

Shotley Bridge Primary School

Pupil Attendance Policy



September 2025

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Attendance Key Contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Vicky Atkinson	Headteacher	01207260444
Natalie Dryden	Attendance Manager	
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Deborah Lee	Pupil Wellbeing Lead	

Introduction to our School Attendance Vision and Ethos

Shotley Bridge Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, other local partners and parents/carers.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and by working together to put the right support in place.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

Here's what the data shows:

Pupils with higher attainment by the end of KS2 had lower levels of absence over the key stages compared to those with lower attainment. Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stages, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the KS2. Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

At Shotley Bridge Primary School, we recognise the importance of good, regular attendance and ensure that all children understand the role that this plays in positive progress and good mental health and wellbeing. Attendance is a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.

We recognise the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, therefore building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, anti-bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium).

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked. Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to. We will ensure:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

2. Monitor Attendance Data

We monitor and analyse attendance and absence data through our MIS system (Arbor) and also through WAND (LA data). Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level (for those children currently below 90% we monitor weekly).
- Identify persistent absence: where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence: where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.
- Provide regular attendance reports to, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

3. Listen to and Understand Barriers to Attendance

We will:

- Hold regular meetings (Attendance TAFs) with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school

- Closely monitor/ send letters home to parents

4. Facilitate Support

The attendance team will work with pupils and families to:

- Establishing a school-based Attendance Team Around the Family
- Build strong relationships with families
- Ensure pupils and families have a point of contact within school
- Communicate with all members of staff (on a need to know basis)
- Signposting to support within the community to provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Support families with referrals for Early Help for additional home support (with permission)

5. Formalise Support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, the attendance team will explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is in place to enable families to respond. Depending on individual circumstances, this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

6. Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

General / Frequently Asked Questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly. This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance.
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet.

- You are a traveler family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact school as early as possible to explain why your child is not attending school. If not, school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why your child is not in school.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. A leave of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

The Headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

This decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance

You should plan your holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, therefore a leave of absence will not be agreed for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

Details of where parents/carers can find term dates and INSET days can be found in the school website.

Attendance and Absence Management

We promote good attendance and punctuality by,

- Building strong relationships and working jointly with families
- Promoting the benefits of high attendance to pupils across the school day
- Accurately completing admission and attendance registers and having effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences
- Submitting a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools
- Celebrating good attendance through weekly class rewards (SBPS Bear)
- Celebrating good attendance through weekly individual rewards (attendance tickets)
- Celebrating good attendance through half termly individual and class awards
- Reporting attendance to parents on the Arbor App and on end of term reports

Communication

School requests that all parents remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure contact and emergency contact details are up to date (parents can pass this on to school or update themselves using the Arbor App)

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or to discuss the reasons for absence.

School will analyse absence across all year groups. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place. If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

On the First Day of Absence

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the school office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there

is no phone call from home, then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Doctors and Dentist Appointments

Appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment, they need to. The absence will be authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and the child's attendance is not below 90%.

Periods of Extended Absence

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received, the school will ring parents to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare. If contact cannot be made, our Pupil Wellbeing Lead will make a home visit. If contact still cannot be made, other contacts on the child's record will be alerted. If contact is still not possible, the police will be called.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate and if so will refer the matter to the Local Authority.

Absence Authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Headteacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences. For children whose absence is below 90% medical evidence will be required in one form:

- Appointment card from GP
- Hospital note
- NHS/GP Text message
- Prescription

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

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Punctuality

In both buildings we offer a soft start from 8.40am. The gates close at 8:50am in the EYFS/KS1 building and at 8.55am in the KS2 building and this marks the start of registration time. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for your child and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 15 minutes after this time, then a late mark will be recorded in the register. Registers will be closed at this point and for any children arriving more than 15 minutes late, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (Arbor).

If a child is late for school on a number of occasions (after registers close):

School will contact parents to remind them that lateness after the register closes means the child receives an unauthorised absence. If this continues, our Pupil Well-Being Lead will contact parents/carers to improve punctuality. If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason and no improvement, an Attendance Team Around the Family (ATAF) will be established.

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The sooner we know about the problem, the sooner we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Headteachers are only able to grant a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the pupil's prior attendance; any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made at least two weeks in advance via a form which is available from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion. If an application for a leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Pupils with Specific Needs

School will always take into account specific needs of pupils/pupil cohorts and procedures will be followed fairly and consistently and consider the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a safeguarding matter.

National framework for Penalty Notices and Other Legal Intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 school-week period, schools must consider if:

- · further support is appropriate.
- · support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- · support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- · support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, this should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention will be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Penalty Notice or Offence investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. (DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. (DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet)

If penalty notices are not paid then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence.

If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, parents/carers can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

The local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age (5 years old and above).

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Notifying the Local Authority to issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The Attendance Managers are responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Leading/attending Attendance Team Around the Family Meetings (ATAF)

The Attendance Managers responsible for attendance are:

Natalie Dryden and Anna Reid

Pupil Wellbeing Lead is responsible for:

- Running attendance reports
- Supporting Attendance Managers
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Attending Attendance Team Around the Family Meetings (ATAF)
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office through our MIS system (Arbor). Attendance is recorded at morning and afternoon registration.

School office staff are responsible for:

- Taking calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on Arbor
- Contacting parents/carers to ask about absence
- Communicating with the Pupil Well Being Lead, Attendance Managers and Headteacher

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Making sure their child attends every day on time

- Calling the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence) and advise when they are expected to return.
- Providing the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensuring that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

Attendance register

We will take an attendance register on Arbor and place all pupils on this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day (am) and at the start of the second session of each school day (pm). It will mark 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

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised
- The nature of the activity if 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 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am (EYFS/KS1) and 8:55am (KS2) and will be kept open for 15 minutes. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1.05pm.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#).
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)

Links with Other Policies

Safeguarding
Anti-Bullying
Behaviour
Equality