating to a child, and the parent/carer unexpectedly removes the child from school to electively home educate, a referral to Children's Social Care will be made.

If there is reason to suspect that a crime has been committed, whether this relates to a child's absence or otherwise, the school will inform the Police.

If there is reason to believe that a child who is absent from school is in immediate danger or at risk of significant harm, whether or not communication has been received from parents/carers, a referral will be made immediately to Children's Social Care and, where appropriate, the Police.

**For children on sponsored visas, please refer to the *Safeguarding Policy* and Appendix 1**

Pupils who have been persistently or severely absent from school may face greater barriers to regular attendance and are likely to require more intensive support from a range of services and partners. Where severe unauthorised absence persists despite appropriate support, intervention and reasonable adjustments, the school will consider whether the circumstances indicate neglect or another safeguarding concern and will work with

Children's Social Care and other agencies as appropriate. Where required, Children's Social Care will lead decision-making regarding the child's welfare and the support required by the child and family.

## 19.0 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove their child from school with a view to educating them at home, the school will coordinate a meeting with parents/carers to explore why they are considering this option. Schools will explore keeping the child in school whilst respecting parental choice.

Where a parent/carer notifies the school in writing that they are now home educating their child, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and notify the local authority of the leaver, including the local authority's Elective Home Education Team (informing the parents/carers that they have done this so that they can receive the necessary support). However, where parents/carers orally indicate that they intend to withdraw their child to be home educated, the school should consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

## 20.0 EARLY YEARS FUNDING AND ABSENCE

Where a child receives Local Authority-funded early education, the treatment of absence, continued eligibility for funding and any circumstances in which charges may become payable will be determined in accordance with the applicable Local Authority Provider Agreement and funding terms.

The school will monitor funded children's attendance and will discuss significant, repeated or prolonged absence with parents/carers. Where required, the school will notify or consult the relevant Local Authority before withdrawing a funded place, altering the funded arrangement or applying charges. Parents/carers will be informed in writing of any potential financial implications before charges are applied, subject to the terms of the applicable Provider Agreement and the school's contractual arrangements.

Where parents/carers are late to collect children from our nursery setting, penalty charges will be implemented at the rate of £10 per 30 minutes.

## Appendix 1 - Attendance of Sponsored International Students (Child Student and Student Visas)

Blenheim acts as a sponsor for international students who have Child Student and Student visas. The United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has a duty to ensure that all sponsors discharge their responsibility to act in accordance with the immigration rules. As a school, we are responsible for ensuring that these students are appropriately cared for and that any safeguarding concerns are addressed.

### Knowledge of the sponsored student

Prior to any children sponsored by Blenheim arriving at the school, it is important that the school's pastoral and safeguarding team, and other relevant team members (including the child's form tutor/class teacher, Head of Year, Head of Phase) have knowledge of the child's circumstances, including who has parental responsibility, the child's care arrangements, and contact details for the carer/Private Foster carer in the UK. The most senior member of the pastoral team, with support from the DSL, must have oversight of all international students sponsored by Blenheim.

Responsibility for each sponsored student starts from the moment the Blenheim International Recruitment Team assigns the *Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS)*, i.e. before the student leaves their home country and enrolls at the school. The Headteacher, school admissions team, most senior member of the pastoral team and DSL should be aware of the child's travel arrangements to the UK.

### Records of sponsored student information

At the very least, this should be the student's passport, birth certificate/family book and their eVisa. If the child is aged 4-11 years old, then they will be here with one of their parents under the Parent of a Child Student visa route. We should have the parent's passport and eVisa too.

Other appendices we hold, depending on circumstances, may include:

Appendix A: letter of consent from the parents/guardians for Blenheim to sponsor their child and copy of parent's passports.

Appendix B: letter of undertaking from intended carer (if the child isn't coming to the UK with one or both of their parents) and copy of carer's passport and proof of address.

Appendix C: letter of consent from parents/guardians to intended carer

Appendix D: close relative care arrangements (if the child is going to live with a grandparent, brother, sister, stepparent, uncle (brother or half-brother of the child's parent) or aunt (sister or half-sister of the child's parent) who is aged 18 years or over and has UK Settled Status.

