

THE FLAGSHIP SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY



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Approved by:	
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Summary of Changes

Date	Updates	Page No.

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Introduction and background

The Flagship school recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for students to get the most of their school experience, including the attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

The law entitles every child of compulsory age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

The policy seeks to ensure that all stakeholders in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to

outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absence are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is a rule of this school that students must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the *Headteacher*, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Promoting Regular Attendance

At the Flagship school, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The name and contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion (the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school) is:

Name: Ruth Angel

Email address or contact details: rangel61@beckmeadtrust.org

Tel: 01424 311 Ext: 2281

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Promote the benefits of high attendance
- Attendance registers are completed twice a day and an effective day to day processes is in place to follow-up absence as required by law
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target of 90% for attendance
- Attendance support plans are completed with parent/carers and reviewed regularly

Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any student's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information

about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes (this list is not exhaustive):

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, is counted as an absence for the session
- shopping trips
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends
- day trips
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A non-attending student is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any student's education and we

need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All students who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A student who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent**'. Students within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

Absence Procedures

The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is:

Name: Teresa Hedgeland

Email address: thedgeland@beckmeadtrust.org

Tel: 01424 311023

We carefully monitor and review all students' absence and the reasons that are given.

If a child is absent from school, the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.00 am, when *our register closes*
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call. Alternatively, parents can send an email to flagshipoffice@beckmeadtrust.org or visit the school in person and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, the school may still phone you to discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised.
- Parents should also contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.00 am
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and that you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child has had multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons.

When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS and East Sussex County Council Guidance on School Absence and Childhood Illness.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us.
- If we are unable to contact parent/carer by telephone, we will telephone other emergency contact numbers, send letters home and, in the interests of safeguarding, may arrange to make a home visit.
- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be deemed as “missing from education.”

If absence continues, we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 90% causing concern and/or where punctuality is a concern
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with our Senior Attendance Champion, Ruth Angel.
- Create a personalised action/support plan, such as an attendance contract, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all students at Flagship School are:

Gates open: 8.40am

Registration starts: 8.45am

Registration closes: 9.30am

End of the school day: 2.30pm

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at **8.45am** when children can begin to come into school
- Registers are taken at **8.45am**
- Children arriving after **9.30am** are required to come into school via the school office and provide a reason for their lateness, which is recorded
- At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark, and it means that they will have an unauthorised absence
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns
- A member of school staff will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school
- Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with Ruth Angel, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Understanding barriers to attendance

While any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too

unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to come to school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, Early Help Key Worker team, a Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a meeting to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these students, however we will work with families and students to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

See Appendix 1 Parent's Guide to Attendance

See Appendix 2 for summary tables of school attendance.

School staff member students and parents should contact for more detailed support on attendance:

Name: Ruth Angel

Email address: rangel61@beckmeadtrust.org

Tel: 01424 311023 Extn: 2281

Local Authority Attendance Support Team

Local Authority Attendance Support Team (AST) work strategically by offering support, advice and guidance to schools, to reduce persistent absence and

improve overall attendance.

Parents are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice (see Annex B for the East Sussex Code of Conduct) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

School Attendance and the Law

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty

Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

East Sussex Code of Conduct can be found [here](#).

There is no entitlement under law for students to take time off during the term to go on holiday, or to be absent for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity during school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.”

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are “exceptional circumstances,” and they do not have discretion to authorise up to 10 days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child’s overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request, and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Penalty notices will likely be requested, in line with the National Framework and the East Sussex Code of Conduct, for each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

At the Flagship School, exceptional circumstances will be interpreted as:

Being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the

Headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The Headteacher/school may discuss the leave-of-absence request with other educational settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are, however, advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Absence data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual students or groups of students when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit student attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis, Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. Students who are persistently and severely absent are tracked and monitored closely. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Appendix 1

Understanding Our Attendance Stages – Parent/Carer Guide

90% attendance sounds good — but it means missing 21 days of school

- That's over 6 full weeks
- And 126 lessons missed across the year

Learning gaps are cumulative, not isolated

“90% attendance means your child is missing more than one full day of learning every fortnight.”

We understand many pupils at The Flagship School have additional needs or challenges. Our approach is supportive, warm and collaborative.

Stage 1 – Early Support

What this means: Your child's attendance is good, but we may notice slight changes.

What school will do:

- Check in with your child
- Speak to you if a pattern appears
- Help with simple barriers
- Celebrate good and improving attendance

What we ask from you:

- Keep in regular contact
- Let us know if worries or difficulties arise

Stage 2 – Targeted Support

What this means: Attendance is slipping and we want to understand why.

What school will do:

- Meet with you and your child
- Create a shared Attendance Support Plan
- Support daily routines and anxieties
- Review progress every few weeks

What we ask from you:

- Work with us on the plan
- Share what's difficult
- Try agreed strategies

Stage 3 – Intensive Support

What this means: Your child is facing significant challenges with attendance.

What school will do:

- Work closely with the Local Authority Attendance Team
- Arrange whole-family support where needed
- Help to access health or mental health support
- Create a gradual return-to-school plan

What we ask from you:

- Engage with support services
- Communicate daily if your child cannot attend
- Support the reintegration steps

Appendix B

Attendance %	Days Missed (per year)	Lessons Missed (6 per day)
100%	0 days	0 lessons
95%	10.5 days	63 lessons
90%	21 days	126 lessons
85%	31.5 days	189 lessons
80%	42 days	252 lessons
75%	52.5 days	315 lessons
70%	63 days	378 lessons
65%	73.5 days	441 lessons
60%	84 days	504 lessons

55%	94.5 days	567 lessons
50%	105 days	630 lessons