

Attendance Policy

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Issue Number	006	Author	Nicola Kelly
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Headteacher	Jo Murray	Executive Headteacher/ Regional Director	Jo Murray/Rob Arrowsmith

1. Introduction

This Attendance Policy reflects Keys Group’s EPIC values—Excellence, Passion, Integrity, Caring—and the Keys Connect approach, which emphasises relational, trauma-informed practices tailored to support pupils with complex needs and attendance challenges.

Keys Group schools are committed to working in partnership with pupils and families to promote and support high levels of attendance. In line with the Department for Education’s statutory guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (updated August 2024), our approach prioritises early intervention, relationship-building, and understanding the barriers to attendance. We recognise that improving attendance is not solely a compliance issue but a collaborative effort rooted in pastoral care, wellbeing, and inclusive practice. Our schools consistently demonstrate strong engagement with families and pupils, and we aim to build on this strength by ensuring that support is proactive, respectful, and tailored to individual needs. Attendance is monitored rigorously, and strategies are implemented to address persistent or severe absence, always with the goal of re-engaging learners and fostering a culture where every day in school counts.

The policy complies with Part 3, paragraph 15 of the Independent School Standards 2014 (as amended), and the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. It recognises the unique barriers faced by many of our pupils, including historical trauma and ongoing challenges, and commits to a personalised, empathetic approach to attendance improvement.

While our aspiration is for all pupils to achieve 100% attendance, we pursue this goal sensitively and realistically, recognising that many pupils join us with persistent absence patterns.

2. Policy Aims

At Begdale, we aim to ensure that every pupil:

- Feels safe, secure, and well cared for within the school community.
- Fully participates in school life, enjoying and achieving their potential.
- Feels valued and trusts staff to safeguard their wellbeing.
- Receives support tailored to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Understands the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Name
Governing Body (Chair)	James Madine
Regional Executive Headteacher/Director	Jo Murray / Rob Arrowsmith
Head Teacher	Jo Murray
School Attendance Leader	Carrie-Anne Curtis
Daily Attendance Contact	Sarah Longley/Tara Squire

4. Reporting Absence

Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of absence before the school day starts via Arbor, phone 01954 860 055, or email Sarah.Longley@keyseducation.ac.uk.

Arrangements for longer absences will be agreed as needed.

Parents/carers needing support with attendance should contact

carrie-anne.curtis@keyseducation.ac.uk.

5. Registration and Lateness

- Registration is taken twice daily (AM: 8:45 – 9:00 PM: 12:40 – 12:45)
- Pupils arriving between 9:00am and 9:15am are marked late (Code L).
- Pupils arriving after 9:15am are marked absent (Code U).
- Persistent lateness linked to transport or external factors will be addressed collaboratively with families, transport providers, and local authorities.
- Where students of Begdale School are at an alternative provision as part of their educational offer, the placements register times will be used and our normal safeguarding processes will be followed.
- We do understand that some of our pupils travel a significant distance to Begdale School and sometimes there are unforeseen traffic delays. If a pupil arrives after the start of the school day they will be recorded appropriately.

6. Categorisation of Absence

Authorised absences include:-

- Genuine illness
- Emergency medical/dental appointments (evidence may be requested)
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes

Unauthorised absences include:-

- Family holidays
- Shopping trips

- Birthdays
- Caring for family members
- Transport unavailability

7. Attendance Monitoring and Intervention

- Attendance is benchmarked on admission and monitored daily using ARBOR data.
- Patterns of absence are analysed to identify pupils or cohorts needing support.
- Attendance improvement meetings are held fortnightly to review data and progress against plans.
- Positive attendance is recognised with rewards and certificates.
- Pupils with attendance concerns receive personalised Attendance Support Plans developed collaboratively with families.
- Home visits and safe and well checks are conducted for unexplained absences, especially for pupils known to social care.
- Multi-agency collaboration is maintained to support attendance improvement.

8. Safeguarding and Children Missing in Education (CME)

- Unexplained absences trigger safe and well checks, including unannounced home visits where necessary.
- The school collaborates with social care and other agencies to safeguard pupils.
- The Local Authority is notified of pupils missing from education as per statutory guidance.
- The school cooperates fully with local authority procedures regarding CME.

