



Faith, Family and Fascination

Attendance Policy

Boutcher C.E. Primary School

Reviewed by:	Eilidh Verhoeven
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Last reviewed during:	Autumn 2026
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“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”
John 13:34

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance](#) and [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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 School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- › [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- › The [Equality Act 2010](#)

It also refers to:

- › [School census guidance](#)
- › [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- › [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)
- › [Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit](#)

1.Statement Of Intent

- 1.1 Excellent attendance is integral to the safeguarding, well-being and academic achievement of our pupils. Boutcher CE Primary School strives to build good relationships between school and families to ensure pupils attend school and achieve 95% or higher attendance.

2. Aims And Objectives

- 2.1 At Boutcher CE Primary School we aim to:

- Show our commitment to meeting our obligations including those laid out in the DfE's statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promote good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 **The governing body is responsible for:**

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Ensuring the school works effectively to help remove barriers to attendance

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- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Evaluating the school's attendance management processes to ensure they are delivered effectively, meet pupil needs and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- The 'Attendance Governor(s)' to assist with supporting families whose child's attendance falls below 90%
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Ensuring dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- 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
- Working with the parents of pupils with SEND to develop specific support approaches for attendance
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an EHCP has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

3.3 The designated senior leader in charge of attendance is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for addressing absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies where needed including EWOs
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and address attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering/signposting targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the headteacher and the DSL/DDSLs

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3.4 Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance and punctuality for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis and submitting this information via Arbor

3.5 School office staff are responsible for:

- Taking calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the designated senior leader in charge of attendance in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.6 Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every session on time
- Contact the school to report their child's absence before or on the day of the absence, 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
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting office@boutcher.southwark.sch.uk

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 School will keep an electronic register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day (9.10am) and once during the second session (1:15pm for EYFS/KS1 and 1.30pm for KS2).

4.2 We will mark the register using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes. We will also note whether the absence is authorised or not.

4.3 The register is regarded as closed 30 minutes after registration (9.40 for the first session. 1.45pm for EYFS/KS1 second session and 2pm for KS2 second session).

5. Absence

5.1 Parents must notify the school of the reason for an absence on the first day of an absence by 9.15am. They can notify the school by emailing: office@boutcher.southwark.sch.uk or ringing the school office on 02072372149. Parents must notify the school each subsequent day of absence and advise when the pupil is expected to return.

5.2 We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Where there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, school will ask for medical evidence such as a doctor's note. If the school is unsatisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

5.3 For absence due to a medical appointment, we will ask for an appointment card as evidence. Please note, where possible, appointments should be scheduled outside of the school day.

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6. Unexplained absence

6.1 Where any pupil is absent without explanation, the school will:

- Contact the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason; school expects a response within the first session of the school day the pupil is absent.
- Contact parents every subsequent day of absence where no explanation has been given to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- School may contact the pupil's emergency contacts when a reason has not been given before or on the first session of pupil absence
- School may make a pastoral visit
- Where relevant, contact MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub)
- Where relevant, make a referral to FEH (Family Early Help)

7. Reporting to parents

7.1 School will report their child's attendance figures to parents each term

7.2 School will report absence figures if there is cause for concern. A cause of concern will be raised if a pupil's attendance figure is below 90%

8. Authorised and unauthorised absence

8.1 An absence will be recorded as authorised for:

- Pupil illness (see 5.2 for more details)
- Religious observance where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance
- Attending an offsite approved educational activity such as a trip arranged by school
- Pupil attending an interview or pupil sitting an educational exam
- Pupils on a part-time timetable directed by school where parents and LA have been notified
- Attending provision arranged by the LA
- Suspension or exclusion
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency or because the school premises are closed.

8.2 A leave of absence can be granted by the headteacher at the headteacher's discretion due to exceptional circumstances. We define exceptional circumstances as an event that is unlikely to be repeated within the same academic year or for a medical reason occurring outside the UK. Evidence will be required if a leave of absence is requested on medical grounds. It is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted if the pupil's attendance is below 95%. If the reason is not medical, parents must agree that the child will continue to access Google classroom for phonics, Numbots or TTRS and continue to read daily. They must also complete any missed work on their return. Permission for any reason other than medical, will NOT be given to any Y6 child missing school in the Spring term.

