



'We enjoy. We achieve.'
Care Growth Teamwork

Attendance at School

Information for Parents/Carers

At Pudsey Bolton Royd Primary School, we aspire to all pupils having excellent attendance - right from Nursery all the way to Year 6. We believe school really is unmissable - not just so that students can engage, learn and make progress with their academic skills and attainment. We also see how vital regular attendance is for developing children's social skills, their ability to make and maintain a good group of friends and how their wellbeing is improved by being part of a settled class group.

Missing days in school has a detrimental impact on a child's learning, meaning they struggle to link together the sequence of lessons the teacher has planned, so they lose the 'big picture' of their learning – further placing them at a disadvantage and making them feel a bit 'lost' in lessons. Over time, this almost always leads to children not fulfilling their academic potential and is linked to lower grades and attainment outcomes.

At Bolton Royd we want all students to fulfil their potential. Our aim is for all pupils to have as close to 100% attendance as possible. However, we know that things don't always go to plan – so this letter is to explain our attendance systems in school, give some advice and guidance to parents/carers and let you know how we will work with families where pupil attendance is not what we would hope for.

We will also share how some of these systems and routines are changing in the light of new government/legal frameworks that came into force from September 2024.

Getting off to a good start

Please arrive for the **start of school at 8:45am - every child should aim to be in class by this time!** To help ease congestion, we keep classroom doors open until the end of registration at 8:55am – but bear in mind a child arriving at 8:55am misses 10 minutes of learning every morning – that's over 30 hours of lost learning compared to someone arriving on time in just one school year!

School constantly monitors attendance. We have electronic registers which are taken at 8:55am (and again at the start of the afternoon session) as soon as the classroom doors close – this is why it is vital to arrive on time!

You will know that the office checks for any child with a missing mark in the register straight away – we check for telephone messages from parents and make phonecalls home to chase up the reasons for any unexplained absences. Where we have a reason, this is recorded – where we don't, this goes down as 'unauthorised absence' – so it's crucial you let us know when and why your child is off school.

From September, all schools legally have to complete electronic registers so that real-time attendance data is available for local authorities and the Department for Education (DfE) to see – we have been compliant with this for a while already.

What if my child is unwell?

The NHS guidance <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/> is designed to support parents/carers in making their decision about whether to send their child to school with a range of common illnesses. We think you'll find this really useful.

The medical advice is clear - children with mild illness (ie no fever) should continue to attend school - for example, if they have a cough, or cold, without a temperature. Please tell the staff in class when dropping them off that they are not feeling well - rest assured that we will keep a close eye on them through the day and will call you to collect them if their symptoms get worse. 'Care' is the first of our core values and this certainly applies to looking after children who aren't feeling 100%!

Monitoring attendance and 'lates'

Daily electronic registers mean that it is simple to monitor all the children's attendance – our systems will automatically flag up concerns where any pupil has missed more than 10% of sessions (a session is half a day's teaching – a morning or an afternoon). Missing just 5 days of school (10 sessions) equates to 25 lessons missed. If your child misses 10 days, this increases to 50 lessons missed. This rapidly starts to have a detrimental impact on your child's learning – so we want to avoid this wherever we can.

We keep a close eye on how all the children settle into their new classes in the autumn term – with a school wide review of all pupils' attendance after the first 6 weeks. At this point, we inform parents/carers of concerns we may have around their child's attendance and will monitor to check for improvements over a subsequent four-week period.

Regular reviews of attendance take place after that – with the aim of ensuring that no child falls below 90% attendance (classified as 'Persistent Absence'). Where no improvement is seen in their attendance in the next four weeks, then parents/carers will be invited to school for a meeting to discuss what can be done to support the family in improving their child's attendance.

As mentioned above, regularly arriving late (ie after 8:55am) negatively impacts children's learning, so we also monitor lateness – if there are more than 5 lates in the first six weeks, we will inform families and check to make sure there are no more than 3 lates in the following four weeks – if there are, then parents/carers will be invited to a meeting to discuss improving that.

Holiday/Leave of Absence in term-time

You will know that any foreign or U.K. term-time holidays are unauthorised – (this is government policy, which our governors uphold) – unless in truly exceptional circumstances (as decided by the Headteacher). Parents/carers are also required by Safeguarding procedures to notify schools of any term-time travel – especially abroad (for any reason) and must share ticket information with the 'return to the UK' date. For these reasons, please make us aware before you book your travel of your proposed arrangements and the reasons for taking your child(ren) out of school in term time (ask for a form at the office or complete an electronic version available from school's website).

Failure to comply with this will lead directly to the issue of a fixed penalty notice for any unauthorised absence of five days or over. Note that after 20 days of unauthorised absence, with no confirmation from parents/carers of the whereabouts of the children, school is required to report this under Children Missing Out On Education procedures to the local authority for investigation. This will likely result in your child losing their school place.

Families who work with school, make known their intentions well ahead of making any bookings and minimise the number of school days missed, *might* escape fines - as we have the discretion to authorise a certain number of days (for example, to attend a special event) even if the rest of a 'holiday' is unauthorised. If in doubt, be honest, work with us and ask! We will inform you in writing (using schools messaging systems) on the outcome of your application. Please be aware that this is for information only, if you do receive a fine, that will be sent from Leeds City Council once you return to school.

We should make clear school does not condone *any* avoidable term-time absence – even though we appreciate that genuine emergencies do occasionally mean families may have little choice. Parents sometimes ask for work to go with the pupil on holiday – this misses the point of the damage to the child's education. It isn't the activity that matters – it's the social aspects of learning in the classroom with all the discussion with the teacher, other pupils and support staff that are crucial. Missing that is what impacts so negatively on the child's educational outcomes. Tagging leave of absence onto school holidays means that children miss the beginning or end of their topics or units of work, meaning that learning makes much less sense to them - so even families working with school to minimise term-time absence are still depriving children of significant learning.

From September 2024, the government has changed the law so that there is no code for holidays in term-time – such 'leave of absence' can only be coded as 'Exceptional Circumstances' (where authorised by school) or unauthorised absence.

They have also said that:

- All unauthorised absences five days or over (10 sessions or more) will lead to a fixed penalty notice fine being issued (with these going up to £80 or £160 per child for each parent).
- After 20 days of unauthorised absence (and a CMOOE referral to the local authority – see above) pupils may be removed from school's roll.

Persistent or Severe Absence

Attendance below 90% is classed as *persistent absence*, below 50% is now called *severe absence*. Where families have children who fall into these categories, school will take steps to work with the parents/carers to remove barriers to attendance and alleviate any other problems contributing to such low levels of attendance – this is to try to get the best deal possible for the education of each child on roll at Bolton Royd. In the first instance, this will involve parents attending School Attendance Panel meetings with staff in school to formulate a plan to work together in the child's best interests.

Encouraging Good Attendance

Of course, the vast majority of our pupils attend brilliantly – with hundreds of pupils meeting or exceeding our target of 97% attendance every half-term. We continue to implement all the rewards, recognition and competitions to encourage all the children to attend as best they can – these are all outlined in our Attendance Policy – which can be found in the policy documents section of the school's website – www.pudseyboltonroyd.org

Together, let's make every school day count for every pupil!