



Blatchington Mill School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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Date to be Reviewed:



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1. Policy Framework

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.

Initiated:	June 2009
Groups Consulted:	Governors Staff
Date Reviewed:	May 2015 by Governors' Committee January 2016 by Governors
Audience	Parents Staff Governors
Policy located:	Portal (Staff and Parents)
Policy Format:	Full
Policy Relates to:	Student Attendance Guidelines
Lead Member of Staff:	Lindsey Thompson



2. Attendance and Punctuality Policy

2.1 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. 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.

When taking decisions about issuing fixed penalty notices to parents for their child's poor attendance, the school adheres to the Brighton and Hove City Council Code of Conduct.

Whole school attendance targets are set annually.

2.2 Background and Principles

There are strong and proven links between student attendance and educational achievement. We are committed to working in partnership with Brighton & Hove City Council to reduce overall absence and persistent absence. The school supports Brighton and Hove City Council's Every Lesson Counts initiative and strives to ensure all staff, students, parents and carers place a high value on school attendance. We are committed to actively promoting Early Help and promoting multi-agency support for vulnerable children and their families.

When your child attends school punctually and on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. Regular attenders usually leave school with more qualifications and access to greater employment opportunities. When pupils apply for college placements or apply for employment, the school will be asked for a reference which includes a history of pupil's attendance and punctuality. If this is poor it could affect their ability to find employment or a college placement. Please note that the increase in participation age means pupils must stay in education or training until their 18th Birthday.

Brighton and Hove City Council's Every Lesson Counts initiative aims to raise awareness of the importance of regular attendance, helping schools, parents and children to



implement simple working practices to reduce absenteeism. If your child is missing lessons, this could affect their learning in the following ways:

- Your child's attainment and progress suffers when they are not in school
- Students suffer a break in the continuity of their learning or miss important topics.
- Students lack confidence due to the fact that they have missed mid-topic information and are unable to understand or catch up – much of the work missed is never made up, which puts students at a disadvantage at exam time.
- Disruption to your child's learning, friendships and social development.

What is good attendance?

At Blatchington Mill, we expect all our students to aim for 100% attendance and punctuality. We define good attendance as consistently over 95%:

2.3 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 and evidence about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably by text, phone, email or in writing.

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.

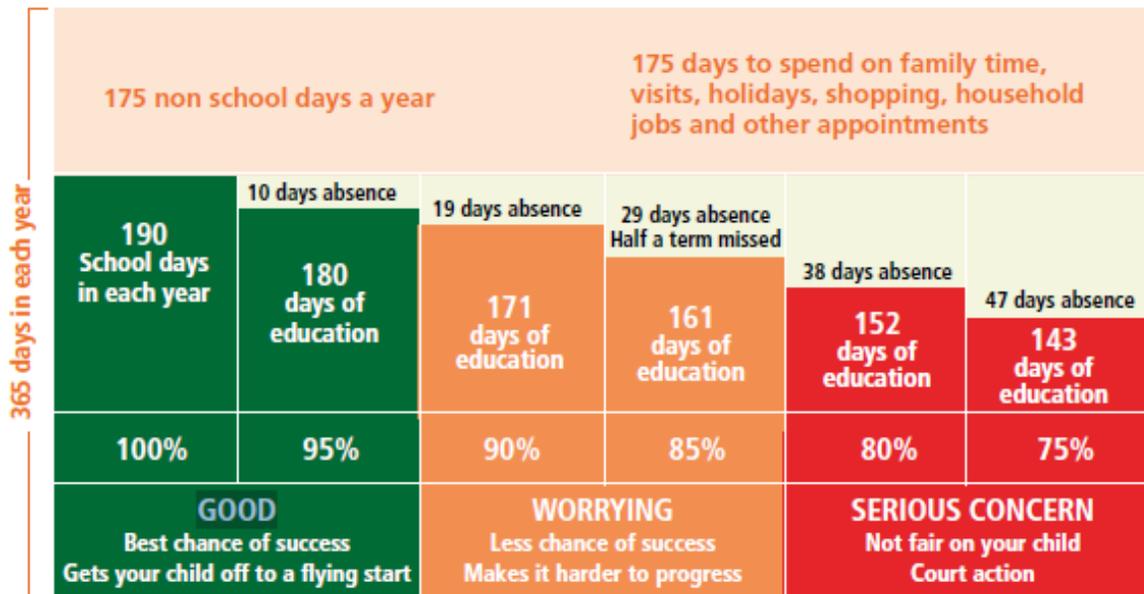
This type of absence can lead to the school referring cases to the Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team for fixed penalty notices and prosecution. Whilst any student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any



problems with regular attendance are best addressed between the school, the parents/carers and the child as soon as they are identified.