9. Legal Framework

- The school adheres to the National Framework for Penalty Notices where applicable, including the new statutory guidance effective from August 2024.
- Parents have legal duties to ensure regular attendance under sections 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, with penalties including fines and possible prosecution.
- The school will work with local authorities to enforce attendance where voluntary support fails.
- The Government have introduced a single national threshold of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence, **including family holidays** within a rolling 10 school week period. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The period of 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years.

- As your child attends an independent setting, please be aware that when addressing unauthorised absence from school a penalty notice cannot be issued. Local Authorities cannot issue penalty notices on behalf of independent schools, due to the current legislation. However, in line with national guidance, the Local Authority (LA) retains the discretion to prosecute parents under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, where the maximum sentence is a fine of up to £2,500, and/or 3 months imprisonment.
- A parent includes any person who is not a natural parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996.

10. Parental Responsibilities

Parents/carers must:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Report absences promptly with reasons.
- Update the school daily during ongoing absences unless agreed otherwise.
- Request leave for exceptional circumstances in advance.
- Provide evidence for planned medical appointments.
- Work collaboratively with the school and other agencies to resolve attendance barriers.

11. Training and Equality

- Staff receive training on attendance policy and its links to safeguarding.
- The policy is implemented with sensitivity to diversity and individual pupil needs.
- Any concerns regarding equality impact should be raised with line management for appropriate action.

Appendices – Procedures and Localisation of Policy

Appendix A – Tiers of Intervention around Attendance

Attendance Tier	Identifying Factor	Potential Strategies
1. Expected attendance is maintained	Pupil consistently meets their expected attendance target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Celebrate through positive points or rewards - Continue regular monitoring
2. Expected attendance is not consistently maintained	Patterns of poor attendance identified through data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss barriers with pupil and parents/carers - Develop and agree an Attendance Support Plan - Monitor progress for minimum 4 weeks - Engage external support if needed (e.g., Early Help)
3. Attendance is not improving / lack of engagement	Persistent absence despite support and engagement efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formalise support with attendance contract or Education Supervision Order - Clearly explain consequences - Continue multi-agency collaboration
4. Enforcement	All support avenues exhausted, no improvement or engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issue Penalty Notice in line with National Framework - Consider prosecution to protect pupil's right to education

Appendix B – Attendance Management Plan (Stages)

Stage	Description	Actions
Stage 1	Attendance falls below target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send letter to parent/carer informing of concern - Explain impact of low attendance
Stage 2	Continued absence and decline after Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send Stage 2 letter - Arrange home visit or virtual meeting to discuss attendance and create plan
Stage 3	Further absence after Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invite parents for attendance meeting - Review Attendance Support Plan - Explain possible escalation
Stage 4	Unauthorised absences continue after Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issue Penalty Notice Warning letter (Headteacher authorised) - Liaise with Local Authority Attendance Team
Stage 5	Persistent absence despite penalty notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request Local Authority to consider prosecution - Continue multi-agency support

Appendix C – Attendance Codes (DfE Guidance Summary)

Code	Description	Usage
/	Present (AM or PM)	Pupil is present in school
L	Late (before register closes)	Pupil arrives after start of session but before register closes
U	Unauthorised absence (late after register closes)	Pupil arrives after register closes without valid reason
I	Illness	Authorised absence due to illness
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence for medical reasons (evidence may be requested)
C	Other authorised circumstances	Authorised absence for other exceptional circumstances
G	Unauthorised absence	Absence without permission or valid reason
N	No reason yet provided	Absence not yet explained
X	Not required to be in school	For example, pupils in approved off-site educational activity

Appendix D – Sample Attendance Improvement Plan

Student Name:		Pastoral Lead/Deputy:	
Year Group:		Date:	
Present Attendance %:		Authorised Absence %:	
Unauthorised Absence %:			

Attendance Concerns:

- [Describe current attendance issues, e.g., frequent absences on Mondays]

Patterns Identified:

- [Describe any significant absence patterns]

Agencies Involved (tick as appropriate):

- Barnardo's
- Stronger Families
- Early Help
- Social Care
- IEWO

School Support Provided:

- Daily home calls
- Home visits
- 1:1 mentoring sessions
- Relationship building
- IEWO support

Family Support Actions:

- Communication with school
- Acceptance of support
- Attendance at meetings or response to letters

Attendance Targets:

- Target Attendance:
- By When: _

By Student	By Parent/Carer	By School
[Action]	[Action]	[Action]

Review Plan:

- **Frequency:** Daily Weekly Biweekly Monthly
- Notes for next review: [Insert notes]

Signatures:

Student/Parent: _ Date: _

Staff Member: _ Date: _

BEGDALE SCHOOL'S HANDY GUIDE TO ATTENDANCE

Expect

At Begdale School we expect our pupils to attend regularly and consistently in line with their individual plan. Many of our pupils join us with very low attendance in their previous setting and struggle to re-engage with learning. Whilst our aim is for pupils to attend in line with national expectations, many of them will not achieve this but we will be able to demonstrate improving attendance.