Appendix K: travel confirmation form (detailing travel arrangements to the UK) and evidence of arrival in the UK (passport entry stamp, boarding pass or e-ticket.

Appendix P: genuine student English interview (conducted and completed by the Blenheim International team)

Appendix Q: student route finance declaration (confirming the family have sufficient funds to meet the UKVI requirement for sponsorship)

Appendix S: Tuberculosis certificate declaration

**Arrival to the UK**

If the child fails to arrive as expected, the school should report this as a matter of urgency to the Blenheim International Admissions Team (IAT) internationaladmissions@ofgl.co.uk who are responsible for updating UKVI if the child fails to enroll. Blenheim are responsible from the moment the CAS is raised. The school needs to complete the sponsored student enrolment checklist and upload it to the student's sponsor file on Teams.

**Arrival to start school**

If the student does not arrive when expected to start school, the school should notify the IRT immediately. If the student does not arrive within ten working days of the enrolment period, the IAT must report this to UKVI.
Once the child has arrived safely, the UKVI School Champion, in collaboration with the DSL, will aim to ensure that their needs are met, including pastoral need, and they will liaise with the child's parents and carers for the ongoing needs of the child.

**Absences from school or pastoral concerns**

With regards to safeguarding this potentially vulnerable group of students, any lack of engagement in study/social activities displayed by them, any absences, or failure to return to school after a holiday or break, should be escalated initially to safeguarding@ofgl.co.uk **on the day it occurs**. Therefore, schools must make notes of the child's planned travel dates and location/address of visit). The RST will escalate the concerns to the Blenheim International Admissions Team as needed (but no later than 5 working days after the event); the latter is obliged to report the child to the UKVI if the child has ten consecutive unauthorised absences.

A formal meeting with the child's parent/guardians/carers must be arranged if a sponsored child's attendance falls lower than **95%** and again if it falls below 90%. A record must be made of this meeting and saved in the child's folder in MS Teams, with agreed action points to improve the child's attendance. If a sponsored child's attendance falls below **80%**, Blenheim may be required to withdraw sponsorship of their visa and they will need to leave the UK. It is a requirement of UK Visas & Immigration (part of the Home Office), that schools demonstrate how they track attendance of this group of potentially vulnerable children. The school must therefore collate evidence.

**Changes in circumstances of the sponsored student**

Schools should be proactive in determining whether there has been any change in a sponsored international student's circumstances.

The school should liaise with the parent(s)/guardians of all sponsored international students every half term to check whether:

- the student and their parent/carer's address has changed; or
- the students' childcare arrangements have changed (e.g. moved from living with their parents to a private foster care arrangement).
- the student's travel plans during holiday periods

Changes in circumstances must be reported immediately. These can include:

- a change in where a student studies;
- a change in the student's course;
- a change in a student's registered address;
- a change in whom the student lives with (e.g. from parent to private foster care); or
- any other circumstance that suggests that they are breaking the conditions of their permission to stay in the UK.

## Appendix 2 - Timings of the School day

| Session | Time |
|---|---|
| **Registration** | 8.30-9.00am |
| **Period 1** | 9.00-9.45am |
| **Period 2** | 9.45-10.30am |
| **Break** | 10.30-10.45am |
| **Period 3** | EYFS/KS1 - 10.45-11.30am |
| **Period 4** | EYFS/KS1 - 11.30-12.00pm |
| **Lunch** | EYFS/KS1 - 12.00-12.50pm<br>KS2 – 12.30-1.20pm |
| **Registration** | EYFS/KS1 - 12.50-1.00pm<br>KS2 – 1.20-1.30pm |
| **Period 5** | EYFS/KS1 – 1.00-1.45pm<br>KS2 – 1.30-2.15pm |
| **Period 6** | EYFS/KS1 – 1.45-2.30pm<br>KS2 – 2.15-3.00pm |
| **Period 7** | EYFS/KS1 – 2.30-3.15pm<br>KS2 – 3.00-3.45pm |
| **Finish** | EYFS/KS1 – 3.30pm<br>KS2 – 3.45pm |

**Document Name:**
Attendance Policy

**Document Type:**
Policy

**Policy Owner:**
Director of Education Standards & Practice Uk

**Version Number:**
2627.1

**Last Review Date:**
September 2026

**Next Review Date:**
September 2027

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