



# ATTENDANCE & CHILDREN ABSENT FROM EDUCATION POLICY



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<b>Next review</b>	April 2027	

## Scope of this policy

Brackenfield School is committed to promoting excellent attendance and safeguarding pupils who may be at risk of missing education. This policy applies to all pupils, including those in EYFS and those with SEND and has regard to:

- **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024** (in force 19 Aug 2024) — including electronic registers, standardised national attendance codes, record retention (min. 6 years), and addition/deletion returns to the local authority.
- **Working together to improve school attendance** (DfE statutory guidance, applies to independent schools), August 2024.
- **Children Missing Education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools** (DfE, Sept 2025, statutory for schools and LAs).
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025** (DfE statutory guidance).
- **Independent School Standards** (ISSR, Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils).

Brackenfield School is committed to promoting excellent attendance and safeguarding pupils who may be at risk of missing education.

This school is legally required to follow Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, August 2024), which is now statutory guidance for all independent schools.

Children missing education are defined as those who are not on a school roll or receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. Those who are regularly absent or have missed ten school days or more without permission may be at risk of becoming children missing education. While not all cases will involve safeguarding concerns, some children are at risk of exploitation, neglect, or significant harm when disengaged from education.

## Risks

These 'missing' children can be vulnerable; it is essential that all services work together to identify and re-engage these children back into appropriate education provision as quickly as possible. It is important to establish, at the earliest possible stage, the reasons for the child being missing.

Possible reasons that should be considered include:

- Failure to start appropriate provision and never enter the system
- Stopped attending, due to illegal exclusion or withdrawal by parent/carers
- Failure to complete a transition between schools
- Children from refugee and asylum -seeking families
- Children from families who are highly mobile
- Children at risk of a forced marriage
- Children experiencing abuse and neglect
- Children supervised by the Youth Justice System

Children who remain disengaged from education are potentially exposed to higher degrees of risk such as anti-social behaviour and/or sexual exploitation. Families moving between local authority areas can sometimes lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system and consequently missing education.

When a child has moved, local authorities should check with other local authorities, either regionally or nationally, and share information to ascertain where the child is living.

Once the location of the child is established, the relevant local authority must ensure that the child is receiving an education either by attending a school or otherwise.

## Attendance Procedures

### When joining school

We hold more than one emergency contact number for every pupil to ensure we can contact a relevant person promptly when a child is absent or at risk. Staff recognise that being absent (as well as missing) from education can be a significant indicator of abuse, neglect or exploitation; attendance concerns are managed within our safeguarding procedures and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL).

Once a child joins from another setting, the DSLs will contact the previous setting to ask if there are any safeguarding and pastoral concerns. A digital form will be sent to the previous school to ascertain if there are any concerns in the first instance. If any concerns have been noted the DSLs will contact the previous school to discuss further. All of this information is logged on our Management Information System (MIS).

The digital form is printed and added to the child's paper file.

Teaching staff will ask the school office to obtain academic reports.

If there is no response to the initial digital form link sent via email, the DSLs will call the school directly and follow this up with a further email.

### Whilst in school

#### Admissions & Attendance Registers

The school maintains an electronic admission register and an electronic attendance register in line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Entries are retained for at least 6 years.

Absences are recorded using the correct codes as set out in DfE guidance. Where a pupil is absent without explanation, the school will make contact by 9.30am with the parent or carer on the first day of absence.

In line with the Department for Education's guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*, we use specific attendance codes to record term-time holiday requests. Holidays taken during term time are not routinely authorised and will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances. Where leave of absence is approved in advance by the Headmaster, the absence will be recorded using code C (exceptional circumstances). Where a pupil is taken on holiday without prior approval, or where a request has been declined and the absence still occurs, the absence will be recorded using

code **G** (unauthorised holiday). Parents and carers should be aware that unauthorised holidays may be referred to the Local Authority and could result in a penalty notice or other legal action in accordance with statutory attendance guidance. In addition, a letter is kept in the pupil's file.

### **Response to Unexplained Absence & Same Day Safeguarding Response**

If a pupil is absent without explanation, the office will make first-day contact by 9.30am. Where no contact is made, staff will escalate to the DSLs the same day to assess risk and agree next steps (e.g., same-day welfare check/home visit, contact additional emergency numbers, engage other professionals). Any known vulnerabilities will trigger immediate contact from us with children's social care and/or police as appropriate.