2.4 Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil is defined as a 'Persistent Absentee' if they miss approximately 10% or more of all possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.



If your child has attendance that has fallen below 90% over a six-week period, the school will follow the Brighton and Hove City Council guidance set out in their School Attendance Toolkit. This will involve raising awareness of the attendance concern with parents/carers, seeking medical evidence to explain low attendance, consistently reviewing attendance every two weeks and inviting parents to attend an Attendance Support Meeting to discuss concerns.

Parents and carers will receive standard letters at every stage in the process to inform them of the school's concerns and any potential consequences of a failure to improve attendance. If there is little or no improvement in attendance, despite the intervention and support detailed above, the school will refer the case to the Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team to request that a fixed penalty notice be issued. A family may receive up to three fixed penalty notices in a 12 month period.



If a family has received the maximum of three fixed penalty notices in a twelve month period, and there has been little or no improve in attendance, the school will refer the case to the Council's Behaviour and Assessment Team to consider prosecution.

2.5 Holiday Requests/ Term Time Absence

Time off school for holidays is not a right; therefore, parents/carers are discouraged from arranging holidays, either in the UK or abroad, or visits to their country of family origin, during term-time.

The Head Teacher will only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances (see section 3 below). Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis, by the Deputy Head who has oversight for attendance.

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 on a Request for Leave Of Absence 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.

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 fixed penalty notice, being prosecuted in court and losing the young persons' place at the school.

2.6 Additional Term Time Absence

Parents may wish a young person to be absent from school for the following reasons:

- to take part in a performance on television or in a theatre
- to audition for such a part
- to take part in a sport
- to work as a model

In such cases, the Headteacher may give permission to parents of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 to obtain a six month Open Licence from the Children in Employment and Entertainment Officer at the Local Authority. This permission is given on the understanding that the days involved will not interfere with any important



examinations/assessments or events scheduled in the school calendar and the student has a 95% or above attendance record.

For every absence the school will also require, in writing, the details of the dates and times that the student will be away from school. Absences will not be authorised if the school does not receive the request in writing. The Local Authority will be informed which may result in the licence being revoked.

For the Years 10, 11 and 6th Form six month Open Licences will not be granted, permission will need to be sought for each and every absence in writing.

3. Fixed Penalty Notices

The school adheres to the Brighton and Hove City Council's Code of Conduct with regards to student attendance. It may therefore be necessary to issue fixed-penalty notices in some circumstances.

CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN PENALTY NOTICES MIGHT BE ISSUED

Unauthorised Absence/Truancy:

- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed amounting to 10 or more sessions in 10 weeks).
- Pupils whose attendance has not reached a satisfactory (90% attendance – 2015 threshold) level during a 6 week period following intensive support i.e. truancy patrol.
- Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification in a fixed term or permanent exclusion.
- Penalty notices **will** be issued as a result of **persistent absence** as outlined in section 2.4 of this policy.
- Penalty notices **will** be issued for all unauthorised **holidays taken during term time**.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1st September 2013, removes reference to holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments now make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances (*no definition is given within this legislation*). However, the NAHT guidance suggests the following as circumstances which might be considered to be exceptional:
 - Bereavement
 - Serious illness of a close family member
 - Wedding within the immediate family
 - Service personnel returning from a long tour of duty



The Headteacher will determine the number of sessions a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. The school will ensure that all literature provided to parents, such as Prospectus, Attendance and Behaviour Policies, Home School Agreements, Newsletters and website information includes the warning that parents may be issued with a penalty notice if a holiday is taken without permission.

If the decision is made not to authorise, the Headteacher (or designated deputy) will send a letter to the parent confirming that a leave of absence has not been authorised and will include a warning that a penalty notice may be issued.

