



Carlton VC Church of England Primary School

Attendance Policy 2026

'I am the vine, you are the branches; those that abide in me and I in them will bear much fruit' (John 15:5)

Approved by: Jo Bevis
Staff
Governors

Date: July 2025

Written by: Jo Bevis

Date: 1-6-25

Sourced from: The Key and Bedford Borough Council

Last reviewed on: 1-6-25

Next review: 1-6-26

Carlton VC Church of England Primary School

Contents

1. Aims.....	3
2. Legislation and guidance.....	3
3. Roles and Responsibilities.....	4
4. Recording Attendance.....	5
5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence.....	7
6. Attendance Monitoring.....	8
7. Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence.....	8
8. Monitoring of Policy.....	8
9. Links with other policies.....	8

Appendices

1. Attendance codes.....	9
2. Application for Leave of Absence.....	11
3. Carlton Steps to address attendance issues.....	12
4. Bedford Borough Referral Pathway.....	13

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

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

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

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](#)
- It also refers to:
- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) 2024
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)
- Bedfordshire Borough Council [Local Offer – Attendance](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

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 headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 6)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- 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. Please see appendix 3 for Carlton Primary's steps to addressing attendance concerns.
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

3.3 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 before 09:10am daily through our Sims system.

3.4 School Admin Staff

School office staff will take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system and inform the teachers involved. They will also answer queries on attendance. They will monitor attendance and send out the relevant correspondence.

3.5 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every weekday (Monday to Friday) on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:55am on the day of the absence, 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, where this is not possible proof of appointment will be needed.

4.6 Pupils

Pupils are expected to attend school every day on time and follow 'The Carlton Way' by being ready, respectful and safe.

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.

As a school we will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 08.55am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:05am and will be kept open until 9:20am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1:10pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:55am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7). You should notify the school by telephoning 01234 720281 or come into the school in person.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 3 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for 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/carers will be notified of this.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. A copy of the appointment card/text/email should be sent to the office with the notification of the time needed. However, we encourage parents/carers 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.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L).
- After the register has closed will be marked as unauthorised, using the appropriate code (U).
- If a child is marked late more than 3 times in a half-term the headteacher will contact the parent to discuss how the school can help the parent to reduce the amount of lateness.
- If the child continues to be late an Early Help Assessment will be offered to see if this can reduce the amount of lateness.
- If the child continues to be persistently late the school will seek advice from Integrated Front Door by making a referral.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may follow up with a home visit, if after 3 attempts to contact parents, we are unable to make contact we will contact the Integrated Front Door to seek advice.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- 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

The school will inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels on request or at the end of the year. If there are concerns about absence (less than 92% parents will be notified and a record of attendance sent. If there is a severe attendance issues (less than 50%) a meeting will be sought between parents/carers and the headteacher to verify nature of absences.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher 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. A leave of absence form must be completed and returned to the school (see appendix 2).

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

The Government Guidance informs you of the following:

When your child can miss school

You can only allow your child to miss school if either:

- they're too ill to go in

- you have advance permission from the school

There's [extra support available](#) if your child cannot go to school for long periods because of a health problem.

There may be other exceptional circumstances where you can ask to take your child out of school. Your school will consider each application and may let you take your child out of school.

Holidays in term time

A holiday is generally not considered an exceptional circumstance. You cannot usually take your child away during term time.

Therefore, holidays during term time will not be authorised. The Government has changed the guidelines for taking children out of school and this guidance can be found on the DFE website <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>.

At Carlton if more than 4 days in any school year is taken as holiday will seek advice from the Educational Welfare Officer with regards to fining a parent.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. In accordance with the Bedfordshire Attendance Toolkit the school will follow procedures as shown in the referral pathway (Appendix 3).

The Penalty Notice is £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If you do not pay a Penalty Notice you will be prosecuted in court. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The 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 or withdraw the notice.

