

Policy Title: Attendance Policy



Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College believes that we give a high priority to our students' educational achievement and believe that maximum student attendance and punctuality are essential in order for all young people to achieve their full potential, supporting the Every Child Matters' agenda.

Initiated: June 2009

Groups consulted: Governors
Staff

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Audience: Parents
Staff
Governors

Policy located: Portal (Staff, Parents

Policy format: Full

Policy relates to : Student Attendance Guidelines

Lead member of staff: Jim Browning

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Introduction

The Staff and Governing Body at Blatchington Mill School and 6th Form College give a high priority to its students' educational achievement and believe that maximum student attendance and punctuality are essential in order for all young people to achieve their full potential, supporting the Every Child Matters' agenda. This policy has been introduced in order to help achieve this aim and the staff and governors are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that it is effectively and appropriately implemented.

Whole school attendance targets are set annually.

2. Background and Principles

There are strong and proven links between student attendance and educational achievement. Attendance of less than 95% (i.e. absences of 9.5 days or more out of the 190 student days in the school year) has been shown to compromise student attainment. At 90% attendance students miss the equivalent of almost 4 weeks education (19 days) and only 10% of students who are persistently absent from school achieve 5 A-C grades at GCSE.

The Elton report on Discipline in schools says that absence and lateness not only damages the educational progress of that specific student, but can also affect others in the class. Students in class may be neglected when teachers help late comers and absentees catch up with work. If schools do not tackle the problem the message to students and parents is that teachers do not care if students attend or are punctual.

3. Definitions of absence

Students should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing, by text, by phone or email.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. This includes:

- - Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- - truancy before or during the school day
- - absences which have never been properly explained
- - children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- - shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- - day trips and holidays in term time which have not been authorised.

This type of absence can lead to the School using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Whilst any student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best addressed between the school, the parents/carers and the child as soon as they are identified.

4. Persistent Absenteeism

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance falls below 80% across the school year for whatever reason. **(As a result the student will be placed on the 'additional educational needs register')**. This means a student is missing, on average, one day a week. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to any student's educational prospects. The school needs parents/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. The LA's Education Welfare Service will be informed of any student who is persistently absent. **This may result in a parent contract being drawn up by the school.**

5. Holidays requests/ Term time absence

Time off school for holidays is not a right. The Head Teacher can allow up to 10 days absence but will only authorise absence of any length in exceptional circumstances. Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis, by the Deputy Head who has oversight for attendance.

Planned absences during term-time for holidays are not allowed without prior authorisation from the Head Teacher and parents/carers are therefore discouraged from arranging holidays, either in the UK or abroad, or visits to their country of family origin, during term-time.

The school operates a formal application process for parents/carers wishing to take the young person out of school during term times. An application should be made to the Head Teacher on a form obtained from the school office, at least ten days in advance. The application does not, in itself, guarantee that the request will be authorised.

The Head Teacher is authorised to turn applications down and refuse permission for parents/carers to take their children out of school during term time. Such a decision will have been made in the best interests of the student's educational progress and attainment and with due regard to their previous attendance record.

Parents who take their children out of school during term time without the authorisation of the Head teacher not only damage their children's educational opportunities but also risk being issued with a penalty notice, being prosecuted in court and losing the young persons' place at the school.

6. Absence in exceptional circumstances

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interests of the child nor wholly appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. School and school friendships and relationships can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background to life during times of upheaval. However, where the Head Teacher judges there to be genuine and pressing reasons for a student to be absent during term-time, they may agree up to a maximum of 10 consecutive days absence in any one school year in exceptional circumstances.

7. Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must

- Contact us before 9.30 on the first day of absence;
- Send a note/e-mail on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence - you must do this even if you have already telephoned us. The note may be written in the student's planner;
- If the reason for the absence is sickness and it is likely that the absence will continue for more than a week, medical evidence should be obtained and sent to the school.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on each day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Year Leader or Learning Development Officer (LDO) if absence persists;
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service if the situation does not improve.

8. Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Students must attend on time to morning registration to get important information for the day. Late arrival to lessons disrupts teaching and learning.

How we manage lateness:

8.25am – The warning bell sounds, school day starts and we expect your child to be in registration.

8.35am - Registers are downloaded and the student will receive a late mark and the possibility of sanctions from their form tutor or Year Leader if they arrive after this time.

8.45am – Students arriving after this time must sign in at Student Services.

9.55am – Students arriving after this time will not receive a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child is persistently late, you will be contacted by the Year Leader or the LDO to resolve the issue. If you are having problems getting your child to school on time, for whatever reason, please contact the school. Lateness to lessons is dealt with by the subject teacher and sanctions will be imposed where appropriate.