### **Sickness returns (15 days)**

Where illness leads to 15 days or 30 sessions (consecutive or cumulative) of absence during an academic year, the school will notify the Local Authority to prompt consideration of section 19 of the Education Act 1996 where the LA will look at alternative education provision, and we will work with the LA and family to plan support.

### **Monitoring and oversight**

The School Administrator and Headmaster share the role of Attendance Champions at Brackenfield School. In this role, they promote this policy, the importance of good attendance and they take ownership of liaising with families and staff to support good attendance at all times.

The Headmaster receives monthly attendance reports showing overall, vulnerable cohorts, persistent ( $\leq 90\%$ ) and severe ( $\leq 50\%$ ) absence. This is reviewed with SLT to identify patterns for :

- persistent absence
- severe absence
- vulnerable groups (SEND, children being supported by social workers)
- year-on-year and termly patterns

### **Children Missing in Education**

In the circumstances of a child going missing who is not known to any other agencies, the Headmaster will inform the Children Missing Education (CME) Officer (Julie Hodges 01609 532477 at NYCC Children's Safeguarding Board or the emergency LADO 01609 798005/01609 533080/cme.coordinator@northyorks.gov.uk) of any child who has not attended for 10 consecutive school days without provision of reasonable explanation. Prior to doing so, school should make enquiries to ascertain whether the child is still residing at the home address and is not attending or whether the child is missing.

### **Reporting**

The school submit SA25 forms monthly to the LA for all in-year admissions and leavers.

### **Other Agencies**

Where any agency in contact with children and families believes that a child is not on the roll of a school or receiving education otherwise, this information should be passed to the CME Officer with any details they have of the child in question.

## Response

From the first day that a child does not attend school and there is no explanation or authorisation of the absence, the following steps should be taken:

- Office staff will contact the parents/carers (person with parental responsibility for the child) to seek reassurance that the child is safe at home
- The outcome of the contact should be assessed and if there are any concerns a consultation with our DSL should take place to consider the child's vulnerability

In the following circumstances a referral to children's social care and /or the police should always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime
- The child is subject of a Child Protection plan
- The child is subject of section 47 enquiries
- The child is looked after (LAC)
- There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household

The answers to further questions could assist a judgement whether or not to inform children's social care and the police

- In which age range is the child?
- Is this very sudden and unexpected behaviour?
- Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- Was there a significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Has the child been a victim of bullying?
- Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g.: Does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Was the child noted to be depressed prior to their unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g.: Rites of passage, female genital mutilation or forced marriage planned for the child?
- Has the child a disability and/or special educational needs?
- Have there been past concerns about this child and family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying? e.g.
  - o Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?
  - o Is there any known history of domestic violence?
  - o Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?
  - o Is there any concern about extremist views?

## Children missing from education but not missing from home

The length of time that a child remains out of school could, of itself, be an alerting factor of risk of harm to the child. A judgement as to timeliness is required in respect of the referral to the local authority. This timeliness should be on a case by case basis.

In exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence can be authorised by the Headmaster, at which point a return date is set. In these cases, the time line for enquiries starts from when the child does not attend school on the expected return date, not from the day the authorised leave started.

### **Notifications and Actions for Children Missing from Education where there are Safeguarding Concerns**

If the answers to any of the points set out in the previous section indicate that there are concerns about the child's safety then a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and the Police on day one. Children's social care, who must be contacted as soon as possible in these circumstances, will also liaise with North Yorkshire Police in order to identify, and act upon, any suspicion of child abuse or child related crime.

We will work in collaboration with children's social care and the police and the DSLs should participate in any strategy discussions, section 47 enquiries and child protection conferences which may arise.

**Reasonable enquiry:** If the judgement reached on day one is that there is no reason to believe that the child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm, then the school should delay making a referral to allow them to make further reasonable enquiries. Reasonable enquiries include staff checking with all members of staff with whom the child may have had contact, with the pupil's friends and their parents, siblings and known relatives at school, and others. The speed at which these reasonable enquiries are made will depend upon any known or concerning factors that may arise through the enquiry process.

School staff should also make telephone calls to any numbers held on record or identified and send a letter to the last known address. Home visits can be made by school based staff in consultation with local authority staff.

