



**Attendance Policy:  
Bowling Park Primary School**

Approval date:	February 2026
Approved by:	Local Advisory Board
Next review:	February 2027

Together we **Exceed**



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# 1. Introduction

For the purpose of this guidance, a parent means:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

This policy is easily accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, including being published on the school's website. Parents will be sent it with any initial information when pupils join the school and reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is updated.

As the barriers to attendance evolve quickly, the policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary. In doing so, the School/Academy will seek the views of pupils and parents.

This policy is informed by guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE): 'Working together to improve school attendance' and 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance': <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

## 2. Policy and practice

**The Education Act 1996 states:**

**"It is the duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age by regular attendance at school."**

At Bowling Park Primary School, our vision is to develop the potential of all our pupils so that they become successful and effective members of society. There is a relationship between attendance of pupils and their development, behaviour, attainment, and progress. Our school is committed to promoting good attendance as part of its dedication to ensure quality educational provision. In order to achieve this, we have high expectations of attendance.

To support this, we adhere to guidance set out in "Working Together to Improve School Attendance".

We make it clear to pupils and parents that regular attendance is our expectation. All children are legally required to attend school for 190 days each academic year from the term following their fifth birthday. We have a set of rewards which promote good attendance and procedures to monitor poor attendance. As a school, we will monitor all pupils' attendance data and take all steps possible to support families who are experiencing difficulty.

Improving attendance is a school leadership issue. We also recognise that every staff member plays an integral part in communicating our vision for improvement. The school's Attendance Leader is Tim Phillips, Deputy Headteacher. The Attendance Leader works strategically with the school's governing board to ensure it fulfils its statutory and legal responsibilities in line with Ofsted expectations. We recognise that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process of improvement. This is because we also recognise the well-established link between attendance, child wellbeing and safety.

Bowling Park Primary School works closely with Bradford Local Authority to learn from other schools and ensure its work reflects the latest guidance and best practice models. We also ensure we regularly work with other schools within the Exceed Academies Trust, to share advice and best practice

A register is taken at the start of each morning and afternoon session by the teacher responsible for the class for that teaching session. Registers are checked by school administrative staff daily to ensure accuracy. The register is on Arbor online reporting, so it is saved directly to the central school data management system, ensuring that we can monitor the attendance of pupils quickly and address any patterns of absence. National codes are used to record attendance and absence in a consistent way.

Morning register opens at **8.35am** and is closed at **9.05am**. Pupils who register after this will be classed as an unauthorised absence. Pupils who register between 8.35 and 9.05 will have a late mark. Late marks will be followed up by the attendance team. The afternoon register takes place when children return from lunchtime, but no later than **1.20pm**. The school day ends at **3.05pm**

It is parents' legal responsibility to ensure their children attends school **every day**. Therefore All absences and persistent lateness are investigated.

All parents must inform school by **9.00am** on the first day of absence, stating the reason for the absence. When the register closes, school administrative staff check parent messages and operate 'first day calling' for those pupils who are absent with no reason given. If no verbal contact can be made, we will carry out a home visit. The government state that when a pupil "*frequently goes missing from care or from home*" *this is an indicator of a potential safeguarding issue.*" For this reason, school needs to know the reasons for all absences.

Communication is 'parent-friendly,' free of jargon and equates absence with 'days missed,' as well as overall percentages. For the purposes of comparison national, local, and regional attendance figures are also provided. Communication with parents also focuses on the link between attendance and academic success, and on the social impact of school absence on pupil welfare.

Parents evenings, email, phone calls and face-to-face meetings are all used to engage parents in supporting good attendance. This policy will also be provided via our school website and a 'parent-friendly' version provided to all parents of children starting our school. A link to this policy on our website will be provided annually to all other parents.

If wider family circumstances are affecting a child's attendance, we have staff who are trained to offer pastoral support to pupils and families who require it. Parents will be signposted and referred to services to support them- to support their child's good school attendance.

Where necessary (e.g. to address patterns of poor attendance), the school logs conversations with parents on CPOMS, our electronic reporting system. This is to assist in the monitoring of attendance and the offering of support.

