



Blenheim

Attendance Policy

Committee: School Policy

Date Published: December 2018

Expiry Date: December 2021

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At Blenheim we aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the school community to work towards excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and every child should be at school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for the absence is exceptional.

It is very important therefore that all parent(s)/carer(s) ensure that their children attend regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

1. Why regular attendance is so important:

Learning: Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the parent/carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of every child is the responsibility of us all and within the context of this school, this encompasses:

- attendance
- behaviour management
- health and safety
- access to the curriculum
- anti-bullying

If any child fails to attend this school on a regular basis it will be considered a safeguarding matter.

2. Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility, parents/carers, students and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide parents/carers with guidance regarding attendance in our regular school newsletter
- report to parents/carers on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments as part of our reporting programme
- celebrate good attendance through assemblies, achievement mornings and by publishing individual and/or tutor group attendance figures
- reward good or improving attendance through merit and reward systems

3. The Law Relating to Attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

a) To age, ability and aptitude and

b) To any special educational needs he/she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.

4. Understanding Types of Absence

Attendance or absence of every half-day of school has to be accounted for by the school. Absence is when a student **misses morning or afternoon registration** even when they have attended lessons in that half of the day. Absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

There are some legitimate reasons for absence, including the following examples, which would normally be authorised by school:

- sickness
- medical or dental appointments, wherever possible these should be arranged outside of school hours
- days of religious observance
- exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement
- emergencies or other unavoidable causes

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been granted. This type of absence can result in a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer and/or Penalty Notices/legal proceedings. The following are examples of absences which will not normally be authorised by school:

- 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 after registration has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips or holidays in term time
- continued absence after a student has been classified as a persistent absentee
- regular or repeating patterns of absence
- where there is an unusual number of broken weeks

Sometimes students can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out early between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, a parent/carer would be ill advised to cover up the true reason for absence or to give in to pressure to excuse the child from attending. This gives the child the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

5. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they are absent, authorised and/or unauthorised, from 10% or more schooling across the school year. Absence at this level does considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and the school requires parents' full support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic support where absence affects attainment.

All PA students and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan which may include:

- students attending an 'attendance clinic' in school with the Education Welfare Officer
- a meeting between parents/carers and the school's attendance team
- use of individual incentive programmes and target setting to raise attendance
- allocation of additional support through the Student Support Centre (SSC)
- review of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- requirement to provide medical evidence before any absence for illness is authorised

All PA cases, regardless of the circumstances, are automatically made known to the Educational Welfare Officer and may result in legal action such as a Penalty Notice or prosecution.

6. Absence Procedures

If a child is absent parents/carers must:

- contact school as soon as possible on each day of absence
- send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence, even if parents/carers have already telephoned or log the absence using the parent gateway.
- save evidence in the form of appointment cards, prescriptions or referral letters should they be required at a later date

In unusual or difficult circumstances parents/carers can make an appointment to speak with the attendance officer. If parents/carers know in advance that their child will be absent from school early notification enables us to prevent the student falling behind

If a child is absent we will:

- telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them. This is part of a system known as 'Truancy Call'
- contact parents/carers if they have not provided an explanation for the absence. Students approaching or below the PA threshold must provide **medical evidence** of the reason for absence before it can be authorised

- invite parents/carers in to school to discuss the situation with our attendance officer if absences persist or the attendance figure is approaching PA threshold of 90%
- refer the matter to the Educational Welfare Officer if attendance falls below 90% or when the pattern of absence is a cause for concern.

Students returning from absence are expected to collect work from each of their subject teachers and catch up with the work that has been missed as soon as possible. If it is known that a student will be absent for an extended period of time (not for holidays or other unauthorised absences), work can be collected and sent home by the school. This relies upon notification of the nature of the absence from the parents/carers.

7. The School's Attendance Team

The attendance team consists of the student's:

- Form Tutor
- Assistant Head of Year
- Head of Year
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator
- Leadership Team member responsible for attendance

The attendance officer is responsible for monitoring levels of attendance, identifying patterns of absence and acting to bring about improvement. The majority of their work is celebrating good attendance and rewarding improving attendance, however, parents/carers are expected to be in regular contact with school regarding attendance issues and concerns. Action at an early stage is nearly always successful in resolving any problems when home and school work together.