**Further Actions:** If the above response is unsuccessful, the school should contact the aforementioned CME Officer, referring the child as missing in education and providing the details of the completed enquiries we have made. The LA should make enquiries by visiting the child's home and asking for information from the family's neighbours and their local community - a risk assessment of this activity will be needed along with a decision about whether this is appropriate.

The CME Officer should also check databases within the local authority, use agreed protocols to check local databases, e.g. housing, health and the police; check with agencies known to be involved with the family, with any local authority the child may have moved from originally, and with any local authority to which the child may have moved.

The child's circumstances and vulnerability should be reviewed and reassessed regularly and jointly by the CME Officer in consultation with children's social care and the police, as appropriate.

### **Child missing from school for more than four weeks**

A child may not be removed from the school roll before the end of four weeks, unless located in an alternative educational provision. The CME Officer will inform the school when they can remove from roll.

## **Leave of Absence During Term Time (Including Holidays)**

Parents and carers are expected to arrange holidays outside of school term time. Leave of absence during term time will not normally be authorised.

### Exceptional Circumstances

The Headmaster may authorise a leave of absence during term time only where satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply. Each request is considered individually and there is no automatic entitlement to such leave.

In making a decision, the Headmaster will consider:

- The pupil's attendance record and educational needs
- The length and timing of the requested absence
- Any safeguarding or welfare concerns

Family holidays, travel convenience, cost, or parental work commitments are not normally regarded as exceptional circumstances.

### Requests and Recording

- All requests must be made in advance and in writing.
- Parents will be informed in writing whether the leave is authorised.
- Absences are recorded using DfE national attendance codes; unauthorised leave will be recorded accordingly.

### Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

The school recognises that unauthorised or extended absences may increase safeguarding risk. Failure to return following authorised leave, or any unauthorised term-time absence, will be managed in line with the school's Children Missing Education and safeguarding procedures, including referral to the Local Authority where statutory thresholds are met.

<p><b>Name of policy</b> Attendance &amp; Children Missing from Education Policy</p>	<p><b>Policy reviewed/amended date</b> 11/08/2022 – Policy name amended (V2) 24/09/2022 – Policy reviewed (V3) March 2023 – Appendix added V4 August 2023 – Policy Reviewed V5 November 2023 – Policy name amended V6 September 2024 – (V7) September 2025 – (V8) May 2026 – (V9) (mistake corrected)</p>
<p><b>Original policy date</b> September 2021</p>	<p><b>Current version</b> <b>V10</b></p>
<p><b>Date of new review</b> April 2027</p>	

**CME - Referral to Children Missing Education Co-ordinator**

*To be used immediately where there has been 10 days unauthorised absence/no response by parent/carer to enquiries made/a destination school is not known and/or there are welfare concerns regarding the child.*

<b>Name of School:</b>	
<b>Name of Referrer:</b>	
<b>Date of Referral:</b>	
<b>Name of Pupil:</b>	
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	
<b>UPN No. (if Known):</b>	
<b>Gender:</b>	
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	

<b>Date last attended school:</b>	
<b>Name of parent(s) /carer(s):</b>	
<b>Last known home address:</b>	
<b>All known contact numbers:</b>	
<b>Sibling details and school:</b>	

### Initial Action Checklist

Actions taken:	Dates:	Person Responsible:	
First Day Contact			
Telephone calls to all contact details held			
Letter to parent/carers last known address			
Contact with other schools with siblings			
Enquiries made with friends of the pupil in the school and their family			
<b>Is the status of the child/young person: (please tick those that are appropriate)</b>			
Looked After	<input type="checkbox"/>	Child in Need	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	CAF – (Prevention Service)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Traveller/Gypsy/Roma	<input type="checkbox"/>
Temporary Accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other agencies involved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Armed Forces	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

**Any other relevant information:**

**If there is a significant risk of harm regarding a child, then the school's Designated Person for Child Protection should be informed and contact made with the CME Coordinator for the situation to be logged and action taken urgently.**

**Please email this referral to Julie Hodges (Children Missing Education Co-ordinator) at:**

[CME.Coordinator@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:CME.Coordinator@northyorks.gov.uk)

[Julie.Hodges@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.Hodges@northyorks.gov.uk)