### **Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday or for visits abroad during term time**

The law states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are *exceptional* circumstances and for a maximum of five days. The Governing Board of Bowling Park Primary School have made the decision that exceptional circumstances will be at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Any requests for leave of absence need to be made before travel arrangements are finalised and *at least two weeks* before the absence is due to take place. A meeting may be arranged with a member of the school's Attendance Team or Headteacher, who may require evidence of the need for extended leave, such as travel documents. After the meeting, a letter will be given to the parent confirming whether or not the absence is approved.

If a pupil is absent for an extended period without permission, they may be removed from the school roll and their place offered to another pupil, in line with local agreed criteria.

Bowling Park Primary School will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age (age 5+) to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend.

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school is **Tim Phillips**, who can be contacted through the main school email address: **office@bowlingparkacademy.co.uk**

***On a day to day basis, parents should contact our Attendance Team to inform us of absences or seek support in helping them improve their children's attendance.***

- **New Cross Street:** 01274 777360
- **Usher Street:** 01274 724581

### **Day to Day Processes for Managing Attendance**

The School will take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session.

We have developed processes that meet the needs of the pupils. We:

- Proactively manage lateness and set out in their attendance policy the length of time the register will be open, after which a pupil will be marked as absent. The register opens at 8.35am and closes at 9.05am.
- Expect parents to contact the School when their child is absent to explain the reason and put in place processes to contact parents on the first day of absence where a reason has not been provided. If absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made to ensure safeguarding.
- Meet and greet at classroom doors and the school gates – focussing on positive returns to those who have been absent.
- Complete register checks, including correct use of codes
- Pursue and checking medical evidence for absences cited as illness and medical/dental for all pupils.
- Expect parents to understand their responsibility to keep the School up to date with at least two emergency contact details as required by the Children Missing Education requirements and in line with the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance.
- Ensure ongoing alignment of attendance work with our safeguarding partners. (inc. Early Help, NHS, Police, Children's, Social Care)
- Ensure where children are only poorly in the morning, they attend in the afternoon; where illness is cited, evidence is sought; where 'mirrored' absence is evident in families, this is challenged.
- Identify any absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents to understand why and when the pupil will return. No absences are authorised without good reason.

- Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels, based on the amount of time missed and the impact on the pupil's learning.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the School (and/or Local Authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

### ***How our school is promoting and incentivising good attendance.***

The most vital part of encouraging good attendance is to ensure that Bowling Park Primary School is a place to which children want to come; that the school is a place where the children are treated with respect and feel valued; a place where their needs are recognised and are being addressed; a place where all children can experience success within a rich, relevant, and diverse curriculum.

It is clear that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. From the outset, parents are encouraged to take an active interest in the work of the school and to build and support their child's enthusiasm for attending school.

All staff make children aware of the importance of good attendance and children are praised and recognised accordingly.

We promote a culture of good attendance through

- The sharing of class, pupil, and whole school targets. These are mainly based around Bowling Park Primary School being above national average attendance figures.
- Whole school and class attendance data is announced in school weekly
- Weekly class attendance displayed on classroom doors
- Use of social media
- Free access to breakfast club
- Weekly assemblies which explore the importance of good attendance and its link to future success, friendship, and mental health

In addition, we have a system of rewards and incentives for good attendance.

- Weekly targeted/tailored incentives where poor attendance and punctuality need addressing (e.g. hot chocolate with a member of the Attendance Team).
- Half-termly and termly rewards (e.g. a non-uniform day for winning classes or an additional playtime)
- Termly certificates/prizes for 100% attendance
- An annual reward for 100% attendance all year

### **The School's strategy for using data to target attendance**

The School will treat all pupils and parents with dignity and staff will model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. In communicating with parents, the School will discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like.

All pupil attendance and punctuality is monitored on a weekly, half-termly and annual basis. Where there are concerns about attendance this is done more frequently and additional monitoring takes place. This includes daily checks, meeting the parents regularly and providing support through other agencies, such as Bradford Local Authority and Children's Social Care.

Each pupil with low attendance will be treated on an individual basis and any underlying reasons for absence will be explored. Actions at this point will include informing the parent by letter that their child's attendance is low, meeting a member of the senior leadership team and being placed on closer monitoring with the school's attendance team to ensure improvements are being made.