9. Reducing persistent absence

9.1 If a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, they are considered a 'persistent absentee'.

9.2 If a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, they are considered a cause for concern and the following measures will be considered:

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- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Parents will be invited for a meeting with school staff to discuss the cause for concern regarding absence and implement next steps to target improving attendance
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the LA
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils
- Parents will be invited for a meeting with the Attendance Governor
- An Attendance and Inclusion Consultation with the Education Inclusion Team.
- Issue a Notice to Improve – see 12.2
- Implement sanctions – see Appendix A

10. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

10.1 Support for pupils to help improve attendance may include:

- Support from LA such as social workers or SEND team
- Support from external agencies such as Family Early Help
- School liaising with medical personnel or institutions
- School based initiatives such as Mental Health First Aider, the Thrive Programme or small group interventions

11. Monitoring attendance

11.1 The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

11.2 Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

11.3 The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely. Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

11.4 The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

11.5 Use attendance data to identify patterns and causes for concern and implement interventions accordingly. Measure impact of the interventions used.

12. SPECIAL FEATURES

12.1 Promoting excellent attendance

Strategies for promoting excellent attendance include:

- Highlighting attendance percentages on termly targets
- Announcing class attendance in the Celebration Thursday assembly

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- Reward for highest class attendance of the term
- Attendance information given weekly in the newsletter
- Teachers support & recognition for return of absent children – ‘Check-ins’

12.2 A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. An authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate, but they do not expect a notice to improve would have any impact on a parent’s behaviour (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

Links to other policies:

Behaviour policy, SEND policy, Inclusion policy, Anti-bullying policy, Safeguarding policy

APPENDIX A

Penalty Notice Protocol

1. Legal Basis

1.1 Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the Education Act 1996. They can only be issued in relation to pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, pupil referral units, academy schools, alternative provision (AP) academies, and certain off- site places as set out in s.444A(1)(b).

1.2 A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 day of a fixed period or permanent exclusion (under section 105 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006).

1.3 The definition of a parent in the Education legislation can be wider to include any person who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care for the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Therefore, applies to:

- birth parents, whether they are married or are named on the birth certificate
- any person who has parental responsibility for a pupil or pupil
- any person who has day-to-day care of a pupil or pupil i.e. lives with and looks after the pupil

1.4 The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (and subsequent amendment 2024) sets out how penalty notices for school absence must be used.

1.5 A penalty notice can only be issued by an authorised officer: that is, a headteacher or a deputy or assistant head authorised by them, an authorised local authority officer or a police constable. Southwark Local Authority authorised officers are the Family Early Help Education Inclusion Team or a delegated senior officer (contact earlyhelp@southwark.gov.uk).

1.6 The national framework for penalty notices is published in statutory guidance ‘Working together to improve school attendance’. It provides further national guidance on the operation of penalty notice schemes for school absence in England.

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2. When may a penalty notice for absence be appropriate?

2.1 When a school becomes aware that the national threshold has been met, they must consider whether a penalty notice can and should be issued or not. The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday),
- code N (the circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established),
- code O (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies), and
- code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

2.2 If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period.

2.3 If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. In Southwark, where a child's attendance has met the national threshold for a third time within 3 years and the parent/s have already been issued with 2 penalty notices within that period, consideration will be given to prosecution under S.443 or s.444 Education Act 1996 or if an Education Supervision Order is appropriate.

2.4 For the purpose of the escalation process, previous penalty notices include those not paid (including where prosecution was taken forward if the parent pleaded or was found guilty) but not those which were withdrawn.

2.5 The national framework does not prevent a penalty notice from being used in other cases where an offence has been committed but before doing so, authorised officers are expected to make the same considerations as set out above and below. This might apply for example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term-time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events. In Southwark, this discretion will be used in exceptional circumstances only, and the issuing of penalty notices in these circumstances can only be authorised by a senior officer (contact earlyhelp@southwark.gov.uk).

