

Attendance

At Birchwood Avenue Primary School, we aim for the whole school community – governors, staff, parents and pupils - to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Birchwood Avenue Primary School aims to encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Attendance and school achievement have a strong correlation.

From the term after your child turns five, the school is required by law to record and report authorised and unauthorised absence to the Department for Education.

Regular and punctual attendance is very important from an early age:

- As well as educating children, schools provide opportunities for making friends and learning vital social skills;
- Children are also encouraged to develop any talents or skills they have, as well as the essential skills of reading, writing and mathematics;
- Children who are regularly absent miss out on certain aspects of their basic education making it difficult to cope in primary school and to transfer successfully to secondary school;
- Children who do not attend school regularly miss out on opportunities, which has a considerable impact on their progress across the curriculum;
- Bad habits can develop at an early age – children with odd absences during Reception and in primary school are at a much higher risk of having poor attendance at secondary school.

If parents are positive and eager about school, children are likely to pick this up.

Reasons to attend school regularly – facts to consider

95% attendance	Sounds good, but still means that your child is missing out on one day every month.
90% attendance	Your child is missing 1/2 a day of school every week.
	Your child is missing 4 whole weeks of school during the academic year.
	Every year, from Reception to Year 6, your child will have missed over 1/2 a year in total.
80% attendance	Your child is missing 1 day every week.

Achievement

Attendance over 93%	Pupils are more likely to achieve expected progress at primary school as well as improved SATs results. Students achieve an average of 75% A*-C GCSE grades.
Attendance below 90%	Students achieve an average of 25% A*-C GCSE grades at secondary school and SATs results are lower at primary school.

Authorising Absence from School

It is the Headteacher's decision to authorise an absence. Legitimate reasons for absence include: sickness, days of religious observance, exceptional circumstances and medical appointments that cannot be made out of school time. Reasons that would not be authorised include: shopping, birthdays, getting up late, having a late night, looking after a relative, having a haircut or taking a day trip.

What is the law concerning exceptional absences?

There has been a lot in the press about families being fined for taking their children on holiday in term time. Children in Reception reach statutory school age the term after they turn 5. The current law for children of statutory school age (with reference to recent published Government advice*) is explained below, including the circumstances in which the Headteacher may authorise absence and what happens at Birchwood Avenue Primary School if an absence is unauthorised. All schools publish their attendance policy on the school's website for reference.

The law states that an 'authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

What should you do if you want to take your child out of school for an exceptional reason?

Please put your request in writing to the Headteacher via the form from the school office. The Headteacher considers each request individually, taking into account the circumstances described. The guidance states that granting the leave of absence is entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

What happens if your request for authorised absence is refused and you still take your child out of school? Or you take them out without making a request?

By law, if you do this, the absence cannot be authorised. The regulations do not allow the Headteacher to give retrospective approval. However, if your child is absent from school for any reason, please contact us to let us know and please give us the real reason for the absence. It is far better for us to know that your child is well and safe than to be concerned for their safety if you report them ill when they are on holiday or do not contact us at all. In any case, children tend to tell us if they or their friends are going on holiday. The law does allow the school to request medical evidence to support illness, if there is a concern that the child was not really ill. Such absences can be recorded as unauthorised and parents are informed.

The law states that the school should follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure the safety of our children and identify whether the absence is approved or not.

What happens if parents are having difficulty ensuring that their child attends school regularly and on time?

If the school notices that your child is developing a pattern of absence or lateness, the Headteacher will contact parents about it so that a solution can be resolved. This might involve working with the School Family Worker, who can suggest a range of services to help. The school reviews the attendance of pupils regularly with our Attendance Officer, so if a problem persists, the Headteacher will ask for his/her involvement. Birchwood Avenue Primary School's attendance policy does include the ability for the school to issue penalty notices if parents fail to ensure that children regularly attend school. A repeated pattern of unauthorised absence with no attempt by parents to improve the situation is likely to culminate in the issue of a penalty notice.

