



BENSHAM MANOR *School*

Attendance Policy

Last reviewed: February 2026



Introduction

This Policy is written in conjunction with the DfE's Working Together to improve school attendance document August 2024:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf

Bensham Manor School wishes to promote the best level of attendance achievable by our students. We recognize that good attendance facilitates effective learning and that promoting good attendance is one of the School's duties of care for its students. Ideally all students should achieve a good level of attendance (over 95%) with as many achieving 100% as possible.

Some considerations offset this position to some degree.

1. Some students at Bensham have significant medical conditions that make it unlikely they will achieve attendance at this level. The School does not consider it appropriate or beneficial for students who are unwell to attend School.
2. The School recognizes the importance of the celebration festivals to some families. Therefore, the Headteacher can authorise up to two days per year for attendance and observance of a Religious Festival.
3. Attending the funeral of a relative will be classed as an authorised absence.
4. Covid absence – pupils do not need to be absent for more than three days if they have Covid.

Promoting Attendance

- The School will actively monitor the attendance of students. Parents/carers must call the school office by 0900 on each day their child is absent. If the parents/carers do not contact the school the office will text the family or phone if appropriate. If necessary this will be followed up by the Attendance Officer.
- If the child has a medical appointment the parent/carer should let the school know in advance and bring in the appointment card. This will be photocopied and attached to the records.
- Any planned absence, including family holiday, planned medical procedure or religious festivals must be communicated to the school via the leave of absence form.
- The Family Support Worker will follow up all cases where the School is concerned about either the reasons for absence or the amount of absence.
- All students with below 85% attendance will be referred to the Family Support Worker who will consider these on a case-by-case basis with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). The EWO, in conjunction with the Family Support Worker and the Deputy Head and any relevant external agencies will try to resolve all cases where attendance is a concern. If you do not send your child to school you could be in breach of this policy and receive a fine/a safeguarding referral. From September 2024, the Government has introduced a new system of fines and penalty notices which can be viewed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf

- The School will celebrate the achievement of classes and year groups half termly and termly for those classes who have the highest attendance and the most improved attendance.
- Holidays within term time will be classed as an unauthorised absence.

Pupils with additional health needs

- Where a pupil has a complex or long-term health issue, the school will discuss the pupil's needs and how these may be best met with the LA, relevant medical professionals, parents and, where appropriate, the pupil.
- The LA expects the school to support pupils with additional health needs to attend full-time education wherever possible, or for the school to make reasonable adjustments to pupils' programmes of study where medical evidence supports the need for those adjustments.
- The school will make reasonable adjustments under pupils' EHCPs, in accordance with the Medical Policy.
- Pupils admitted to hospital will receive education as determined appropriate by the medical professionals and hospital tuition team at the hospital concerned.
- During a period of absence, the school will work with the provider of the pupil's education to establish and maintain regular communication and effective outcomes.
- Whilst a pupil is away from school, the school will work with the LA to ensure the pupil can successfully remain in touch with their school using the following methods:
 - School newsletters
 - Emails
 - Invitations to school events
 - Cards or letters from peers and staff
- Where appropriate, the school will provide the pupil's education provider with relevant information, curriculum materials and resources.
- To help ensure a pupil with additional health needs is able to attend school following an extended period of absence, the following adaptations will be considered:
 - A personalised or part-time timetable, drafted in consultation with the named staff member
 - Access to additional support in school
 - Online access to the curriculum from home
 - Movement of lessons to more accessible rooms
 - Places to rest at school
 - Special exam arrangements to manage anxiety or fatigue

Reintegration

- When a pupil is considered well enough to return to school, the school will develop a tailored reintegration plan in collaboration with the LA.
- The school will work with the LA when reintegration into school is anticipated to plan for consistent provision during and after the period of education outside school.
- As far as possible, the pupil will be able to access the curriculum and materials that they would have used in school.
- If appropriate, the school nurse will be involved in the development of the pupil's reintegration plan and informed of the timeline of the plan by the appointed named member of staff, to ensure they can prepare to offer any appropriate support to the pupil.
- The school will consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made to provide suitable access to the school and the curriculum for the pupil.
- For longer absences, the reintegration plan will be developed near to the pupil's likely date of return, to avoid putting unnecessary pressure on an ill pupil or their parents in the early stages of their absence.