3. Key considerations prior to the issue of a Penalty Notice for school absence

3.1 The following considerations will be made before issuing (or requesting that another authorised officer issues) a penalty notice to ensure consistency of approach:

3.2 In cases where support is not appropriate (for example, for holidays in term time), consider on a case-by-case basis:

- Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
- (For local authorities only) Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given the local authority would be accepting responsibility for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment?

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3.3 In cases where support is appropriate, consider on a case-by-case basis:

Has sufficient support already been provided?

In Southwark, sufficient support will usually include:

Schools have followed [Southwark's 3 Stage Approach](#) to poor attendance, which sets out the following expectations:

- The parent been regularly contacted by the school to establish the reasons for absence or is there proven parental non-engagement. Communication/s in writing, notifying parent/s of the concerns held in relation to their child's absence levels.
- Stage 1 has been completed and opportunities for parent/s to meet with school staff to share/discuss the barrier/s to regular attendance and identify support strategies which aim to achieve an improvement in attendance. Meetings such as The Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings have been held to identify any unmet needs and decide if support from another service is needed. When it is clear that improved school attendance of a child cannot be achieved by agreement with the parents this is an opportunity to consider a Notice to Improve
- Agree "attendance contracts" at the TAF making clear the role of each relevant party in improving the child's attendance levels.
- Referrals to wider support services such as Family Early Help where criteria are met.
- Where safeguarding concerns are identified for a pupil/family, liaison between relevant agencies including social care, police, health, other educational establishments, etc.
- An Attendance and Inclusion Consultation has taken place (Stage 2 of the 3 Stage Approach) with the Education Inclusion Team.

3.3 Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate? In Southwark a penalty notice should be considered if the parent is judged capable of securing better attendance but is not willing to accept that responsibility and it is considered likely to improve the pupil's attendance. This judgment is based on the parental response to warnings issued by the LA and the school about their child's poor attendance and their engagement with the school and/or attempts to improve attendance.

3.4 Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010?

3.5 (For local authorities only) Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given the local authority would be responsible for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment? In Southwark the decision to prosecute will be taken in line with the Code for Crown Prosecutors. These general principles are:

- Each case is unique and must be considered on its own.
- The right person is prosecuted for the right offence which underlines the importance of having up to date information on school records of all those with parental responsibility as well as day-to-day care and supervision. It is essential that schools regularly up-date their contact details.
- There is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and consideration must be given to what the defence case may be and how that is likely to affect the prosecution case.
- Is the evidence reliable? It is therefore essential that schools ensure that they are satisfied with the accuracy of the register and registration codes used.
- There are also Public Interest factors against prosecution which must be considered: was the offence committed because of a genuine mistake or misunderstanding.

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- A prosecution is likely to have a detrimental effect on the victim's physical or mental health.
- The defendant is suffering from mental or physical ill-health.
- It is considered that there is insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction. realistic prospect of conviction

3.6 If the answer to the above questions is 'yes', then a penalty notice (or a notice to improve in cases where support is appropriate) will usually be issued.

4. Procedure for issuing penalty notices

4.1 Under the [new national rules introduced by the Department of Education](#), all schools must consider a penalty notice when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons in any rolling 10-week period. This is in line with national guidance and Southwark's Code of Conduct. Judgements should be made on the evidence in each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency.

4.2 From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will increase to:

- £80 if paid within 21 days
- £160 if paid within 28 days

This rate is in line with inflation and is the first increase since 2012.

4.3 First offence:

Penalty notices will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

4.4 Second offence (within 3 years):

The second time a penalty notice is issued for term time Leave or Irregular Attendance: The amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

4.5 Third offence:

Where two penalty notices have been issued within a rolling three-year period, and a third offence is committed for term time leave or irregular attendance: A penalty notice must not be issued. The case will be considered for legal action and expedited to the Magistrates' Court for prosecution where appropriate. Fines can be up to £2,500 per parent, per child.

4.6 Offences before August 2024:

Please note that any offences prior to the changes in August 2024 will be processed under the previous legislation. For example, term time leave for 5 or more days in the academic year prior to August 2024 may incur a penalty notice of £60 per parent if paid within 21 days and rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days.