



# Attendance Policy:

## Harden Primary School



Approval date:	Sept 2025
Approved by:	Local Advisory Board
Next review:	Sept 2026

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 attendance and punctuality expectations of pupils and parents, including start and close of the day, register closing times and the processes for requesting leaves of absence and informing the School/Academy of the reason for an unexpected absence.

The schools 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 name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school.***

**Leanne Ruddock, Headteacher, Harden Primary School**

***Information and contact details of the school staff who pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis and for more detailed support on attendance.***

**Danielle Warrener, Office Manager, Harden Primary School**

***The School/Academy's day-to-day processes for managing attendance, for example first day calling and processes to follow up on unexplained absence.***

The School/Academy 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 the attendance policy the length of time the register will be open, after which a pupil will be marked as absent. **The register opens at 8:30am and closes at 9am.**
- Expect parents to contact the School/Academy when their child is absent to explain the reason and we 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.
- Expect parents to understand their responsibility to keep the School/Academy 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.

- Identify any absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents to understand why and when the pupil will return.
- 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/Academy (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 the School/Academy is promoting and incentivising good attendance.***

#### **Good attendance**

Attendance above 98% is classed as good attendance.

Attendance below 90%, a child is classed as a persistent absentee.

Good attendance is celebrated and encouraged at Harden Primary School by a variety of means:

- A class attendance certificate, with incentive, for 100% attendance.
- Attendance recognition for children with good attendance, 98% or above, throughout an academic year.

The Headteacher, with support of the office staff, regularly monitors absence each half term. Any child who has a pattern of absence or has absence below 95% will be contacted to discuss reasons and offered support as necessary.

### ***The School/Academy's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most.***

The School/Academy 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/Academy 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.

### ***The School/Academy's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority (Bradford Council).***

***The point at which Fixed Penalty Notices for absence and other sanctions will be sought if support is not appropriate (e.g. for an unauthorised holiday in term time), not successful, or not engaged with.***

***From 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024, the Department for Education (DfE) introduced Notices to Improve as a final opportunity for parents to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. They also introduced a more consistent approach to penalties. The minimum fine increased from £60 to £80 per parent and, if the parent fails to pay the fine within 21 days, this is raised from £120 to £160. Only two fines can be issued to the same***

***parent for the same child within a three-year period. A second penalty notice will be charged at £160. The government says a school must consider a fine if a pupil misses 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks across one or more terms or school years. The absence includes late after the register has closed. The Council has the discretion to issue fines before such thresholds have been met, e.g. repeated short holidays and absence for birthdays. The school must share daily attendance data with the government. Schools must provide the Council and (if applicable) social worker and/or youth offending team worker, the name and address of children who miss 15 consecutive days.***

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

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. The School/Academy 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. School is not permitted to grant pupils leave to participate in protests.

Where engagement in support is proving challenging, the School/Academy 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.
- From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, 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 10 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 the School/Academy 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, the School/Academy 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.

To avoid prosecution, parents should provide the school with the appropriate evidence required to avoid unauthorised absences been recorded in the school attendance register **before** prosecution proceedings commence, i.e. immediately at the start of each and every absence. Once prosecution processes commences, the parent will need to present their case to the Council's Prosecution Team and potentially Court of Law for a decision on whether the parent will be prosecuted.

## A quick guide to attendance for parents

<i>The law entitles every child of compulsory school age (age 5+) to an efficient, full-time education</i>	<i>Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly</i>
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<i>This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment (learning), wellbeing, and wider life chances</i>	<i>The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have high rates of attendance</i>
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**The school day starts at 8:30am**

**The register closes at 9:00am**

**Breakfast Club is available from  
Spring field Breakfast and after  
school club.**

**School finishes at 3:00pm.**

Good attendance is **celebrated and rewarded**, including weekly class certificates for classes with 100%.

Non-authorised 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 telephone the school office by 8:30am on the first day of absence and each subsequent day.

The Senior Leader responsible for attendance is Leanne Ruddock, Headteacher.

To report an absence, please contact the school office by telephone 01535 273847 or email [parents@hardenprimaryacademy.co.uk](mailto:parents@hardenprimaryacademy.co.uk).

To discuss your child's attendance, please contact **the school office** by telephone: 01535 273847

**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

We would like all children to have **100% attendance** at school but taking into account a child being too ill to attend school, the expected attendance for your child is **at least 95%**.

