

Bradford District Schools Attendance Charter

The Attendance Charter is a collaborative approach to promoting good attendance within schools across Bradford District, so that all children and young people can fulfil their potential. All those signing the charter agree to uphold a set of joint principles and to work together to implement the charter. Bradford Council has agreed to support the charter and work together with schools and settings to ensure a partnership approach to the charter's implementation. The charter will seek to strengthen support from key multi-agency partners and further support our shared approach to school attendance.

Our school agrees to:

1. Elect a senior leader, a Senior Attendance Champion responsible for implementing the attendance strategy, and elect and train a governor or trust leader responsible for overseeing attendance.
2. Ensure attendance staff are appropriately trained and that they participate in networking/development opportunities.
3. Have in place a clear attendance policy whose effectiveness is regularly monitored and reviewed by the senior leadership team and reported to governors or trust leaders.
4. Appoint a member of staff who is responsible for the day-to-day management of attendance across the school and liaising with appropriate safeguarding leads.
5. Implement a robust approach to track and monitor pupil attendance, so that action can be taken swiftly for students whose attendance is causing concern, and that patterns and themes in respect of student absence can be analysed and managed appropriately.
6. Offer an engaging curriculum and enrichment programme for all pupils, that inspires children to attend their school or setting every day.
7. Engage and involve parents/carers and the community in developing attendance approaches, particularly those parents whose children are most at risk of ongoing or persistent absence issues.
8. Engage and involve parents/carers and the community in the developing attendance approaches, particularly those parents whose children are most at risk of ongoing or persistent absence issues.
9. Commit to multi-agency working to address underlying issues facing families and communities, including a commitment to active engagement with the wider team around the child and whole-family approaches to supporting children and families with more complex or entrenched needs.
10. Share and implement best and emerging practice in respect of what is working to improve attendance for those children and families most at risk of persistent absence.
11. Review Bradford Schools Online guidance, taking note of the best practice recommendations around the Staged Intervention Approach to Poor Attendance, safeguarding pupils and when removing children from roll.

Schools agree to also implement the following common practices:

- Take their attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day (morning) and once during the second session (in the afternoon). They will record if the pupil is:

  ✔ Present;

  ✔ Attending an approved educational activity

  ✔ Absent due to illness/medical appointment

  ✔ Absent – unauthorised; or

  ✔ Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

- Contact the pupil's parents/carers on a pupil's first day of absence, to establish the reasons for absence and mark the attendance register accordingly. Then contact the pupil's parents/carers every day that there are subsequent unexplained absences.

- Close their register 30 minutes after the start of the school day. All pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked with the code U or with another absence code such as I or M.

- Positively engage with termly attendance support meetings with Bradford Council, sharing information on the interventions attempted with persistently and severely absent children and engaging in discussions to agree appropriate actions.

- Headteachers across all Bradford District schools will not authorise any requests for leave during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers will also commit to communicate effectively with families in respect of planned absences, and withdrawal from learning which may then impact a pupil's term time attendance.

- Monitor patterns of late arrival amongst pupils. Those pupils who are persistently late (late more than once a week for a period of a month) will be contacted and a plan put in place to address this.

- Monitor and track the attendance of all pupils on weekly basis.

- Where pupils have a concerning decline in attendance, over one term and/or have had six sessions of absence (unauthorised and/or authorised absence over a three school week period), schools will contact parents/carers and will consider holding an attendance meeting to review their child's attendance with them and that will set clear targets for improvement.

- Liaise with schools where children from the same/linked families attend, so that there is a shared approach to promoting good attendance and in respect of sanctions for families whose attendance is a concern.

- Where a pupil has had two sickness absences in a half term or has a sickness absence of three consecutive days, and If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

- Follow the Bradford Staged Approach to Poor Attendance, ensuring families are offered support tailored to their needs, whilst ensuring legal intervention is requested swiftly when appropriate.

- Be aware of emerging issues that may impact children and their families (such as refugees and asylum seekers) and where additional support may be sought to support the school and the family.

Bradford Council agrees to work proactively with schools on a core basis, through the Education Safeguarding Team, to build capacity around supporting and managing attendance, predominantly via termly conversations with schools. This work will include supporting schools to:

- prioritise attendance and put appropriate staff in place with dedicated time and training to do the role
- identify attendance issues early through data analysis
- take a holistic view of attendance issues and adopt an early intervention approach
- have challenging conversations to tackle attendance issues
- review communications about attendance, to make them as effective as possible
- use legal intervention as a last resort when support has been offered, but not engaged with.

Schools may also buy in bespoke attendance support from the Attendance Improvement Team, a traded service available to all schools.

Schools can continue to request penalty notices where appropriate for:

- term-time holidays (minimum of 6 sessions in total - 3 school days)
- low level unauthorised absence and lateness (minimum of 6 unauthorised absences during a 6 school week period / maximum of 24 sessions of absence during a 12 school week period)

Bradford Education Priority Improvement Area will support schools to share their learning from implementation of the Charter to enhance our city wide approach to improving attendance. Bradford Education Priority Improvement Area will continue to work to resolve any barriers to implementation and will seek to enhance a multi-agency approach to improving attendance.