If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may refer the child to the Educational Welfare Officer. He/she will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if this is unsuccessful and unauthorised absences persist, parents/carers risk criminal prosecution if their child fails to attend regularly, and punctually, at the school where s/he is registered. Prosecutions may result in fines of up to £2,500 and/or the possibility of a three months imprisonment. Courts may, at their discretion, impose a parenting order or direct the LA to apply for an Education Supervision Order which puts a child of compulsory school age, who is not being properly educated, under Local Education Authority supervision.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Educational Welfare Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting Surrey County Council.

8. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day they will miss valuable time with their tutor and not receive vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students disrupt lessons which can also be embarrassing for the student. Students with poor punctuality often have poor attendance records later in their school career.

9. How We Manage Lateness:

The School day starts **at 08.40 am** and we expect all students to be in registration at that time. A student will receive a late mark if they are recorded present after this time. Truancy call will go out to parents **at 9.30am** when the registers will close. In accordance with the Regulations, if a student arrives after that time without a good reason they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. Students with a poor level of punctuality will be required to remain behind after school in detention to make up lost time. Any student with a persistent late record will be required to meet with the attendance officer and/or the Education Welfare Officer to resolve the problem, but a parent/carer can approach the school at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time. A Penalty Notice could be issued if the problem persists (See Section 14).

10. Absence in Term Time

All applications for leave must be made in advance to the Headteacher and only in the most exceptional circumstances will the school authorise time off up to a maximum of 10 days in any academic year.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may result in sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

Leave of absence in term time (5 days or 10 sessions or more). **Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 states that Headteacher's may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.**

In such cases the Headteacher/Governing Body have to judge whether there are exceptional circumstances and may request the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices when the absence is not authorised. Warnings will not be given where it can be shown that parents have been notified that such absences will not be authorised.

The issue of a Penalty Notice (See Points 14/15/16) will also be considered where it is judged that a parent is failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance. This will be considered if the attendance is below 90% and there are 7 or more unauthorised sessions in any six-week period, which may include a pupil arriving late after close of registration.

School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives

The school sets targets to improve attendance and every student has an important part to play in meeting these. The target for Blenheim High School is currently 97% ~~95%~~ attendance and we will keep parents/carers updated regularly about their child's attendance rate. The attendance officer meets with the Educational Welfare

Officer on a weekly basis to consider the attendance of all students and discuss strategies to improve attendance and punctuality such as:

- student incentives and rewards e.g. merits, postcards, certificates and prizes
- student support e.g. attendance clinics, Student Support Centre assistance
- parent/carer contact and support via letter, meetings, home visits
- EWO referral and legal action e.g. penalty notices or prosecutions

11. Removing a student from the school roll

A student's name will be removed from the school roll if a student fails to attend school for 20 consecutive days and the Headteacher does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the student is unable to attend by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause. This 20-day period could include time spent on authorised leave of absence.

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school, they inform Blenheim High School staff in writing as soon as possible and provide the following details:

- the date the student will be leaving this school and starting the next
- the address of the new school
- the new home address, if it is known

12. Legal Duty

The school has a legal duty to keep accurate registers and to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote good attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a legal duty to make sure that their children attend school in order to receive an education. All Blenheim High School staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance and punctuality as possible such that every student's welfare, academic progress and life opportunities are promoted. Regular attendance and punctuality help young people to become reliable and organised adults, both qualities which are valued by higher education and employers.

13. Penalty Notice

The Education Welfare Service, working in conjunction with Surrey County Council, may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and will require the recipient to pay a fixed amount. The amount payable on issue of a penalty notice is currently £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

14. Circumstances when Penalty Notices May be Issued

A Penalty Notice may be issued to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are failing to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Education Welfare Officer.

- Where a child is taken out of school for a holiday or other unauthorised leave during term time for five days or ten sessions or more within a three-month period (this need not be consecutive) without the written consent of the Headteacher, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child. In these circumstances, a warning will not need to be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised.
- Students identified by police and Education Welfare Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where attendance has fallen below 90% and there are 7 or more unauthorised absences in any six-week period. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason. The lateness will be recorded in accordance with the 'How we manage lateness' section of this policy (Section 10). In such circumstances, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

15. Penalty Notice Relating to Exclusions

If a child is excluded from school, Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent/carer liable to a Penalty Notice. (Alternative education provision will be made available from the sixth day of any exclusion.)

With the exception of unauthorised holidays taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.