



# Spa Bermondsey Attendance Policy 2023

## 1. Aims

Spa Bermondsey aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

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## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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 Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 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 head of school to account for the implementation of this policy

### **3.2 The head of school**

The head of school 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
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is 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
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Reporting on attendance to the Local Governing Body once per term

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Karen Esson and can be contacted via telephone **020 7237 3714** or email [kesson@spa-education.org](mailto:kesson@spa-education.org).

### **3.4 The attendance officer**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the head of school
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the head of school (authorised by the head of school) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Tanika Williams-Platt and can be contacted via telephone **020 7237 3714** or email [twilliams-Platt@spa-education.org](mailto:twilliams-Platt@spa-education.org).

### **3.5 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office each morning and afternoon.

### **3.6 School Office Staff**

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents and carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents and carers to the attendance officer, Tanika Williams-Platt in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

### **3.7 Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence by 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### 3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Attend every timetabled session on time

## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. 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

*See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.*

We will also record:

- o Whether the absence is authorised or not
- o The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- o The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9:15am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:05 and will be kept open until 9:15. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:30pm and will be kept open until 1:45pm.

Pupils travelling independently or with family will be marked as late if they arrive after 9:15.

Pupils travelling by home-to-school transport will be marked late if they arrive after 9:30.

## **4.2 Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Parents should call the school on 0207 237 3714 or e mail the school office: [office@spa-education.org](mailto:office@spa-education.org)

Parents should not rely on home-to-school transport staff to pass on messages about absence or lateness.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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

## **4.3 Planned absence**

### **Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Please inform the school in advance either by phoning, emailing or putting a note in your child's home-school diary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 5.

## **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

Lateness due to issues with home-to-transport will be addressed directly with Southwark Transport and parents will be informed so that they are aware.

Pupils travelling independently or with family will be marked as late if they arrive after 9:15.

Pupils travelling by home-to-school transport will be marked late if they arrive after 9:30.

If an independent traveller is late, i.e. a pupil who travels independently to and from school, a call will be made to the family by 9:30am to ascertain if the pupil is on their way to school. If a pupil does not arrive at school when expected, this may trigger the Missing Child Protocol to be implemented.

If an independent traveller is persistently late, a meeting with families will be arranged to help support the pupil with their punctuality and to ensure they are travelling directly to school. An action plan will be created in conjunction with the family and reviewed regularly.

In the rare case when a family needs to make alternative arrangements to the start or collection time for their child, these will need to be discussed with the Head or Deputy Headteacher in the first instance. We recognize how important the beginning and end of day are for all pupils and strongly encourage all families to keep to the timings of the school day.

## **4.5 Following up absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Families should not rely on home-to-school transport to inform the school of absence. Spa will follow up with all families, regardless of whether a message from transport has been received or not.

We will call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

#### **4.6 Reporting to parents/carers**

Attendance information will be reported to parents as part of the Summer Report as well as the EHC Annual Review.

### **5. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

#### **5.1 Granting approval for term-time absence**

The head of school will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head of school's discretion. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Authorisation from the Head of School, in writing, should be sought if a term time absence is to be requested due to the family taking a holiday or travelling overseas for any reason. This request should be made as far in advance as possible with an explanation as to why the trip cannot occur out of term time.

#### **5.2 Legal sanctions**

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the head of school, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Spa Bermondsey will work with families to ensure all pupils have excellent attendance and punctuality. We will work with families to identify any barriers and will work collaboratively to support the young person and their families.

If you have concerns, in the first instance please speak with either the Family Liaison Officer, Tanika Williams-Platt or any member of the Senior Management Team.

We will work closely with families to identify pupils at risk of becoming school refusers and to implement strategies that support the young person and the family. We may make referrals to external agencies such as Family Early Help, CAMHS, All Age Disability Team at Southwark or other Local Authority Transport services in consultation with families. An attendance action plan will be written in collaboration with the family as a supportive measure.

## 7. Attendance monitoring

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- o Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- o Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

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.

### 7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- o Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- o Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

### 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- o Provide regular attendance reports to Assistant Headteachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- o Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- o Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- o Hold regular meetings 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
- o Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Deputy Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

### Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement
<b>Authorised absence</b>		

<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed



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<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day