



Birley Primary Academy

A L.E.A.D Academy

Headteacher: Dawn McAughey

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Tuesday 3rd September 2024

Dear Parent or Carer,

RE: Good School Attendance and Term Time Holidays

As the new academic year approaches, I wanted to take the opportunity to thank everyone who has supported our academy to promote good attendance during the previous academic year. The home-school partnership is vital for children to achieve their maximum potential and I am sure everyone is in full agreement that good attendance is central to this. As an academy, we place great emphasis on attendance – best exemplified with the wide variety of whole school attendance initiatives that run throughout the academic year (12 Days of Christmas and Schoolz In Til Summer competitions) – and I would like to thank families for participating and supporting these events.

However, as an academy, we do understand that children do get unwell, and for some children with medical conditions regular attendance can be challenging. Last year, the academy always strived to provide support for families to improve their attendance if required and this will continue this year as the academy implements the new statutory government guidance document titled *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*. At any point in the next year, if you feel as though you would benefit from any support with attendance, we encourage all families to work in partnership with us so that we can work towards removing any potential barriers to good attendance together and eliminate any intervention from the local authority.

At the end of the last academic year, our academy's overall attendance finished at 93.7% which is unfortunately below the national average of 94.5%. In terms of what this means, an overall attendance of 93% is equal to **14** days of learning (close to 3 school weeks) lost and not forgetting the social times our children enjoy with their peers. Clearly, we know that there is room for improvement as good attendance is key to success and gives children people the opportunity to be the very best they can be.

As previously mentioned, earlier this year, the Department for Education released its **statutory** guidance for working together to improve school attendance, which comes into effect on 19th August 2024. This guidance is available to read online at [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance).

I have included some of the key points below:

Term Time Holidays

Working in education, more than anyone, we understand the frustration of holidays increasing in price during school holiday times. However, the impact of taking holidays during term time has a significant impact on children's achievement and academic progress as children often miss key knowledge on their learning journey that they will be required to build upon – potentially providing problems in both the



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upcoming and in subsequent academic years. Last year, over 150 of our families received penalty notices, which are fines issued by our local authority for term time holidays.

I must inform you that from the start of this academic year, we are still required to inform the local authority about families requiring penalty notices for unauthorised term time holidays where appropriate. Please take this into account before booking holidays during term time during the upcoming academic year. As detailed below, the penalty notices are now more severe and monitoring is completed over a 3-yearly basis.

Unauthorised Absences

As part of the new national threshold, schools must consider all unauthorised absences for a penalty notice as well. The new threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school day is divided in to two registration sessions, AM and PM. If these registrations are missed for unauthorised reasons, it may lead to penalty.

Unauthorised absence can be:

- An unauthorised holiday, as explained above
- Reason has not been established as to why the child is absent,
- The school is not satisfied that the reason given is one that can be recorded as authorised due to regular repeated absences without medical evidence
- Being late after registers have closed

Fixed Penalty Notices

Whilst there are many changes, one of the most significant changes are around the penalty notices issued by the local authority for unauthorised attendance. These penalty notices are per parent, per child and have been increased.

First Offence:

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days

Second Offence (within 3 rolling years):

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be:

£160 per parent per child paid within 28 days.



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Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 rolling years):

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates Court.

Below, please see information provided by the Department for Education regarding attendance at school.

Attendance: the top facts to know & share



The link between attendance and attainment is clear:

- In 2018/19, **just 40% of persistently absent (PA) children in KS2 achieved expected KS2 standards**, compared with 84% of pupils who regularly attended school.
- **36% of PA children in KS4 got 9 to 4 in their English and maths GCSEs**, compared with 84% of regular attenders.

And it's never too late to benefit from good attendance:

- **More than half (54%)** of pupils who were **PA in Year 10 and then rarely absent in Year 11, passed at least 5 GCSEs**, compared to 36% of pupils who were persistently absent in both years.

But attendance is important for more than just attainment:

- Regular school attendance can facilitate **positive peer relationships**, which is a **protective factor for mental health and wellbeing**.

Attendance in the first week of school in September sets up attendance throughout the year (and it's time to start preparing for back to school now):

- Evidence from a Children's Commissioner report showed that children who miss one of the first few days of the new term for unauthorised reasons are much more likely to miss long periods of their schooling than their peers who attended those first few days. These children had a predicted overall absence of almost 45%, or 31 days across the term.
- In the 2022/23 academic year, of those who had at least one day of absence in the first week of term, 55.5% went on to be persistently absent.

Thank you for your continued support with attendance and I hope to be celebrating improvements in attendance across the next academic year.

Yours sincerely,

Dawn McAughey



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