- The school is aware that some pupils will need gradual reintegration over a long period of time and will always consult with the pupil, their parents and key staff about concerns, medical issues, timing and the preferred pace of return.
- The reintegration plan will include:
 - The date for planned reintegration, once known.
 - Details of regular meetings to discuss reintegration.
 - Details of the named member of staff who has responsibility for the pupil.
 - Clearly stated responsibilities and the rights of all those involved.
 - Details of social contacts, including the involvement of peers and mentors during the transition period.
 - A programme of small goals leading up to reintegration.
 - Follow-up procedures.
- The school will ensure a welcoming environment is developed and encourage pupils and staff to be positive and proactive during the reintegration period.
- Following reintegration, the school will support the LA in seeking feedback from the pupil regarding the effectiveness of the process.

Information sharing

- It is essential that all information about pupils with additional health needs is kept up-to-date.
- To protect confidentiality, all information-sharing techniques will be agreed with the pupil and their parent in advance of being used.
- All teachers, TAs, supply and support staff will be provided with access to relevant information, including high-risk health needs, first aiders and emergency procedures, via a noticeboard in the staffroom.
- Parents will be made aware of their own rights and responsibilities regarding confidentiality and information sharing. To help achieve this, the school will:
 - Ensure this policy and other relevant policies are easily available and accessible.
 - Provide the pupil and their parents with a copy of the policy on information sharing.
 - Ask parents to sign a consent form which clearly details the organisations and individuals that their child's health information will be shared with and which methods of sharing will be used.
 - Consider how friendship groups and peers may be able to assist pupils with additional health needs.
- When a pupil is discharged from hospital or is returning from other education provision, the school will ensure the appropriate information is received to allow for a smooth return to the school. The named member of staff will liaise with the hospital or other tuition service as appropriate.

Record keeping

- In accordance with the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, written records will be kept of all medicines administered to pupils.
- Proper record keeping will protect both staff and pupils and provide evidence that agreed procedures have been followed.
- All records will be maintained in line with the Records Management Policy.

Training

- Healthcare professionals will be involved in identifying and agreeing with the school the type and level of training required. Training will be sufficient to ensure staff are confident in their ability to support pupils with additional health needs.

- Staff will be trained in a timely manner to assist with a pupil's return to school.
- Once a pupil's return date has been confirmed, staff will be provided with relevant training one week before the pupil's anticipated return.
- Parents of pupils with additional health needs may provide specific advice but will not be the sole trainer of staff.

Emotionally Based School Non Attendance (EBSNA)

EBSNA refers to a group of children and young people who struggle to attend school due to emotional difficulties. These students often experience significant physical and emotional distress related to school attendance.

Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance can affect pupils of any age, across all types of educational settings, and at any point in their school journey. While some children stop attending school suddenly, most experience a gradual increase in non-attendance over time. Therefore, it is important for schools and parents to recognise risk factors, early warning signs, and available support pathways for school non-attendance.

The term "school refuser and school avoidance" are frequently used but are increasingly being reconsidered. This term suggests that the child or young person has full control over their decision not to attend, placing the blame solely on them. This perspective overlooks other contributing factors and limits the understanding needed to effectively support the student's return to school. Furthermore, explanations focusing only on anxiety "within the child" are less helpful than those considering the broader environment around the child. More holistic approaches lead to better intervention plans.

Often, children want to attend school but feel overwhelmed by stress, anxiety, and other emotions, which make them feel unable to attend school.

There are four possible functions of school non-attendance:

1. To avoid situations specific to being in school which elicit high levels of stress (push from school)
2. To escape social situations which cause feelings of discomfort (push from school)
3. To spend more time with significant people (pull to home)
4. To spend time doing something this is more fun or stimulating (pull to home)

It is important to note that if only function 4 is present then we would not consider this to be EBSNA. Children and young people experiencing EBSNA present with a combination of the above functions. These functions can be thought of as things that push and pull a child from school and towards home.

By understanding the individual functions/push and pull factors for a child or young person we can begin to think about how to re-dress the balance and create factors that pull them towards attending school. This might be through providing more support, making reasonable adjustments or putting specific interventions in place.

Autism and anxiety

Although there is little research evidence available, anecdotally it is understood that children and young people with social communication difficulties, or a diagnosis of Autism, are more prone to experiencing difficulties with attending school and anxiety surrounding school attendance. At Bensham Manor, we are aware of the needs of our young people with Autism and work closely with families to address those needs within the school environment.

