Attendance Policy

Low Ash Primary School

Approved by:	The Governing Body	Date: 12.10.22
Last reviewed on:	20.10.21	
Next review due by:	Autumn Term 2023	

Contents:

Statement of Intent

Low Ash Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance, and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all
- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils and parents
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupil
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and pupils
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support

The school's Attendance Officer is **Tom Nowakowski**, and can be contacted via **attendance@lowash.bradford.sch.uk** Staff, parents and pupils will be expected to contact the Attendance Officer for queries or concerns about attendance as well as for any requests for extra support in specific cases.

The senior leader with the responsibility for attendance (Attendance Lead) is **Janina Grimshaw.**

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:
- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Attendance Officer Home Visit Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Board has overall responsibility for:
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Co-Headteachers are responsible for:

- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school

- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance
- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the Attendance Lead role
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence

Staff are responsible for:
- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently
- Modelling good attendance behaviour
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement
- Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers

Parents are responsible for:
- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number
- Updating the school if their details change
- The attendance of their children at school
- Promoting good attendance with their children

Pupils are responsible for:
- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school

Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Authorised absence:
- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

Unauthorised absence:
- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed

Persistent absence (PA):
- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

Severe absence (SA):
- Missing 50 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

Attendance expectations

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.
Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

The school day starts at **8:45am**, and pupils will be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at this time; therefore, pupils will be expected to be on the school site by **8:55am at the latest**.

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

- The morning register will close at **9:25am**. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time
- The afternoon register will close at **1:10pm**. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present

Pupils will be encouraged to communicate any concerns related to attendance and absence as soon as possible to the relevant member of staff.

Absence procedures

Parents will be required to contact the school office via telephone before **9:00am** on the first day of their child's absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g. one school day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by **the close of the morning register** to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent by **telephone call** as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

If a pupil's attendance drops below **96 percent**, the **Staged Intervention Process** begins (see Appendix).

Attendance register

The school uses **<u>SIMS</u>** to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register **<u>at the start of each school day</u>** and **<u>at the start of the afternoon session</u>**.

This register will record whether pupils are:
- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved educational visit
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:
- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for **<u>three years</u>**.

Authorising parental absence requests

Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the co-headteachers – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the co-headteachers, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil's education into account. The co-headteachers' decision is not subject to appeal; however, the school will be sympathetic to requests for absence by parents, and will not deny any request without good reason.

Leave of absence

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents to contact the headteacher **in writing** at least **two weeks** prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. The school will not grant leaves of absence for the purposes of family holidays unless the circumstances are exceptional.

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

Illness and healthcare appointments

Parents will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

Religious observance

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least **two weeks** in advance. The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion. The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least **two weeks** in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

SEND-related / Health-related absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. All pupils will be supported with their mental health in accordance with the school's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through the Common Assessment Framework
- Using an internal or external specialist
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out
- Temporary late starts or early finishes
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs

Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Emotionally-Based School Avoidance is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. A distinction is made between those that are absent from school due to truanting and those that are absent from school due to the specific emotional distress that they experience around attending school (Thambirajah, Grandison & De-Hayes, 2008).

There is no single cause for EBSA and there are likely to be various contributing factors for why a child may be finding it difficult to attend school. It is often underpinned by a number of complex and interlinked factors, including the child, the family and the school environment.

It is very important to be proactive with EBSA. The longer the problems remain unaddressed the poorer the outcome, as the difficulties and behaviours become entrenched. Where significant risks of EBSA are identified, it is really important to gather further information from the child, parents/carers and school staff and put into place strategies to support the child as soon as possible. School will follow an Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle placing the child at the heart of the planning and interventions. Our Senior Lead for Attendance and Inclusion Leader has completed training in EBSA and will oversee this cycle, liaising with parents and any other professionals involved in supporting the child.

