Attendance for Learning Policy

Reviewed by Committee: 27th April 2017
Ratified by Full Governing Body: 22nd June 2017
Next due for review: Summer 2019

Attendance for Learning Policy

Rationale

This Policy outlines the underlying philosophy, purpose, nature, organisation and management of student attendance at Blacon High School. It is a result of consultation with the wider school community and an analysis of existing attendance data to establish current absence trends. It aims to ensure the enjoyment and achievement for all students at Blacon High.

The school will provide an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents who have a low priority for punctuality and attendance.

To maximise attendance the school will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate external agencies to provide mutual information advice and support.

Principles

The Governors, Headteacher and staff wish to ensure every child has the opportunity to:

1. Fully participate in school life
2. Enjoy and achieve
3. Feel a valued member of the school and wider communities

Aims

1. To achieve 95% attendance by 2018/19. National average is currently 95%.
2. Local Authorities and schools should note they are no longer required to set targets for persistent absence and overall attendance respectively and the regulation will be amended accordingly. The Department however remains firmly of the view that unnecessary absence is unacceptable and must be prevented and tackled by schools.
   The Department therefore expects all school and local authorities to continue focusing on reducing overall absence, particularly unauthorised absence and persistent absence. Absence will continue to be monitored closely via the pupil level census and the Secretary of State's power to require an individual school to set absence targets where a school's absence record is of particular concern is being retained.
   Further information can be obtained from: -
   http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmin/target-setting/a0066387/2012-target-setting-guidance
3. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents, teachers and governors.
4. To ensure there is a whole school, graduated response to improving punctuality and attendance.
5. To define roles and responsibilities and promote consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
6. To use data effectively in order to identify groups of students and individuals whose absence causes concern and implement appropriate interventions.
7. To track students' attendance in order to monitor and evaluate progress.
8. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.
9. To use appropriate assessments and develop strong multi-agency links in order to address higher levels of need.

Legal Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, a parent is responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age receives an efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs a child might have.

Parental Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance

Parents must:

- Ensure the school has up to date contact details
- Contact school on first day of absence to provide a reason for non-attendance
- Update the school on the third day of non-attendance if the absence is expected to continue
- Request leave in advance for holidays/extended absences in term time by following the School Holiday in Term Time policy procedures.
- Work with the school and any other agency to resolve any difficulties which may affect regular school attendance

School Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance

Susannah Wright is the school Attendance Lead. As the Attendance Lead of the school she will ensure:

- Registers are accurately marked and maintained in accordance with the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended.
- A whole school approach to reinforce good attendance, teaching and learning to encourage all students to attend and achieve
- Individuals or group attendance targets are set and understood by staff, parents and students

Registration

Parents should ensure students arrive promptly to school for 8:45am registration.

A student arriving after 8:45 am and 1.55pm will be marked late.

A student arriving after 9.15am will be marked as late after the register closes. This is regarded as an unauthorised absence for the session and will be recorded on the register as a 'U' code.

A student arriving in school after 9:00am is to report to reception to sign in using the online entry sign-in system in school reception and the time of arrival will be recorded on SIMS attendance system.

Parents whose child(ren) are persistently arriving after close of registers on 10 or more occasions will be invited in to school to discuss the lateness and seek a resolution with their Progress Leader. Where school action fails to bring about an improvement, the matter will be discussed with Education Welfare Service and consideration given to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice and referral to an Educational Welfare Officer.

Categorisation of Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

The parent must provide an explanation for any period of absence from school. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised.

School will usually authorise absences where a student is:

➢ Unable to attend school due to illness.
➢ Requires emergency dental/medical appointments. Wherever possible routine dental/medical appointments should be made after school or during school holidays.
➢ Absent due to other exceptional circumstances.

School will not authorise absence for the following reasons; note: this is not a definitive list:

➢ Applications for term time holidays, unless in exceptional circumstances (please refer to 'Holidays/Leave of Absence in Term Time' section of this document). April 2017 judgement of the supreme court released, the

court has acknowledged that there are sound policy reasons for not allowing term time holidays and that ultimately the legal position remains as it was unless there are exceptional circumstances.

