Belfairs Academy



Attendance Policy

September 2026

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The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our academy is Mr Gregory Rudolfo.

The attendance officer in our academy is Mrs Charlie Smith.

Collaboratively, they provide strategic oversight of attendance across the academy, ensuring attendance remains a priority within school improvement, safeguarding and pupil wellbeing agendas. The Senior Attendance Champion and Attendance Officer work with staff, families, governors and external agencies

to promote excellent attendance and address barriers to education.

The contact details parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis:

Attendance Team:

- Text: 07860 054357
- Email: attendance@belfairsacademy.org.uk
- Phone to leave a voicemail: 01702 509000 (option 1)
- for Post-16 students please dial for extension 205
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The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis or for more individual support with attendance:

Mrs Charlie Smith, Attendance Officer

Charlie.smith@belfairsacademy.org.uk

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1. Legislative Context: School Attendance and the Law

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age 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 either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. 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 or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "Working together to improve school attendance" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our Academy Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our academy ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the academy's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

In addition, the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026**, emphasises the importance of understanding the vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education and the safeguarding risks associated with poor

attendance. Attendance is a key safeguarding indicator and forms part of the academy's wider safeguarding arrangements.

2. Academy Context: Expectations of all parents and pupils for regular school attendance

Belfairs Academy recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

We aim to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- Raising and maintaining a whole academy awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently
- Working in partnership with pupils and parents to identify any barriers to academy attendance and work together to overcome these barriers
- Being mindful of the link between non-academy attendance and pupil safety

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at the academy, on time, every day the academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this academy that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the Head of School, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

3. Promoting Regular Attendance

Attendance is everyone's responsibility and is a key safeguarding priority at Belfairs Academy. The academy recognises that poor attendance, persistent absence, severe absence, repeated lateness and unexplained absence may be indicators of wider safeguarding concerns.

Attendance information is routinely considered alongside safeguarding, behaviour, wellbeing, SEND, attainment and pastoral information to identify risks at the earliest opportunity. Staff will remain professionally curious and seek to understand the reasons behind absence patterns, particularly where there are concerns regarding neglect, emotional wellbeing, child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, online safety, substance misuse, mental health difficulties or other vulnerabilities.

Where attendance concerns form part of a wider safeguarding picture, referrals may be made to Children's Social Care, Early Help or other appropriate external agencies.

At Belfairs Academy, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our academy's vision, values, ethos and day-to-day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The academy recognises that prolonged absence from school may increase a child's vulnerability to online harms and exploitation. Consideration of online safety risks will therefore form part of attendance and safeguarding assessments where appropriate.

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Pupil absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at the academy is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from the academy, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of academy staff. Missed schooling impacts on pupil achievement and social development. This means that:

- pupils fall behind in their learning and struggle to catch up
- social aspects of academy life are disrupted which impacts friendship groups
- pupils miss wider opportunities such as clubs, visits and trips

In order to prevent this, we have set an aspirational target for every pupil.

Our Aspirational Target is 95%

We will achieve this by:

Reporting effectively

- Submitting a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools
- Accurately completing admission and attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law
- Contacting parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the academy's target for attendance

Working in partnership with parents/carers

- Building strong relationships and work jointly with families
- Giving parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Reporting to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress

Engaging pupils

- Promoting the benefits of high attendance
- Celebrating excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- Rewarding good or improving attendance
- Promoting and incentivising positive academy attendance.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Our school leaders, including our attendance champion monitor and review all pupils' absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. We particularly shine a light on:

- Slippage below 95% attendance (up to 18 days missed learning per year)
- Persistent absence (over 19 days missed learning per year)
- Severely persistent absence (50% missed learning)
- Extended holidays

Governors hold school leaders to account for attendance performance and receive regular attendance reports. Governors provide both challenge and support regarding attendance outcomes and monitor the effectiveness of attendance strategies as part of their wider safeguarding responsibilities.

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit pupil attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis - Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We 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, including the attendance support service in the local authority.

5. Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from the academy has to be classified by the academy (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from the academy for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the academy referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absence includes: parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn;

- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at the academy after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however is counted as an absence for the session;
- shopping trips;
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- their own or family birthdays;
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Head of School, including any arranged by other family members or friends;
- day trips;
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

(however this list is not exhaustive)

6. Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a **'persistent absentee'** when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent'**. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

7. **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular academy attendance patterns. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through academy life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Belfairs Academy are:

Breakfast Club is open from 7.15am each morning for all students

All students are expected to be in the academy by: 8.35am

Period 1 Starts: 8.40am

Registration closes: 9.10am

End of the academy day: 2.45pm

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at ***8.40am*** when Period 1 begins.
- Registers are taken by ***8.50am;***
- Children arriving after ***8.40am*** are required to come into school via the Café. Students will be signed in by a member of staff after 8.40 who will ask for a reason for lateness.
- At ***9.10am*** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence;
- Parents/carers should contact the Attendance Team on 01702 509000 (option 1) to report reasons for lateness.
- The academy may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns;

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with SLT member in charge of attendance but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to the academy on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as an academy, we celebrate good tutor group and individual punctuality.

Late to academy detentions:

If a child arrives late without valid reason, they will be issued an after school detention for the same day for 15 minutes.

Failure to attend the detention will result in a escalation. This is communicated to parents via email.

Late to lesson detentions:

If a student is late to two or more lessons in a day, an email will be sent home to parents/carers and the student will sit a 30-minute detention on the same day.

8. How to notify the academy of pupil absence

If a child is absent from school the parent must follow the following procedures.

To advise your child will be absent from the academy or late, please contact us by 8.30am in one of the following ways:

- **by text: 07860 054357**
- **by email: attendance@belfairsacademy.org.uk**
- **by phone to leave a voicemail – 01702 509000 (option 1)**
- **for Post-16 students please dial for extension 205**

Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 8.30*am;*

Ensure that your child returns to the academy as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS guidance on Childhood Illness and Southend City Council School Attendance Guidance.

If your child is absent we will:

- Text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us;
- If we are unable to make contact with parents/carers by text, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding;
- Unexplained absence will be treated as a safeguarding concern where appropriate. The academy will undertake proportionate safeguarding enquiries, including welfare calls, emergency contact checks and home visits where necessary. A referral to the Local Authority may be made at any stage where safeguarding concerns exist. In all cases, pupils absent without explanation for prolonged periods will be managed in accordance with Children Missing Education procedures.
- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be "missing from education."

If absence continues we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95% or causing concern and/or where punctuality is a concern;

- If attendance falls below 93%, we will arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with our SLT member in charge of attendance, or Year Leader along with our Attendance Officer, Mrs Smith, to identify barriers to school attendance
- Create a personalised action plan in the form of an attendance contract, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear, each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child;
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

9. Understanding barriers to attendance

Belfairs Academy recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to regular attendance and may require enhanced support.
Particular attention will be given to:

- Children in Need
- Children subject to Child Protection Plans
- Looked After and Previously Looked After Children
- Pupils with SEND and EHCPs
- Young carers
- Pupils experiencing mental health difficulties
- Pupils who are electively home educated following previous attendance concerns
- Pupils living in temporary accommodation
- Pupils attending alternative provision
- Pupils identified as being at risk of exploitation

Attendance support will take account of individual circumstances whilst maintaining high expectations for attendance for all pupils.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the academy, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend the academy, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority teams. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

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, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils, however we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to advise the Local Authority of all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness. Where a pupil's medical condition prevents attendance for an extended period, the academy will work with parents, medical professionals and the Local Authority to consider whether alternative educational provision may be appropriate under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.

The academy recognises that some pupils may experience emotionally based barriers to attendance. Where concerns regarding emotionally based school avoidance are identified, the academy will work collaboratively with pupils, parents, external professionals and support services to understand barriers and implement a graduated programme of support.

Strategies may include reasonable adjustments, safe spaces, mentoring, pastoral support, phased reintegration, and referrals to appropriate external agencies.

The name and contact details of the staff member, pupils and parents should contact for more detailed support on attendance:

Mrs Charlie Smith, Attendance Officer

charlie.smith@belfairsacademy.org.uk

10. National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include:

- issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence)
- a second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period, will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child.
- If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court.
- If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison.
- If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

11. **Exceptional Circumstances**

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of Belfairs Academy that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Head of School, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Head of School or her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the academy. The academy will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the academy, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Southend-on-Sea's Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

At Belfairs Academy 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:
... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the Head of School). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The Head of School may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is authorised, the academy will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away. GCSE students should keep up to date with their revision.

12. Removal from Roll

For any pupil leaving Belfairs Academy other than at the end of Year 11, parents/carers should make the Attendance Team aware. Parents/carers are required to email the Attendance Team at attendance@belfairsacademy.org.uk and provide the name of the child along with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name and address of new school, along with the proposed date of enrollment. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all of our pupils, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parents keep the academy updated with current addresses and contact details for the pupil and key family members, in case of an emergency.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are now **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.