Attendance intervention

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the attendance officer, supported by the SLT, will:
- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
    - Following the Staged Intervention Process to contact parents/ carers
    - Using fixed penalty notices

The school will use attendance data, in line with the 'Monitoring and analysing absence' section of this policy, to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

The school will acknowledge outstanding attendance and punctuality in the following ways:
- Weekly recognition in assembly for the class in each key stage with the highest attendance, awarding SAM Bear, the Attendance Cup and a token for the class to choose a book from the vending machine
- Non-uniform day per half term for overall highest attending class in each key stage

Working with parents to improve attendance

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The school will ensure that there is a minimum of **two** sets of emergency contact details for each pupil to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the attendance officer will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, e.g. bullying, the attendance officer will work with the headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g. the DSL and SENCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the attendance officer will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

Persistent Absence

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:
- Children in need
- LAC
- Young carers
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend school. These include:
- Offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps
- Meeting with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support

- Leading **weekly** check-ins to review progress and the impact of support
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups

The school will focus particularly on pupils who have rates of absence over 10 percent, and will work with the LA and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these pupils are facing.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care. The school will also bear in mind that the continuation of severe PA following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Legal intervention

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect after **a period of 12 weeks**, the attendance officer will follow **the Staged Intervention Process**, culminating in the issue of a fixed penalty notice in line with the LA's code of conduct.
Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

Analysing absence

The Attendance Lead will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence, for:

- The school cohort as a whole
- Individual year groups
- Individual pupils
- Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds
- Other groups of pupils, e.g. pupils with SEND, LAC and pupils eligible for FSM
- Pupils at risk of PA

The Attendance Lead will conduct a thorough analysis of the above data in line with the Staged Intervention Process to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

- Patterns in uses of certain codes
- Particular days of poor attendance
- Historic trends of attendance and absence
- Barriers to attendance

The Attendance Administration Officer will provide regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures. The Attendance Lead will also be responsible for monitoring how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future.

The governing board will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data. The school will also benchmark its attendance data against local-, regional- and national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement, and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools.

Training of staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training. The governing body will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Training will cover at least the following:

- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost invariably a result of wider circumstances
- The legal requirements on schools, e.g. the keeping of registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance
- The school's procedures for multi-agency working to provide intensive support for pupils who need it

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

Attendance Monitoring Procedures

Low Ash Primary School has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

1. A spreadsheet is sent to the SLT and Attendance Officer detailing **weekly** and **annual** attendance to date.
2. Attendance is discussed by classroom teachers in each week's staff meeting Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are passed immediately to the SLT.
3. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided; these N codes are reported to the SLT and Attendance Officer daily and followed up until contact with parents/ carers has been made.
4. When attendance drops below 96%, the **Staged Intervention Process** begins.

Appendix

Staged Intervention Process:

Below 96%, Ping message
Ping message sent to parent when child drops below 96% – also sent out at the start of each half term

Below 95% - Stage 1
Letter 1
Phone call by Attendance Officer + Letter 1 sent

If no improvement in 2 weeks, Letter 2
Phone call by FLT + Letter 2 sent (if absence due to illness/ medical, Letter MED sent)

If no improvement in a further 2 weeks (or no medical evidence received), Letter 3 and Attendance Meeting
Meeting to be held by SLT member with class teacher

Lateness
After 5 sessions of 'L', Letter L sent
If no improvement, meeting to be held with parents by FLT member with class teacher

Below 90% - Stage 2
Phone call by Attendance Lead + Warning Letter 1 + announced home visit if below 60%, and action plan completed

If no improvement in 3 weeks, Attendance Panel Meeting to draw up Parenting Contract
Meeting to be held by Co-Headteacher and Attendance Lead
If parent fails to attend, home visit and parenting contract completed

If no improvement in a further 3 weeks, Final Warning Letter
Final Warning Letter to be sent + statutory intervention request completed
OR
Penalty Notice Request
Penalty Notice Request to be sent

Policy review: This policy is reviewed annually by the Full Governing Body.
This policy was reviewed on 12th October 2022.

Signed: …………………………………………………….. **Chair of Governors**

Next Review date: October 2023