➢ Shopping
➢ Birthdays
➢ Days out
➢ Looking after siblings

School routinely requests medical verification where a student's attendance falls below 95%.

Truancy

Any member of staff who identifies a student as truanting should trigger the following procedure:

- The staff member should inform reception and Attendance Officer
- Staff to send whole school e-mail alerting student absent from lesson
- Learning Support staff will endeavour to locate the student and return them to their lesson
- Register should be marked with 'N' code
- If the student is not located, reception should telephone the parent to inform
- Reception should inform Progress Leader and Attendance Officer
- Where a student's truancy is regular, the Progress Leader should follow up in the form of parental meeting.

Provision for supervised learning at home

Where a student is not able to attend school when they would be usually timetabled for onsite provision, in special circumstances, work can be provided for the student.

School Systems for Promoting Regular Attendance

School will:

- Contact parents on first day of a student's absence, where no notification has been received from the parent/carer by 9:15am to ensure the safety of the student
- Analyse individual attendance student data to identify patterns of absence causing concern
- Contact parents by letter/telephone when students' attendance significantly drops to highlight concerns
- Invite parents in to school for a Attendance Review Meeting (ARM) when a student's attendance is of continued concern
- Consider referral to Education Welfare when school action has failed to bring about an improvement in the student's attendance
- Use Individual Attendance Action Plans for students with attendance difficulties
- Consider the use of Parenting Contracts, particularly where exclusion or behavioural issues are affecting a student's attendance in school
- In partnership with LA use a full range of strategies, including legal interventions, to support improvement to attendance
- Provide appropriate support to students to ensure successful reintegration following long term absence
- Complete a Team around the Family (TAF) assessment where complex and significant factors requiring a multi-agency response is identified
- Implement a range of rewards for students with high levels of attendance and those improving attendance
- Work proactively to engage with parents and carers to resolve any difficulties which may be affecting school attendance, through Parents Evenings, student reviews and home-school agreements
- Provide a full and diverse curriculum to engage and motivate students
- Make parents aware of the impact of poor attendance on attainment

Persons with specific responsibilities for attendance in Blacon High School

- Headteacher (Sue Yates) – Whole School strategic overview

- Attendance Lead (Susannah Wright)
- Attendance Administrator (Trudy Ward)
- Governor with special responsibility for attendance (Robert Williams)

Review of Policy

- This policy will be formally reviewed every 2 years
- This policy will be less formally reviewed on an annual basis
- A copy of this policy will be available on the school website
- A basic version of this policy will be included in Student Planners for 2015/16
- A paper copy of this policy is in the staff handbook and the handbook for governors
- Any complaints arising from the implementation of this policy should be addressed to the Headteacher in the first instance

Aim No.1

To achieve 95% attendance by 2018/19. National average is currently 95%.

- Apply Whole School Attendance Policy consistently.
- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality
- Relate attendance issues directly to student attainment and the School's values, ethos and curriculum.
- Monitor progress in attendance via measureable outcomes.
- Effective partnership working with the Education Welfare Service.
- Introduce the use of Fixed Penalty notices for persistent lateness after registration closed and unauthorised term time holidays. 'U' / 'G' Codes.

Aim No. 2

To ensure that persistent absence is consistently reduced year on year basis. (See Page 2 - Aims)

- Early identification of at risk students through effective analysis of data.
- Effective communication with parents of at risk students to ensure they understand the impact and level of absence.
- Thorough assessment of need, and where appropriate, the use of multi-agency approaches to support families and students to improve attendance.
- Action planning and robust reviewing procedure for all students at risk.

Aim No. 3

To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents, teachers and governors.

- Regular reporting of attendance levels to parents / teachers / governors.
- Students to record individual attendance in planners for parents to see.
- Overt promotion of attendance in tutor groups, assemblies and staff meetings.
- Introduce tailored rewards schemes within year groups.

Aim No. 4

To ensure there is a whole school, graduated response to improving punctuality and attendance.

- Attendance Lead to meet regularly with Attendance Administrator, Progress Leaders and designated Education Welfare Officer to ensure effective escalation of process.
- Develop Whole School attendance strategies and embed.
- Hold regular Attendance Review Meetings (ARM).