**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:

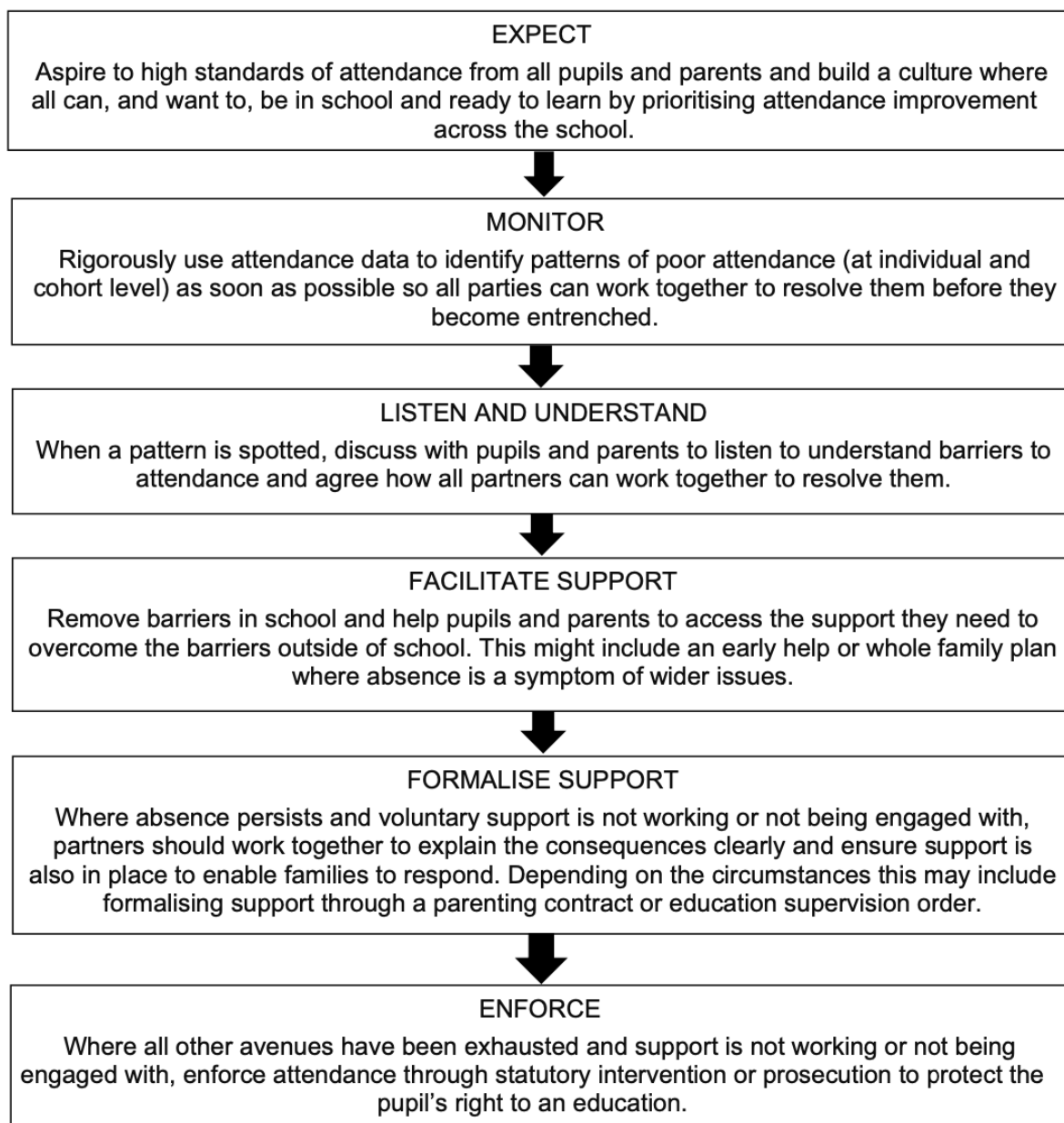
- Recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the School/Academy's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- Recognise the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, 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.
- Are mindful of pupil absence from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational need and/or disability, and provide them with additional support.
- Recognise many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations and variable moods. But, we expect these pupils to attend school regularly.

In addition, we:

- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- 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.

We will work with partners to:



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

The School/Academy 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.

The School/Academy has also adopted the Local Authority Policies on Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education. The School/Academy also follows Local Authority guidance in relation to coding absence for families who travel as part of their culture. All these policies have been endorsed by the School's Local Advisory Board/Trust Board, which support the School/Academy in all attempts to improve the attendance and safeguarding agenda.

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>