

# BRANSTY PRIMARY SCHOOL



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### 2024-2025

| Approved by <sup>1</sup>            |                                 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Name:                               | Joanne Fearon/Stephen Jackson   |
| Position:                           | Head teacher/Chair of Governors |
| Signed:                             | S.Jackson                       |
| Date:                               | October 2024                    |
| Proposed review date <sup>2</sup> : | October 2025                    |

## Attendance Policy

### Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Aims .....   |    |
| 2. Legislation and guidance .....   | 3  |
| 3. Roles and responsibilities .....   | 4  |
| 3.1 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance .....                     | 4  |
| 3.2 The attendance officer .....  | 4  |
| 3.3 Class Teachers .....  | 4  |
| 3.4 School Admin staff .....  | 5  |
| 3.5 Parents.....  | 5  |
| 3.6 Pupils .....  | 5  |
| 3.7 Attendance Staff Team .....   | 6  |
| 4. Recording attendance .....   | 7  |
| 4.1 Attendance register.....  | 7  |
| 4.2 Unplanned absence .....   | 8  |
| 4.3 Planned absence .....   | 8  |
| 4.4 Lateness and punctuality .....  | 8  |
| 4.5 Following up unexplained absence .....  | 9  |
| 4.6 Reporting to parents .....  | 9  |
| 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence .....  | 10 |
| 5.1 Approval for term-time absence .....  | 10 |
| 5.2 Enforcements.....   | 11 |
| 6. Strategies for promoting attendance .....  | 12 |
| 7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school.....                       | 12 |
| 7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance .....                         | 12 |
| 7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND .....                  | 12 |
| 7.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence ..... | 13 |
| 8. Attendance monitoring .....  | 13 |
| 8.1 Reducing persistent and severe absence .....                                      | 13 |
| 9. Monitoring arrangements .....  | 14 |
| 10. Links with other policies .....   | 14 |

### Appendices:

1. Additional links
2. A record of 'exceptional circumstances' (not an exhaustive list)

## 1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024*, and *Cumberland Council's School Attendance Strategy* through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil 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 make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024* and school attendance *Parental Responsibility Measures 2023*. 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 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 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**

Further information can be found on Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook page 4, and the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024*

#### **3.1 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'Attendance Leads') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- 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 tackling absence and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Consulting with pupils, parents/carers, and external agencies, where needed.
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Joanne Fearon and can be contacted via email – [head@bransty.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:head@bransty.cumbria.sch.uk)

#### **3.2 The attendance officers**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data.
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with colleagues to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officers are Amy Leigh Storey and Kara Walker and can be contacted via the emails [astorey@bransty.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:astorey@bransty.cumbria.sch.uk) and [admin@bransty.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:admin@bransty.cumbria.sch.uk)

### **3.3 Class Teachers**

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. This must be completed immediately and within the first 5 minutes of registration

### **3.4 School Admin staff**

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Officers where appropriate, to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Ensure all parents addresses/contact details are up to date
- Consider referral to support services and or an Early help assessment

### **3.5 Parents**

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

1. All natural parents, whether they are married or not
2. All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
3. Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.45am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child and ensure they are up to date
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance action plans that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the Attendance Officers

### **3.6 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time
- Attend every timetabled session, on time

### **3.7 Attendance Staff Team**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Attendance Leads                             | <b>Amy Leigh Storey<br/>Kara Walker<br/>Joanne Fearon<br/>Laura Bell</b> |
| Designated Safeguarding Lead                 | <b>Joanne Fearon</b>   |
| Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead<br>SENCO | <b>Laura Bell</b>  |
| Mental Health and Pastoral Lead              | <b>Amy Leigh Storey</b>  |
| Attendance Administrator                     | <b>Kara Walker</b>   |

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

We will keep an electronic 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, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

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

See DfE *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* 2024 for the full list of attendance codes or refer to pages 27-31 on Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where 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 6 years after the date on which the entry was made. The school day starts at 8.45am and ends at 3.15pm. Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.45pm (EYs and KS1) or 1pm (KS2) and will be kept open until 1.15pm.

## **4.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.45am or as soon as possible, by calling the school office staff, who can be contacted via (01946) 63590 or recording it on the Parent App.

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 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a medical prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

GP fit for work notes for children are not acceptable.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

## **4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents 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.

For any planned absences, parents must complete an absence request form. These can be obtained from the school office or downloaded from the school website. This should be completed and submitted at least 2 weeks before the absence is due to take place.

## **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

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

Persistent lateness will trigger further intervention, including letters home and meetings with teachers/attendance officer.

Those who are late after registration closes and therefore absent will follow the same path as any other unauthorised absence and contributes to the 10-sessions of absence over 10 weeks national threshold.



#### **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 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 complete a home visit and contact any outside agencies who may be involved with the family
- 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(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the Early Help offer
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer, or social worker
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with the school will refer to the Local Authority

#### **4.6 Reporting to parents**

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels at least once a term. This will be through messages, emails and termly data reports.

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

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

The Head Teacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024*

These circumstances are:

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

A leave of absence is granted at the Head Teacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as unexpected or unavoidable events. An example of these can be found in Appendix 2. This is not an exhaustive list and individual circumstances will be taken into consideration.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

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

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

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, **at least 4 weeks before the absence**, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or central office. The Head Teacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health 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 parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to

confirm whether the day is set apart

- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Romani people, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)
- Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):
- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

**For further information on specific codes refer to pages 26-31 of Cumberland Councils Attendance Handbook.**

## **5.2 Enforcement**

Our school will make use of the full range of potential enforcements. Refer to page 18-25 of Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook. *\*\*Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.*

## **6. Strategies for promoting attendance**

Good attendance and improved attendance are rewarded at our school. We do this by:

- Celebrating year group attendance every week
- Displaying weekly attendance updates on the school newsletter and website
- Celebrating good attendance in assembly once a month
- Attendance contributes to rewards and activities at the end of every academic year. This must be at least 95% for students to be eligible (considerations are made for exceptional circumstances)
- The 100% Attendance competition runs throughout the academic year. Pupils who have 100% attendance in a week will receive a gift voucher in the final year assembly

The school will work collaboratively with the Access and Inclusion Team at Cumberland Council to help to support pupils and parents in achieving good attendance.