Aim No. 5

To define roles and responsibilities and promote consistency in carrying out designated tasks.

- Maintain unambiguous procedures for statutory registration.
- Make clear each member of staff's responsibilities in relation to attendance (Refer to Appendix 1: Roles and responsibilities).
- Publicise the framework of roles and responsibilities through INSET and use of the staff handbook.
- Attendance Lead to meet regularly with Attendance Administrator and Progress Leaders to ensure consistent approach to addressing attendance concerns through all year groups.

Aim No. 6

To use data effectively in order to identify groups of students and individuals whose absence causes concern and implement appropriate interventions.

- Maintain an effective system of electronic registration
- Ensure electronic registration is accurate and timely
- Identify patterns and trends for various cohorts.
- Make full use of attendance software.

Aim No. 7

To track students' attendance and monitor and evaluate progress.

- Initiate first day absence contact
- Follow up unexplained absence in writing.
- Promote expectation of absence letters / phone calls
- Maintain computerised records of attendance.
- Attendance Lead to meet regularly with Attendance Administrator, Progress Leaders and EWO to review individual attendance.
- Attendance target setting and review process implemented for all students falling below 90% attendance.

Aim No. 8

To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.

- Promote attendance in tutor time, assemblies, and SMSC.
- Ensure timely communication to parents if attendance is a concern.
- Continue to develop strong positive relationships with parents, as members of the extended school community.
- Meet with parents and students to discuss barriers to attendance and assess need.
- Make referrals to the School's Family Support Team.
- Where necessary undertake home visits or arrange meeting venues to suit the parents' preference.

Aim No. 9

To use appropriate assessment and develop strong multi-agency links in order to address higher levels of need.

- Advocate use of Team around the Family (TAF) for those students higher levels/complex needs.
- Liaise closely with the School's SEN department for students with identified SEN.
- Continue to develop strong working partnerships with relevant agencies.
- Use School procedures to raise concerns about students in need (Inclusion panel meetings half termly, Emotional Health and Mental Wellbeing consultations)

Holidays/Leave of Absence in Term Time

Blacon High School is committed to maximising the potential of every child and good attendance and punctuality are essential to this aim. We feel this will be achieved, with the support of parents/carers by ensuring that leave of absence/holidays are not taken in school time. Absence during term time for any reason interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning and disrupts the educational progress of students.

The Law

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced important amendments to legislation surrounding holidays/leave of absence in term time.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. **These amendments, as described below, will come into force on 1 September 2013.**

Term-time holiday

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. **The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

From the 1st September 2013, **the new law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time**. Any applications for leave of absence must be in **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. **Parents can be fined by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.**

In the academic year 2011 to 2012, **9.7% of all absences in England were due to parents taking their children out of school during term time.** This high level of absence has led the DfE to make this important change to legislation.

As a school, we fully appreciate the financial difficulties that some parents face when booking holidays, particularly during school holidays however, there is an expectation that all schools in Cheshire West and Chester introduce firm policies and stringent checks to ensure that there is a significant reduction in the number of absences during term time.

This new legislation will bring about increased attendance and improving standards in our borough's schools.

Further information can be obtained from www.dfe.gov.uk

Special and Exceptional Circumstances

The Headteacher or person designated by the Headteacher may consider that the following circumstances are "special" or "exceptional".

➢ Where a parent returned from or is going to an armed service tour.
➢ A family member is seriously ill.
➢ There has been a death or significant trauma in the family and a holiday may help the child to cope better with the situation.

However

  ➢   Availability of "cheap" holidays
  ➢   Availability of desired accommodation
  ➢   The prospect of better weather

Would **not** be considered as "special" or "exceptional" circumstances.

Additional Information

  ➢   Parents/carers will be required to complete an absence/holiday request form available from the school office/student services and return it to school **before** booking a term time holiday at least 6 weeks prior to the proposed date of the holiday.
  ➢   Parents/carers will normally be notified of the outcome of their application for a holiday in term time within 10 school days of the date of the application.

When a holiday in term time is agreed by the school, in exceptional circumstances only, the absence will be recorded as 'H' on the school attendance register. This will mean that the absence has been recorded as authorised absence on the school attendance register.