Trends and patterns of absence are closely analysed by the attendance team. This is facilitated by the use of Arbor, our electronic attendance management system. This takes place at a day/week/half-term/annual level and monitors individual pupils, classes, and specific groups; for example, pupils with SEND, children with an allocated social worker, and those with previously low attendance. We also recognise that some groups or individual pupils have specific needs which need to be considered when monitoring attendance.

In this way we can monitor and target resources to those groups which require it most. For example, the attendance team seeks to identify where pupils may be absent on the same day each week, or where siblings are frequently absent at the same time. We are particularly focussed on pupils who have sporadic attendance or 'broken' weeks whereby full weeks are consistently missed.

The attendance team monitors lateness of pupils, as being punctual for school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class.

### **A Support First Approach**

We are a 'support first school'. We aim to understand reasons for patterns of poor attendance. However we do not accept poor attendance. Our offer includes early support, so that low attendance does not become a problem. We offer parents help in a range of areas - or signpost them to services which can help. This includes support regarding: financial/ debt, housing, parenting, medical needs, mental health. This offer is systemically extended in all parental communications.

### **Persistent absence**

**Pupils are expected to be in school every day.**

- If a pupil's attendance is **90% or below**, they are classed as **persistently absent**.
- If a pupil's attendance is **50% or below**, they are classed as **severely absent**.

These pupils and families will be provided with more intensive support and monitoring. This may include access to Local Authority 'Early Help' services to support effective morning routines. Government research shows that these are a particularly vulnerable group and schools are expected to do all that is possible to reduce the number of pupils in this category.

Pupils with persistence absence are allocated a 'key worker' from the school's attendance team who ensure close, daily monitoring and responsive actions take place to secure improved attendance. If attendance does not improve, a referral to the Education Social Worker Team will be made, who will then work with school and the family. This will include meeting in person and jointly agreeing a plan for improvement. This will then be reviewed after six weeks. Research conducted by the Government found that penalty notices were most effective when used to address occasional absences where a child's rate of attendance started to fall below 90%. If no improvements have been made after the 6-week monitoring period, this may result in a fine/fixed penalty notice.

### ***The point at which Fixed Penalty Notices for absence and other sanctions will be sought***

In the first instance, the School will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.

Penalty notices are fines imposed as an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school at which they are registered.

The penalty is £160 if paid within 28 days of receipt, however a discounted rate of £80 will apply if the fine is paid within 21 days.

**Fixed penalties are issued, collected, and administered by the Local Authority and not Bowling Park Primary School.**

These may be issued if:

- Parents have not sought permission for a leave of absence from the Headteacher
- Permission has been refused but the absence occurs anyway
- If a pupil has not returned to school by the agreed date with no satisfactory explanation and the pupil remains on the roll of the school.
- At least 10 sessions (5 days) school days lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil in a period of 10 school weeks.

AND

- Their attendance has not been below 80% (24 sessions of TOTAL absence) in the last 12 weeks (120 Sessions) prior to a notice being requested.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. The School will consider each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Where engagement in support is proving challenging, Bowling Park will hold more formal conversations with the parents (and pupil where they are old enough to understand). This is likely to be led by the senior leader responsible for attendance and may include the School/Academy's point of contact in the local authority School Attendance Support Team. These meetings will clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future but will also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with all schools should work with the local authority to:

- Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
- Bradford Council will consider legal action through the magistrates court as opposed to penalty notices in the following situations:
  1. A continuous period of unauthorised leave of 20 school days (40 sessions) or more
  2. Two or more periods of unauthorised leave totalling 20 school days (20 sessions) or more within a 12 month period

NB – A period of leave which spans across two half terms will be treated as one period of leave.

- The Council will consider which legal option is the most appropriate, which will usually be a prosecution via the magistrates court, or a fixed penalty notice.

Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners will work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. As a minimum, this should include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support.

These actions will be regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families.

Where absence intensifies, so will the support provided, which will require our school to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners:

- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

In all cases, Bowling Park will monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family

plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, all parties will work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

### **Authorised absence**

These include:

- Illness – vomiting or diarrhoea (see Appendix 2: NHS ‘What to do: Advice on Childhood Illness’ leaflet)
- Traveller absence
- Religious festivals\* (see below)

Medical or dental work may be authorised on presentation of an appointment letter. However, routine check-ups and non-emergency appointments must be made during holiday times or after school and will not be authorised.