## **7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school**

### **7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance**

We work particularly closely with pupils and parents where there are more complex barriers to attendance. If a child is struggling or refusing to attend school, parents should inform us immediately.

To support more complex barriers to attendance we:

- Will invite the parent and pupil into school for a meeting
- If the pupil cannot/will not attend a meeting at school, we will visit the family home
- Depending on the barriers identified, the child's teacher will be informed and be part of any reintegration plans
- Consider temporary transition timetables. Depending on need, the aim of these is always for students to be back in school full time as quickly as possible, however we recognise that this can support a phased return into school
- Arrange for temporary pick-ups in the morning by one of our attendance team

### **7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND**

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

Where there is a prolonged physical or mental illness, the Access and Inclusion Team at the Local Authority will be requested to support with education.

### 7.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

To support a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence attendance we:

- Will invite the parent and pupil into school for a meeting or attend the family home
- Consider temporary transition timetables. Depending on need, the aim of these is always for students to be back in school full time as quickly as possible, however we recognise that a pupil may need a phased return into school. This will be in communication with SLT and Pastoral team members
- Arrange for temporary pick-ups in the morning by one of our attendance team

## 8. Attendance monitoring

The school analyses attendance data at least once a week. This includes punctuality. The attendance team meet weekly to discuss attendance and consider next steps for those pupils where attendance is decreasing.

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

Refer to page 8 in Cumberland Council Attendance handbook.

### 8.1 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. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with *DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education*
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
  - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
  - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
  - Explain the help that is available
  - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
  - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Communicate with parents via Dojo, email, phone call or letters to inform them of attendance updates
- Visit the family home to communicate and meet with parents
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance,

- in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement enforcements, where necessary

## **9. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by DSL/Head Teacher, Attendance Leads and Deputy Head Teacher.

At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## **10. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

## Appendix 1

### Additional Links

[Supporting attendance | EEF](#)

<https://thehub.naht.org.uk/management/guidance-on-authorised-term-time-pupil-absence/>

## **Appendix 2**

**List of circumstances which may be considered as 'exceptional'. Please note this is not an exhaustive list and individual cases will be considered appropriately**

### **Whitehaven Cluster – Attendance Cluster Agreement**

#### **Guidance on authorised term-time pupil absence**

The Education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) Regulations 2013 [aka, the Regulations] which came into force on 1 September 2013, made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' prevail.

The regulations also state that head teachers should determine the number of school days a pupil can be away from school if they grant a leave request because of 'exceptional circumstances'.

Whitehaven Cluster Primary Headteachers have worked together to agree some guiding principles for headteachers to consider when families request absence during term-time.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'.

#### **Guiding principles**

1. Term times are for education. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Head teachers will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time apart from in 'exceptional circumstances'.
2. The decision to authorise a pupil's absence is wholly at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment and merits of each request.
3. If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term time, then it would not be normal to authorise absence for such an event – holidays are, therefore, not considered 'exceptional circumstances'.
4. Absences to visit seriously-ill relatives or for bereavement of a close family member are usually considered to amount to 'exceptional circumstances', but for the funeral service and minimal travelling time only, not for extended leave.
5. Absences for important religious observances are often considered, but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not for extended leave. This is intended for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events
6. Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
7. Whilst as a school we must make reasonable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities in school time. Regarding attendance, we work closely with our colleagues from our local special schools. In line with their guidance, we would not consider requests that are based on holidays during quieter times.
8. Families may need time together to recover from a trauma or crisis.
9. It is acceptable to take a pupil's record of attendance into account when making absence-related decisions
10. It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether an absence is authorised.
11. Leave may only be granted where proper procedures have been followed and the permission given.
12. Tickets and/or other travel arrangements should not be booked prior to discussion with and agreement of the school.
13. Parents should not confuse telling the school with having permission.
14. Whether alternative care arrangements have been considered by the parent to limit the time away from school.
15. The impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family, for example, family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN.
16. The potential impact that the absence will have on the child.



### Appendix 3 Letters

The table below outlines a suggested escalation process to follow. It is expected that we continue to exercise good practice and offer support to proactively enable children and young people to achieve positive attendance at each stage.

| Absence Type             | St<br>a<br>g<br>e<br>1 | St<br>a<br>g<br>e<br>2 | St<br>a<br>g<br>e<br>3 | St<br>a<br>g<br>e<br>4 | St<br>a<br>g<br>e<br>5 | St<br>a<br>g<br>e<br>6 | St<br>a<br>g<br>e<br>7 | St<br>a<br>g<br>e<br>8 | St<br>a<br>g<br>e<br>9 |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Unexplained              | 1                      |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |
| Lateness                 | 6                      | 7                      | 2                      | 4                      | 5                      | 8                      | 9                      | 1<br>0                 | 1<br>1                 |
| Medical/<br>Illness      | 3                      | 2                      | 4                      | 5                      | 8                      | 9                      | 1<br>0                 | 1<br>1                 |                        |
| Unauthorise<br>d Absence | 2                      | 4                      | 5                      | 8                      | 9                      | 1<br>0                 | 1<br>1                 |                        |                        |