If the holiday in term time is not agreed by the school, but the student is absent on the requested dates, the absence will be recorded as 'G' (family holiday not agreed) this will mean that the absence has been recorded on the school attendance register as unauthorised.

Where a student is taken out of school for the purpose of a holiday in term time without the prior permission of the school, the parent/carer of the student may be issued with a £60.00 Penalty Notice per parent per child. Parent/Carer must pay £60 within 21 days; or £120 within 28 days. If the notice remains unpaid after 28 days the Local Authority will commence proceedings under section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 or Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 in the Magistrates Court.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Amendments have been made to the 2007 Regulations in the **Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. **These amendments, as described below, will come into force on 1 September 2013.**

The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents must pay £60 if they pay within 28 days; or £120 if they pay within 42 days.

Amendments to 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. **Parents must, from 1 September 2013**, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

Parents/Carers are provided with information on the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices by letter annually.

Appendix 1: Roles, Responsibilities and Interventions

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
Form Tutor	**Progress Leader**	**Attendance Administrator**	**Attendance Lead**
Electronically record statutory attendance During the morning registration and P5 which populates afternoon statutory register. In the event of the electronic attendance system not working, tutors will complete a register using the paper copy from the register folder. Monitor attendance and punctuality of tutor group and raise concerns with parent in the first instance. Update attendance information provided by T. Ward (AO) and record individual attendance % in student planners. Award rewards and apply consequences as per *behaviour policy / pastoral guidance?* For good attendance / poor punctuality. Using specified weekly tutor time address / discuss attendance issues with individuals. (To include chasing up notes, discovering reasons of non-attendance, concerns of pupil, setting targets).	Monitor year group statutory registers. Ensure paper registers are returned to Student Services. Support tutors to monitor attendance and punctuality of form. Ensure attendance and punctuality is raised regularly at pastoral meetings. Implement reward strategy for attendance and punctuality. Attend regular meetings with Attendance lead/Attendance Administrator. Communicate and discuss attendance concerns with parents. Set targets for individual student. Respond to data for meetings. **Directly inform Safeguarding Officer if a pupil is absent for 6 continuous days.**	Input into the electronic register reasons for absence and late marks. Only the Attendance Administrator will authorise or unauthorise absence. Chase up missing registers using electronic messaging. Keep records of medical evidence provided. Produce a list of absentees and initiate truancy call. Produce, send and record letters to follow up unexplained absence. Receive and make calls to parents/carers. Meet with parents/carers as requested. Input paper registers to SIMS system and ensure paper registers are in Tutor group folders at all times. Produce and distribute weekly attendance figures and reports. To action whole school attendance reporting to Attendance Lead/Progress Leaders. Attend regular meetings with Progress Leaders/EWO. Prepare paperwork and invites for Attendance Review Meetings (ARM). Type and send out meeting minutes and action plans.	Ensure that the attendance policy is implemented and that systems are operating effectively. Create a school ethos which promotes excellent levels of attendance. Report to SLT and Governors on attendance matters. Meet regularly with the Attendance Administrator and Progress Leaders to assist with development of the School's attendance strategy. Meet regularly with key persons and agencies to address attendance issues. To arrange and hold Attendance Review Meetings. To plan appropriate intervention. To produce termly reports for governors. Q and A responses to Educational Welfare Officer's Registration Inspection. Keep abreast of any new guidance or legislation pertaining to attendance. Work closely with partner agencies to support the needs of pupils and families whose attendance is of concern.

Refer attendance concerns to Progress Leaders/Attendance Officer for follow-up.		Prepare and complete Q and A responses for Registration Inspection by Educational Welfare Officers. Produce attendance data in response to specific requests from teaching staff/PL/LA/EWO/Attendance lead. Collate and analyse whole school and specific cohort data to identify trends and inform strategic planning.	

Version Control

Number	Update	Date	By whom
0.1	Revisions – various updates to school procedures, aims, and legal detail, pages 2-7, 9, 10	24/04/2017	Susie Wright
1.0	Policy approved at Governor committee meeting	27/04/2017	Safeguarding and Equality, Community Cohesion
	Policy approved by full Governing Body	22/06/2017	Governing Body