HEAD TEACHER'S
EDUCATION BULLETIN
October - 2026

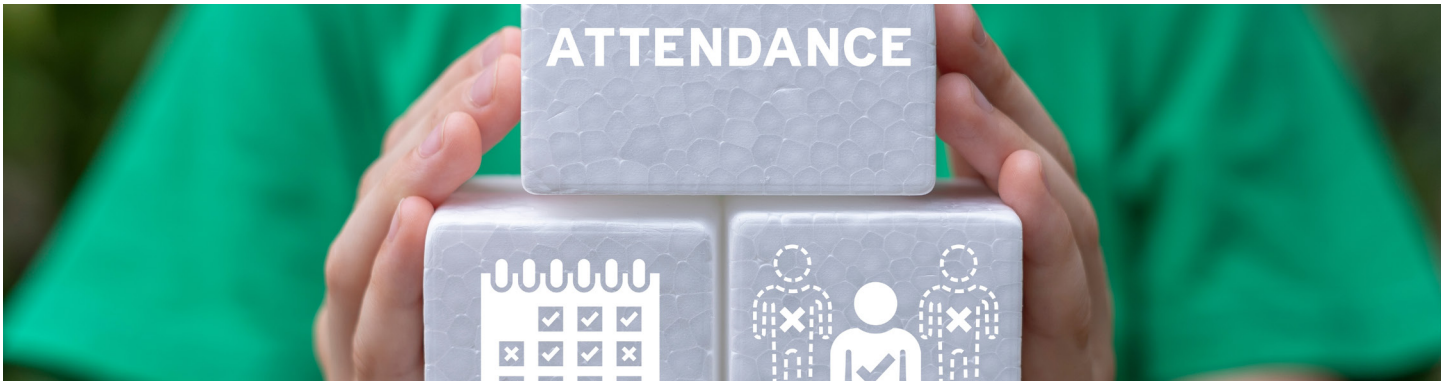
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ATTENDANCE POST-COVID

During my first 4 years at Bewdley prior to COVID, attendance at our school was around 1% above the national average, which hovered around 95%. The long-term psychological effect of lockdown has been profound on both children and their families, with an acclimatisation to missing school being embedded in a significant minority of families. The result for us is that last school year our attendance was around 0.5% below national average, and this year it is around national average at 93%. The critical thing is not the percentage, it is the days of education lost. We have 190 teaching days in the school year, so every percentage point lost is almost 2 days, and at 93% this means that on average students would miss 13 days of learning during the year. Many are missing much more.

The impact of this has been substantial, and whilst our GCSE results last year held up well within the Wyre Forest, as a region Wyre Forest is significantly below national averages. This is not always well understood, as for local progression and employment, students are competing within the local environment. However, as soon as students wish to go further afield for apprenticeships, further or higher education, they will be significantly disadvantaged. You will therefore see us tightening up some of our processes with regard to attendance and behaviour, in order to improve student engagement with learning. A much deeper and more important priority for us though, is to improve our family engagement, so do expect to hear more about this during the year.



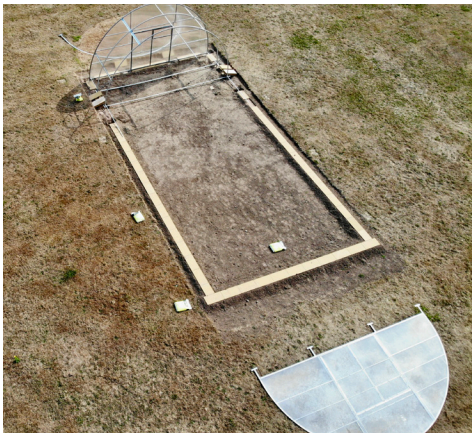
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ENRICHMENT UPDATE

Another important motivator for school attendance is the level of enjoyment students experience at school, and enrichment opportunities can be a critical factor in this. Our new enrichment programme has been running for half a term, with good membership across most clubs. In order to give students who missed out on full clubs the first time round an opportunity, we will be relaunching our whole enrichment programme next half term. If students wish to continue with the clubs they are attending, they will need to sign up again over half-term.

Clubs will open up for signup in the arbor app at 9 AM on Monday 26th October.
There have been some questions about after school enrichment. The main focus for after school will be curriculum based activities and sports fixtures.

We have also made some progress with our environment based and sustainability project work. Ms Morgan's enrichment club planted a new orchard before the summer break, and our fantastic site team have built our 12m by 6m polytunnel over the summer. Students are in process of making raised beds and we will be planting fruit trees during November. Our aim is to grow food that can be served by our kitchen, so that we can demonstrate to our students the value of sustainable food supply.







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HEALTH AND BENEDICT'S LAW

The second half of this term is always the most difficult time of year for sickness and health problems, so this is a good opportunity to pass on the health advice we are given as a school. Infection control is incredibly important and includes regular hand washing with warm water and soap after using the toilet and before eating. Airborne infections are best dealt with by tissues and hand washing, and avoiding touching your face, particularly eyes, nose and mouth. Healthy habits include regular hydration, plenty of sleep, a well balanced diet with plenty of fruit and veg and regular exercise. All of these things support the immune system and help to fight infections.

With the introduction of Benedict's Law in September, there are new requirements for schools regarding the management of students who have allergies and so are at risk of anaphylaxis, which can be fatal. Families of students who have an NHS Allergy Care Plan have already been contacted to ensure that key measures and procedures are in place to protect these children. It is crucial, if a student at the school has any allergy, that we are told about this as a matter of urgency. Even the mildest allergies can rapidly worsen, so if your child has an allergy, we need to know. The key to the new law is communication and every student in the school needs to be aware not to bring allergens into contact with those at risk. You can find our 'Allergy and Anaphylaxis' policy on our website.



'Benedict's Law
designed to improve allergy safety in schools'

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SOCIAL MEDIA, LEARNING AND FEEDBACK

Whilst a lot was said in our bulletins last year about the potential for harmful effects of mobile phone use in our transition to a phone free school, I would like to focus specifically on the expansion of digital technology and social media in this bulletin. Before I do, I would like to thank all Bewdley parents and families for the excellent support the school has been given with regard to our transition to becoming a phone free school. The implementation of Yondr pouches has been much smoother that we could have anticipated, and with only minor issues, students have adjusted exceptionally well. Thank you.

My deeper concern regarding regular and extended social media use is its effect on the teenage brain. This is well documented in the research literature and I am not a psychologist, but in brief, this focuses on the neurobiological implications of social media use, particularly the role of dopamine reward pathways in reinforcing compulsive behaviours. What we are seeing in the classroom, is significant numbers of students who are only able to participate meaningfully in learning, when given constant positive feedback for what 10 years ago would have been normal behaviours. This is exhausting for teachers and very distracting from learning.

I was in Australia in 2024 when their social media ban was introduced for under 16's, which took effect on 10th December 2025. The same model is being adopted here, and will take effect in **Spring 2027**, which includes platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook and X. We are already a year or more behind other countries, and I would like to encourage parents to take the initiative on this issue, and get ahead of the ban in restricting access for their children.

The week we return after the half-term break is international stress awareness week. I will be talking about this and the broader issue of developing resilience, in my year group assemblies throughout that week.

'International stress awareness week

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