6. Attendance monitoring

The headteacher will monitor attendance each week using Sims and Sonar systems. Any parent of a child with attendance that drops below 92% will receive a letter from the Headteacher explaining

the importance of attendance and its correlation to achievement. A meeting will be sought to try and identify any challenges the parent may have and any support the school can give.

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. Reducing persistent and severe absence

Bedford Borough classifies Persistent absence as a pupil missing 8% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers 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
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance (eg: Early Help Assessment).
- Continue to work with parents through offering support, meetings and collaboration to help with their child/children's attendance.

8. Monitoring of Policy

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE and will be updated every two years or sooner if statutory guidelines change. This will be done by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour 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 (after 9am) but 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
K	EHCP alternative provision	To attend provision arranged by the local authority. e.g. alternative provision or as part of an education, health and care plan.

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	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)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	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
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day



Appendix 2: Leave of Absence Form BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCHOOL NAME: Carlton Primary School

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR YOUR CHILD DURING TERM-TIME

Time off school for family holidays is not a right and as a Parent/Carer, you should complete this form and return it to your child's school **AT LEAST FOUR (4) WEEKS** before the date when you want the period of absence to start. You may be required to attend an interview to discuss this request with the Head Teacher or other senior member of staff and/or produce supporting evidence for your request. (A separate application must be completed for each child)

Child's Full Name:

DOB.....YearGroup.....Class/Form.....

Address.....

Period of Absence: From.....To.....(inclusive)

Reason Requesting Absence (if request is for a family holiday, please give exceptional circumstances on why it **MUST** be in term time)

Name:..... Relationship to child:.....
(Applicant must be the parent carer the child normally resides with)

Signed:..... Date:.....

If you have other children in the family of school age please give details (Use additional sheet if necessary)

Name	D.O.B.	School Attended.....
Name	D.O.B.	School Attended.....
Name	D.O.B.	School Attended.....

Application for Leave of Absence During Term Time Return Slip

To: Parent/Carer: An appointment has been made with

to discuss this request on date& time.....

Permission has / has not been granted for

to be absent from school for..... days fromto..... (inclusive)

Reasons given (if appropriate)

Signed:..... Date:.....

Headteacher

Please Note: Holiday absences which have not been agreed will be marked as unauthorised absences and may be referred to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or other action.

Appendix 3: Steps to address attendance issues for Carlton Primary.

Dropped attendance to:	Actions
90%	Level 2 of BBC referral pathway begins. Letter sent to parents explaining the importance of attendance and a meeting called with parents and child to try and resolve any concerns
80%	Letter sent to parents explaining the importance of attendance. A meeting will be offered to discuss the of an Early Help Assessment (EHA) if not already in place previously.
70%	Letter sent to parents explaining the importance of attendance. If EHA has been agreed – and the absences are due to anxiety - Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) team will be contacted. TAF meeting also booked with parents and agencies involved with the child to discuss strategies and support. If no improvement and no EHA agreed and offered after 2nd attempt, parents will be called to the school for meeting to discuss absences and notified that all absences should be backed up by a medical note. Refusal of meeting will mean the case will be referred to Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).
60%	Letter sent to parents explaining the importance of attendance. If EHA is agreed and EBSA involvement is in place – further strategies to be sought and a further TAF meeting made to discuss support. If no improvement and no EHA agreed. EWO officer will be informed and a meeting with school and parents will be made to discuss strategies to improve attendance. Refusal of meeting will mean the case is referred to Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).
50%	Letter sent to parents explaining the importance of attendance. If EHA in place a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting will be called to discuss unresolved attendance concerns. If no improvement and no EHA agreed. A further meeting with the EWO Officer will be arranged.
40% and below	If EHA in place and no improvements to attendance further recommendations will be sought from the EBSA team, a TAF meeting will be called and new strategies discussed. If no EHA agreed – Integrated Front Door referral will be made to Social Services.

Appendix 4: Education Welfare Referral Pathway