These increased risks seem to be explained by the behaviours and developmental differences inherent within Autism including those linked to:

- Social communication difficulties and struggles to make sense of the world around them e.g. not knowing what might happen next or the expectations of other people
- Social interaction difficulties and challenges in understanding others and how they may be feeling, as well as understanding their own emotional state
- Difficulties processing sensory information and heightened sensitivity to environmental stimuli meaning they feel overwhelmed
- Cognitive differences such as more rigid, inflexible thinking or difficulties with working memory e.g. struggling to hold information in mind, or to view the 'bigger picture'

These factors combined can mean that school becomes more challenging for pupils with Autism as they get older, because the curriculum becomes less flexible, and the social environment becomes more complicated and less adult-led. The onset of puberty can also be an additional challenge for all young people, but for those with Autism it can be experienced as a more profound and distressing situation. Additionally, whilst we know that transition and change can be a common precursor to avoidance, for pupils with Autism a lack of routine and unexplained changes can feel stressful and lead to heightened anxiety, ultimately culminating in non-attendance at school.

EBSNA and absence coding

It is the legal duty of parents to ensure that their children receive an education. Where this education is provided in a school they must ensure regular attendance, under the Education Act, 1996. If a child does not attend school then it is the school's responsibility to code the absence according to specific codes.

Schools must adhere to the Department for Education's advice [Working Together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#). The guidance states that schools can authorise absences for limited reasons. It does not provide specific guidance for EBSNA. Head Teachers are responsible for determining whether an absence can be listed as authorised.

The PACE Model

'PACE' stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy, a framework developed by Dan Hughes. It encourages staff to apply these four qualities when supporting children's self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and resilience. PACE takes a holistic approach, focusing on the whole child. It is especially effective in de-escalating conflict and helping children feel understood. Bensham Manor applies the PACE model when interacting and supporting the students at school.

- **Playfulness**

This involves maintaining an open, calm, relaxed, and engaged attitude. Using playfulness when working with children helps keep situations in perspective and creates a light, enjoyable atmosphere. For example, adopting a storytelling tone of voice can help reduce anger and defensiveness.

- **Acceptance**

Creating an environment of unconditional acceptance means acknowledging children's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions without judgment. This doesn't necessarily mean agreeing with their perspective but rather accepting their feelings and reinforcing that it's okay to feel that way.

- **Curiosity**

Approaching children's behaviour with genuine curiosity involves trying to understand the reasons behind their actions in a non-judgmental way. This might include asking calm, open-ended questions. It's important to maintain clear boundaries while communicating a helpful rather than disciplinary intention.

- **Empathy**

Empathy means putting yourself in the child's position and connecting with the emotions they are experiencing. It goes beyond offering reassurance-it involves being present with difficult feelings and containing strong emotions. This fosters stronger connections and provides comfort and support. Empathy requires accessing your own emotions to truly relate, distinguishing it from sympathy.

Trauma-informed practices

Many children and young people showing EBSNA behaviours will have experienced some form of trauma. Particularly those where the third function of EBSNA (to avoid separation from the home or caregivers) is core to their avoidance. In an educational context, trauma-informed practice is a strengths-based framework in which schools and staff understand, recognise and respond effectively to the impact of trauma on pupils (Quadara & Hunter 2016; Craig 2016)

Trauma-informed practice is a whole school approach at Bensham Manor. It focuses on the use of consistent and predictable strategies that emphasise relating to the experiences of others. There is no single, proven model for successfully implementing trauma-informed practice. Researchers and practitioners suggest the following interrelated strategies can be useful in supporting the well-being and learning of all students.

Particularly those impacted by trauma:

- Ensuring physical and emotional safety for students and staff.
- Respect for diversity, including different cultures, historical backgrounds and genders.
- Positive relationships that are particularly focused on trustworthiness, consistency and predictability.
- Empowerment of students, including taking a strengths-based approach.

At Bensham Manor, all staff are trained to be Emotionally Available Adults to support the students at school.

Examinations and assessments

- The named member of staff will liaise with the alternative provision provider over planning and examination course requirements where appropriate.
- Relevant assessment information will be provided to the alternative provision provider if required.
- Awarding bodies may make special arrangements for pupils with permanent or long-term disabilities and learning difficulties, or temporary disabilities and illnesses. Applications for such arrangements will be submitted by the school, or LA if more appropriate, as early as possible.

Targets and Review

- The Governors' are responsible for setting and reviewing aspirational targets for students' individual attendance and the School's overall attendance target. The Governors are also responsible for reviewing the level of attendance (with the Headteacher) and keeping an overview of the implementation of this policy.



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