***School attendance** Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, Department for Education, Nov 13.

Doors open

The school bell rings and doors open at 8.50am. Pupils may enter the building at that time with their teacher and the rest of their class from the playground. Pupils should not arrive at school before 8.40am and should be supervised by an adult. The school gates leading to the playground are then locked.

Registration

- Registers are called by 8.55am and 1.05pm. Registers close at 9.15am and 1.15pm. Registers are marked consistently by staff.
- Any pupil arriving after closure of the register will be marked absent for the whole of the session.
- Registers are marked in accordance with DfE guidance.

Lateness

- Any pupil arriving after 8.50am should report to the school office.
- Parents should enter the date, time of arrival and the reason for lateness in the Late Book, held outside the school office.
- When authorising late arrivals, the Headteacher will take circumstances into consideration. The Secretary is responsible for transferring late information to the registers.
- In the event that the building is evacuated, the Late Book and signing in/out books are taken to the assembly point by the designated person with the registers to determine who was in the building at the point of evacuation.

Following up Lateness

Parents whose children are regularly late for school will be contacted by the Headteacher who will work with the family to bring about an improvement in punctuality.

Absences

- A phone call is required from an adult who has care of the child by 9.30am each day of the absence.
- A reason must be provided for all absences from school, in writing, when the pupil returns to school. This may be by email to admin@birchwoodavenue.herts.sch.uk.
- Correspondence concerning absence is kept in individual pupil files. Absences are authorised by the Headteacher.
- School may decide not to authorise absence, even when a reason is provided.

Leaving and returning to School during School Day

- When pupils leave or return to school during the school day, the school office must be notified.
- Parents must complete the signing in/out book held outside the school office, giving the date, time in/out and reason for having to leave during the school day.

Following up Absence

- Birchwood Avenue Primary School follows up all unexplained absences from school by contacting parents/carers.
- The school will work with pupils and families to ensure reintegration of pupils after long absences.
- Pupils' attendance data is included in end of year reports, including unauthorised absences and lateness.

First Day Response

- Birchwood Avenue Primary School uses First Day Response. If a child is absent and no contact has been made by parents/carers by 9.30am, a member of school staff will call home to ascertain the reason for absence.
- Emergency contacts held for the pupil will continue to be contacted if no reason is given.
- The school office uses the information gained from First Day Response to update the registers, in consultation with the Headteacher when necessary.

Term Time Holidays

- Birchwood Avenue Primary School discourages parents from taking family holidays during term time.
- In exceptional circumstances, leave of absence may be granted by the Headteacher.
- Requests must be made in writing to the Headteacher, giving at least 3 weeks' notice.
- Retrospective requests cannot be authorised.

Rewards

Birchwood Avenue Primary School rewards good attendance through:

- Weekly attendance prizes per key stage: £5 in class 'piggy bank'; £10 if it is 100%
- Class chart outside each classroom to reward 100% attendance each week
- Bronze, Silver and Gold attendance badges given to pupils who achieve 10, 20 and 30 weeks
- Attendance and punctuality are regularly celebrated in the fortnightly Head's newsletter

Publication of Information

- Parents, pupils, staff and governors are informed of whole school attendance issues and statistics on a regular basis in the school newsletter (which is published on the website), and in the Headteacher's Report to Governors.
- Birchwood Avenue Primary School shares information on individual pupils' attendance as necessary with parents, pupils and staff.
- New parents are given information on the school's attendance policy in the school information pack.
- The policy is published on the school website and may also be viewed in school on request at the school office.

Penalty Notices

At Birchwood Avenue Primary School, we expect parents to work with us to address attendance problems. Regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for pupils registered at our school. If a pupil has 15 sessions (half days) unauthorised absences in the current and/or previous term, a penalty notice may be applied for as a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance.

Attendance Officer

Birchwood Avenue Primary School works closely with the Local Authority Attendance Officer. Through this partnership, all absences and late arrivals in school are monitored and the LAEO works with the school and with families to ensure full attendance.