### **Unauthorised absence**

These include:

- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Trips to the airport
- Holiday
- Late after the register has closed
- Visiting family members
- Where no reason is given

### **Religious observance**

- Schools must record absence as authorised when it falls on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the parents’ religious body (not the parents).
- As a general rule, we would interpret ‘a day exclusively set apart for religious observance’ as a day when the pupil’s parents would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from their employment in order to mark the occasion. If in doubt, schools should seek advice from the parent’s religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.
- If a religious body sets apart a single day for a religious observance and the parent applies for more than one day, the school may only record one day as authorised on this basis; the rest of the request would be a leave of absence, and this is granted at the school’s discretion as set out under Code C.

## A quick guide to attendance for parents

*The law entitles every child of compulsory school age (age 5+) to an efficient, full-time education*

*Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly*

*This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment (learning), wellbeing, and wider life chances*

*The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have high rates of attendance*

The school day starts at 8.35am

The register closes at 9.05am

Breakfast Club is available from 8.00am

School finishes at 3.05pm

Good attendance is celebrated and rewarded, including the winning of prizes and extra playtimes for classes with the highest and most improved weekly attendance.

Non-authorized absence impacts negatively on your child and may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice (per parent per child) or other interventions

If your child cannot attend school, please contact our attendance team

- New Cross Street: 01274 777360
- Usher Street: 01274 724581
- Email:

**by 9.00am on the first day of absence and each subsequent day**

The Senior Leader responsible for attendance is Tim Phillips, Deputy Headteacher

To report an absence, please contact the Attendance Team

To discuss your child's attendance, please contact the Attendance Team

Persistent absence: Below 90% attendance – equal to one full day missed every two weeks

Severe absence: Below 50% attendance – equal to 2.5 full days missed every week

Your child's expected attendance is at least 95% at primary school and at least 94% at secondary school