9. Strategies for maximising attendance

- Individual certificates will be presented termly to students who have achieved 100% attendance that term.
- Attendance and punctuality will be promoted through assemblies and rewards given to forms with the highest monthly attendance.
- If a child's attendance level drops below 92%, the Year Leader will commence close monitoring of that child's attendance level.
- If a child's attendance level drops below 90%, the Year Leader/LDO will write to the parents.
- If a child's attendance level drops below 85%, the Year Leader/LDO will consult with the Deputy Head who has oversight of attendance.
- If a child's punctuality rate drops below 85%, the Year Leader/LDO will consult with the Deputy Head who has oversight of attendance.

10. Summary of Responsibilities

Students will:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the school day
- Tell a member of staff about any problem which is making it hard for them to attend school regularly.

Parents/carers will:

- Encourage their children to attend school every day and on time in accordance with the signed home/school agreement.
- Ensure that they contact the school by 9.30am whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Ensure that their children arrive in school fully prepared for the school day.
- Provide the school with up to date home, work and emergency contact numbers.
- Send a letter stating the reasons for and duration of all unauthorised absence upon the child's return.
- A request for absence in exceptional circumstances (see appendix 1) must be submitted in advance using the official 'request for absence' form obtained from and returned to student services (the Head Teacher will then inform you of the decision)
- Do not request term time absences during periods where there are public examinations and assessments (unless there are exceptional circumstances).
- Make arrangements to complete course-work or curriculum work if an extended period of absence has been agreed.
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Form/subject Teachers will:

- Ensure that registers are completed accurately and on time at the start of each session.
- Report any concerns relating to attendance to Student Services/LDOs.
- Use appropriate sanctions to address unexplained absence. For example curriculum detention, referral to curriculum leader, or contact home.

The Year Leader will:

- Monitor attendance and, where concerns are identified, consult with parents/carers/ outside agencies to agree actions to address identified issues.
- Provide appropriate work for long-term absences.
- Following a lengthy absence, the return to school and the reintegration of a student will be planned in conjunction with the young person, parent/carer, other agencies (as appropriate) and the Year Leader.
- Promote and reward excellent attendance by students.

The Head Teacher will:

- Oversee the Attendance policy.
- Set annual targets for attendance.
- Inform governors of attendance data through Head Teacher reports.

School Attendance Administrator will:

- Inform parents/carers of attendance percentages for their child/children via the annual profile.
- Input attendance data on a daily basis.
- Generate unexplained absence/punctuality letters to parents/carers.
- Support the Year Leader in monitoring and identifying levels of absence/lateness causing concern.

The Education Welfare Service will:

- Support the school to develop strategies to meet attendance targets.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the school has a whole school attendance policy in place.
- Receive annual reports from the Head teacher in respect of attendance data and trends.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the whole school policy.

11. Review

This policy will be subject to review and evaluation bi-annually.

12. Appendix 1 - Exceptional Circumstances

Acceptable reasons for absence:

- Medical when appointments cannot be obtained before/after school or in the holidays.
- Illness (a doctor's certificate/letter is required).
- Bereavement
- Holiday when requested for:
 - The observance of religious holidays
 - A family event e.g. a wedding plus travel.
 - On medical advice following a family crisis.

Unacceptable reasons for absence:

- Shopping trips
- Day trips
- 'Treats'
- Booking holidays because it is cheaper in term time.

13. Appendix 2 – Absence codes

ABSENCE CODES	DESCRIPTION
/	PRESENT (A.M.)
\	PRESENT (P.M.)
B	EDUCATED OFF SITE (NOT Dual registration)
C	OTHER AUTHORISED CIRCUMSTANCES (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
D	DUAL REGISTRATION (ie pupil attending other establishment)
E	EXCLUDED
F	EXTENDED FAMILY HOLIDAY (agreed)
G	FAMILY HOLIDAY (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)
H	FAMILY HOLIDAY (agreed)
I	ILLNESS (NOT medical or dental etc appointments)
J	INTERVIEW
L	LATE
M	MEDICAL/DENTAL (NOT Illness)
N	NO REASON YET PROVIDED FOR ABSENCE
O	UNAUTHORISED CIRCUMSTANCE (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
P	APPROVED SPORTING ACTIVITY
R	RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE
S	STUDY LEAVE
T	TRAVELLER ABSENCE
U	LATE (after registers closed)
V	EDUCATIONAL VISIT OR TRIP
W	WORK EXPERIENCE
X	DO NOT USE DFES# SCHOOL CLOSED TO PUPILS
Y	ENFORCED CLOSURE
Z	DO NOT USE
@	DO NOT USE
!	DO NOT USE DFES# Non-compulsary school age absence
#	SCHOOL CLOSED TO PUPILS
*	DFES Z: PUPIL NOT YET ON ROLL
-	ALL SHOULD ATTEND/NO MARK RECORDED