If a holiday is then taken without authorisation the school will complete a request, signed by the Headteacher (or designated deputy), that consideration be given to the issue of a penalty notice. The request will be sent to the Behaviour and Attendance Team within two weeks of the pupil returning to school. The Behaviour and Attendance Team will then issue a penalty notice if appropriate. Penalty Notices for term time holidays may be issued if:

- Unauthorised holidays have been taken within the term time;
Or
- Excessive delayed return from holiday without prior school agreement (beyond one additional school day).

WITHDRAWAL OF PENALTY NOTICE

Penalty notices may only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- a. when it is issued to the wrong person
- b. when issued outside the terms of the Code of Conduct
- c. when an offence has not been committed
- d. if a parent can prove it was delivered to the wrong address
- e. if there are unforeseen exceptional circumstances the leave of absence may be authorised.

PROSECUTION FOR NON PAYMENT OF A FINE

The prosecution would not be for non-payment of the fine, but for the original offence of failing to ensure child's regular attendance at school. The Council may use the fact that a penalty notice has been issued and remains unpaid as evidence.

The Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team would look at all the circumstances of the case when assessing the likelihood of securing a conviction for the original attendance offence.

If the decision is made to proceed with prosecution then as a matter of good practice, in any interviews with parents, the Local Authority will act in accordance with the spirit of the Codes of Practice set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), ensuring that the parent understands the basis for the interview, their needs are taken into account, their rights are explained and the interviews are conducted fairly.



4. Absence Procedures

4.1 If your child is absent you must:

- contact us before 9.00 am 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.

4.2 If your child is absent we will:

- text or telephone you on each day of absence if we have not heard from you
- invite you in to discuss the situation with the Year Team if absence persists
- refer the matter to the Brighton and Hove City Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team if the situation does not improve.

5. Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. The school day begins at 8.30am and students must be in their classroom or assembly at this time to be registered for the AM session.

How we manage punctuality:

- **8.25 am** - the warning bell sounds, school day starts and we expect your child to make their way to their form room or assembly.
- **8.30 am** - registers are downloaded and the student will receive a late mark and the possibility of sanctions if they are not on time. Students arriving after this time must sign in at Student Services
- **10.10 am** - students arriving after this time will not receive a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.
- If your child is persistently late, you will be contacted by the Year Team who will discuss their concerns with you. Any student who receives 10 unauthorised lates in a 10 week period may be referred to the Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team resulting in a fixed penalty notice.



6. 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 95%, the Year Team Leader will commence close monitoring of that child's attendance level.
- If a child's attendance level drops below 90% over a six week period, the intervention and support detailed in section 2.4 of this policy will be implemented.

7. 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 9.00 am 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.

Subject Teachers will:

- ensure that registers are completed accurately and on time at the start of each session



- A.M. marks are recorded at the start of registration (8.30am) and P.M marks are recorded at the start of Lesson 5
- report any concerns relating to attendance to Student Services/Year Teams
- use appropriate sanctions to address unexplained absence. For example curriculum detention, referral to curriculum leader, or contact home.

The Year Team 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 Team 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 Officer 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 Team Leader in monitoring and identifying levels of absence/lateness causing concern.

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.

The Local Authority will:

- Support and challenge schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
- Upon the request of the school, the Local Authority has the power to issue parents or carers with a fine for unauthorised absence under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- The Local Authority also has the power to prosecute parents or carers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if the fine is not paid.



8. Review

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

9. Appendix 1 - Exceptional Circumstances

9.1 Acceptable reasons for absence:

- Medical.
- Bereavement.
- Serious illness of a close family member.
- Wedding within the immediate family.
- Service personnel returning from a long tour of duty.

9.2 Unacceptable reasons for absence:

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



10. Appendix 2 – Absence Codes

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 (i.e. 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-compulsory school age absence
#	SCHOOL CLOSED TO PUPILS
*	DFES Z: PUPIL NOT YET ON ROLL
-	ALL SHOULD ATTEND/NO MARK RECORDED
1	Approved In-School Activity (i.e. Music lesson, PIER, CAG)
2	Intervention Meeting (i.e. re-integration meeting, mentoring, at year office)
3	External Agency Meeting (i.e. Counsellor, Social Services, RUOK)
4	Internal Exclusion
5	Other In-School Authorised Circumstances (i.e. duty student, tours, first aid, RIC)