Pupils can expect staff to provide a therapeutic environment to support them to re-engage with learning, high individualised expectations and positive acknowledgement of regular attendance.

Parents/carers can expect the school to build positive relationships to support them to encourage their child to attend regularly. They will receive regular feedback on improving attendance and support when attendance isn't improving as we'd like.

Monitor

We will monitor attendance daily and contact home when a child is absent. We will monitor weekly for patterns in absence and raise this with the child and their parent/carer through phone calls, meetings and via attendance support plans. We will conduct safe and well checks after the 3rd day of absence and record any safeguarding concerns. The Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance will meet weekly with the administrator to discuss attendance, absences and individual pupils of concern. Actions will be agreed in this meeting. In addition, the school will meet with the Local Authority's attendance team at least 3 times a year to discuss the whole school's attendance, groups of pupils and individual pupils of concern. Guidance from the Local Authority will be incorporated into actions the school takes. Pupils who are monitored may have an attendance support plan or contract in place which will have clear targets for their attendance.

Through this monitoring, we will celebrate improving attendance and consistently good attendance through rewards and certificates. We will also step in and support when things are not yet good enough. (Please see Expect and Facilitate Support sections)

Listen and understand

We know that many of our pupils come to us in crisis, having had a negative experience in their previous school setting, with unmet learning and emotional needs. At Begdale School we will build relationships with each pupil and their parent/carer to enable us to better understand their individual needs and experience. Throughout a pupil's time with us, we will maintain this relationship to ensure that we continue to listen to them and put support in place to enable them to attend regularly and achieve. This could include a flexible,



individualised approach to uniform which considers sensory needs, a key worker to provide consistent start to the day and a bespoke induction to the school.

Facilitate support

Pupils who join Begdale School will have a bespoke induction plan which allows them to get to know key staff and peers and allows us to informally assess needs to ensure we can put in place what they will need to feel comfortable coming to school and engage with learning. Through our systems of monitoring attendance, any pupil who is identified as having patterns of absence or with increased absences will be supported through an Attendance Support Plan. This can include adjustments to timetabled lessons, additional intervention or support, settling time at the start of the day and in some cases agreed reduced timetables for an agreed period.

Enforce

If the above support hasn't had the desired impact on the pupil and/or there is a lack of engagement from the parent/carer with the processes, then the school will work with the Local Authority to proceed with legal enforcement. This also includes reporting to the Local Authority any unauthorised holidays.

Appendix F – Parents guide to unauthorised family holidays.

Norfolk County Council: Independent School Absence Guidance for parents 25-26

Regular school attendance and parent's legal responsibilities

At Begdale our aim is to collaborate with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This guidance is to remind all parents about the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government is clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The important legal information

The Government have introduced a single national threshold of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The period of 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years.

As your child attends an independent setting, please be aware that when addressing unauthorised absence from school a penalty notice cannot be issued. Local Authorities cannot issue penalty notices on behalf of independent schools, due to the current legislation. However, in line with national guidance, the Local Authority (LA) retains the discretion to prosecute parents under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, where the maximum sentence is a fine of up to £2,500, and/or 3 months imprisonment.

A parent includes any person who is not a natural parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Requests for leave of absence Working together to improve school attendance advises all schools that they should only grant a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, considering each request on a case-by-case basis. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. Although we recognise the value and benefits of family holidays, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for a family holiday as the Government 'does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.'

Requests for leave must be made in advance, otherwise schools will be unable to consider your individual circumstances, and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Headteachers are not obliged to reconsider authorising leave if an application was not made in advance.

Support with ensuring regular school attendance

If you require any support with ensuring your child's attendance, please contact carrie-anne.curtis@keyseducation.ac.uk