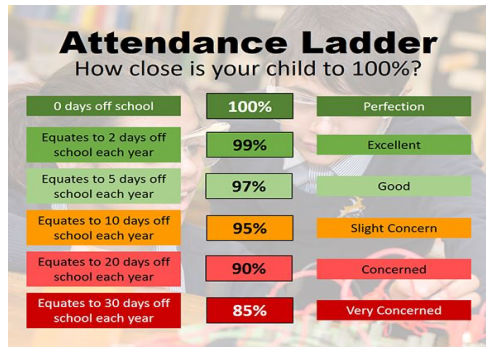




Berkeley Primary Attendance News – June 2024

Please read to the bottom for important changes to penalty notices for non-attendance.

Every Child • Every Chance • Every Day

We continue to strive to improve our children's attendance back to pre-Covid levels (over 97%) – our attendance is currently a way off this at 94.56%. We want every child to be 100% - as our school motto says 'Every Child, Every Chance, Every day' – every day counts and we want all our children to be in school.

Good attendance is essential for a successful future for your child. Research shows that some young people who regularly miss school can be drawn into anti-social behaviour or crime. We want all our children to be happy and achieve, we want them to have a good education so they have choices and opportunities in adult life.

We monitor attendance very carefully so that we can support families. The Government have defined the 'persistent absence threshold' as 90%. We write and speak to parents on a regular basis if their attendance or punctuality is causing a concern and put in place measures to try to improve this.

We are about to complete another attendance review and we will be sending letters out to parents informing them if their child's attendance has fallen below the desired level. Please work with us to try and improve your child's attendance at school.

I am delighted to say that 183 children from Nursery to Year 6 have had 100% attendance over the Spring term 2024 and received a certificate for this. This is an amazing achievement – well done to these children and to their parents.

Holidays / Leave of absence in term time

Recently we have had an increase in the amount of parents taking children on holiday during term time, often for a considerable amount of time, this is really affecting children's routines and education. As you can see from the table, having 10 days off school for a holiday equates to a 5% drop in attendance across the year – this is a significant drop.

Please do not book holidays during school term dates, please book in the 13 weeks of holidays that we have. We have lots of transition plans in place for this term and it is important children are here for these activities.

The worst week you can book for a holiday is the first week back in September, as this is when children are settling back in to school, sorting all the new routines and expectations with their new class teacher and forming new friendships – please do not book a holiday at this time.

In summary, the legislation states that:

- the current law does **not** give parents any entitlement to take their children out of school for a holiday during term time;
- any application for leave must only be in 'exceptional' circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are 'exceptional';

- in 'exceptional circumstances' a request for absence must be made in advance to the Headteacher, who will inform you of his/her decision prior to booking the leave;
- if a request for leave is not authorised by the Headteacher and the pupil does not attend school, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**, which then stays on a child's permanent record;
- parents

We are required by law to report unauthorised absences to the Local Authority, who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice, which means a parent may be fined by the Education Inclusion Service (EIS). I must also make parents aware that due to equalities legislation, fixed penalty notices will now be issued to all parents who have parental responsibility and whom can be traced. Please be aware that the proceeds from fixed penalty fines DO NOT go to the school.

NEW Department for Education (DfE) Information

Fines for parents for taking children out of school: What you need to know and New National Framework for Penalty Notices

The DfE are introducing a new national framework which will mean all councils have the same rules in place for when they need to consider a fine. From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be **£80 if paid within 21 days**, or **£160 if paid within 28 days**. This rate is in line with inflation and is the first increase since 2012.

In the case of **repeated fines**, if a parent receives a **second fine** for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the **higher rate of £160**.

Fines per parent will be capped to **two fines within any three-year period**. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a **fine of up to £2,500**.

What happens if my child misses school without a good reason?

If your child is absent and you haven't received advance permission from the headteacher to take your child out of school, the school and local council may take action. Before that, your child's school and your local council are expected to support you to improve the child's attendance before any measures are put in place. These measures can include:

- **Issue a fixed penalty notice, otherwise known as a 'fine'** – your local council can give each parent a fine. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.
- **Seek an Education Supervision Order from the family court** – if the council thinks you need support getting your child to go to school but you're not co-operating, they can apply to a court for an Education Supervision Order. A supervisor will be appointed to help you get your child into education. The local council can do this instead of, or as well as, prosecuting you.
- **Prosecute you** – this means you have to go to court. You could get a fine, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court could also give you a Parenting Order.

Why is attendance important?

For most pupils, the best place to be during term-time is school, surrounded by the support of their friends and teachers. This is important not just for your child's learning, but also for their overall wellbeing, wider development and their mental health.

If you have any questions about the school attendance procedures, please do not hesitate to contact the school. Please accept my thanks for your full support in attendance and punctuality matters.

Anna Cvijetic
Headteacher