Term time holiday will not be authorised

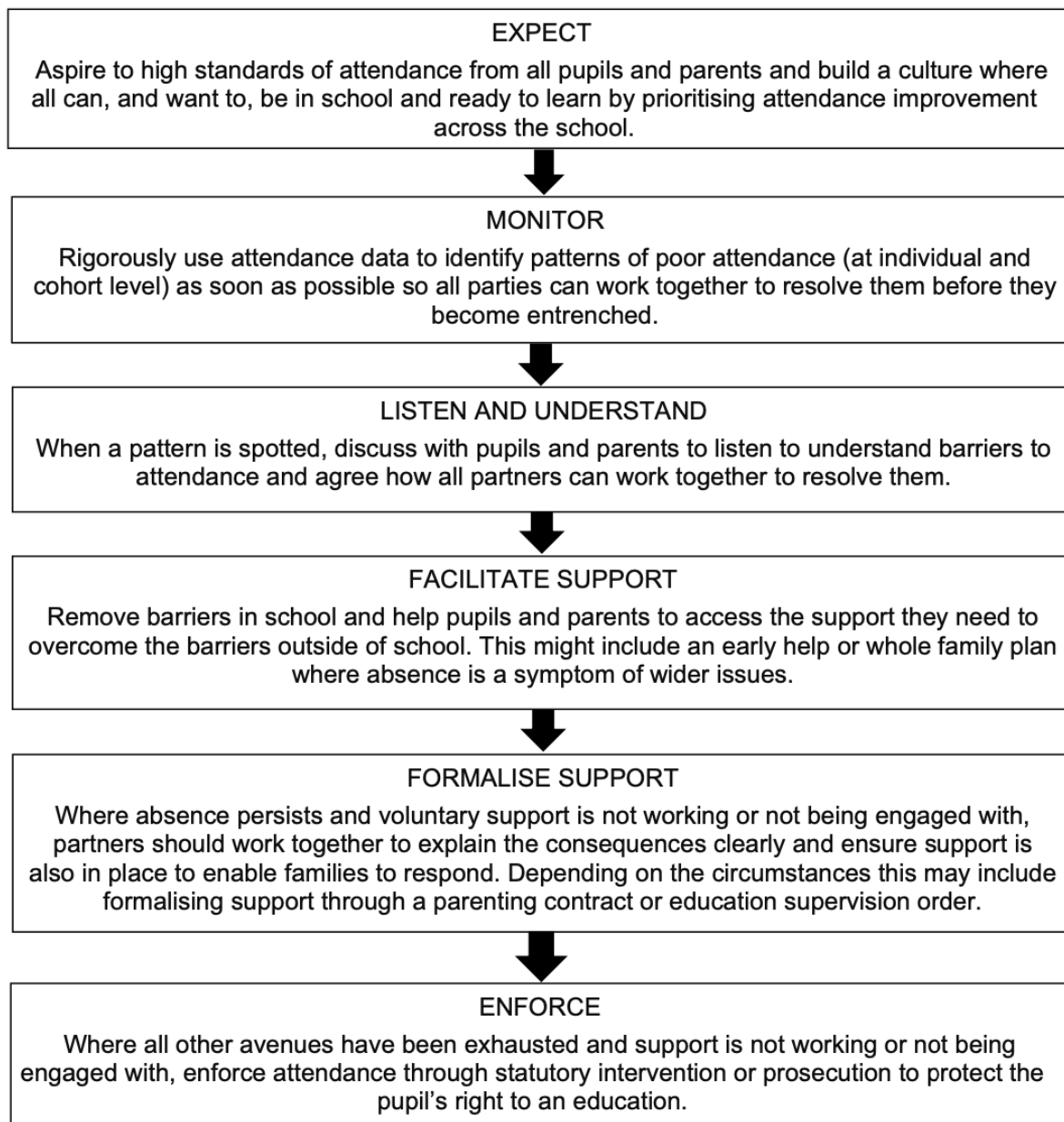
### 3. School ethos and culture

Good attendance is a learned behaviour, and as an effective school we recognise the importance of pupils/students developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. We recognise that it is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the School/Academy's ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school attendance, we:

- Recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the School's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- Recognise the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium).
- Recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. Responsibilities should include offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes, oversight of data analysis, and communicating messages to pupils and parents.
- Make sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Make sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding. Where possible this should include attendance or pastoral support staff (either school based or contracted) who can work with families, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders, the Local Authority's School Attendance Support Team and other partners.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels. In doing so, schools should help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development. It should also include clarity on the short- and long-term consequences of poor attendance.
- Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include in displays, assemblies or in registration periods. Where used sensitively and without discrimination, this may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year group, class/form and individual level.
- Recognise that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies.
- Recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse, and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

In addition, we:

- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Have a SMART and costed Action Plan to improve attendance and reduce persistence absence, which is regularly reviewed.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to, and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.



Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils will be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, the School/Academy will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable will not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour. A part-time timetable will only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision.

## 4. Safeguarding

Bowling Park Primary School recognises that children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. The Attendance Policy has a direct link to the Child Protection policy; the Behaviour policy; Anti-Bullying strategies and the Health and Safety Policy.

Bowling Park Primary School has also adopted the Local Authority Policies on Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education.

Development and implementation of this policy will be considered under School/Academy obligations from the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## 5. Data

We use attendance data to:

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families.
- Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and to parents.
- Identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions.
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Benchmark our attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented.
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the Local Advisory Board and Trustees.

## 6. Other points to note

Whilst every pupil has a right to a full-time education and high attendance expectations should be set for all pupils, the attendance policy accounts for the specific needs of certain pupils and pupil cohorts. The policy will be applied fairly and consistently but considers the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. In development and implementation of the policy, the School/Academy considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The roles of the Trust Board and the Local Authority are outlined in guidance from the Department for Education - *Working together to improve school attendance* - available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

## 7. Further information

### Guidance for parents on school attendance (Department for Education)

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/aaa-guide-for-parents-on-school-attendance.pdf>

### Resources for families (Children's Commissioner)

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/back-into-school/resources-for-families/>

### Attendance (Bradford Council)

<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/education-and-skills/school-support-services/attendance/>

**Working together to improve school attendance (Department for Education)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

**Pupil attendance in school data (Department for Education)**

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools>

**Improving attendance: good practice for schools and trusts (Department for Education)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/improving-attendance-good-practice-for-schools-and-multi-academy-trusts>