



Attendance Policy

1. Rationale and Aim

It is vital to the academic progress of all pupils at Robert Bloomfield Academy (RBA) that they attend school regularly in order that they can participate in the educational opportunities available to them. Research shows that high absence rates go hand in hand with poor examination results. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process, since not only does a pupil miss out on valuable teaching but they are less prepared for lessons when they return. Poor attendance also places children at risk and in some cases it can result in pupils being drawn into anti-social behaviour. A student arriving late may disrupt his/her continuity of learning and also that of others. RBA believe that the life chances of all pupils can be improved by ensuring that all staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware of the importance of, and take responsibility for, regular attendance.

RBA will encourage and assist all pupils to achieve the highest levels of attendance and punctuality in order to maximise their achievement and attainment at school.

RBA aim to:

- Ensure pupils are supported in reaching their full potential in order that they can attain at the highest possible level.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with RBA including pupils, parents, staff and governors.
- Maintain a high attendance record and low unauthorised absence rate.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
- Promote effective partnership with the Access and Inclusion Service and other agencies.
- Encourage pupils to catch up on any missed work in a positive and supportive environment.
- Encourage pupils to maintain high attendance levels by use of a reward system.
- Publish attendance figures to parents and governors.
- Analyse attendance rates (%) and at various times throughout the year, certain attendance rates will trigger standard letters that will be sent to the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s).

2. Policy

Working in Partnership with the Law

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at that school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence introduced where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend school regularly, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend. (Education Act 1996, section 444 (1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). It is clear from the law that parents risk prosecution if their child does not attend school regularly. It is important, therefore, for parents and the school to work closely together to overcome any problems which may affect a pupil's attendance. The DfE recommends that no term-time holidays are granted and therefore requests for term-time leave will not normally be approved. The Principal will only consider exceptional applications for leave of absence that are submitted in advance and have strong compassionate grounds. If leave of

absence is taken without the school's prior approval, this will be viewed as an unauthorised absence.

The school will work closely with the Access and Inclusion Service where attendance or punctuality does not meet the school's expectations. Our attached Local Authority School Attendance Officer visits RBA regularly to support regular attendance and to help remove any barriers that may be preventing a student from accessing the education to which he/she is entitled.

Absences authorised by the school

Although parents/carers will know about and agree to these absences from lessons, additional parental action is not required to authorise these absences. In the case of School Visits, parents will be asked to sign consent forms.

Examples:

- Attendance on a school trip or visit
- Representing the School in a sporting fixture, musical, public speaking or drama event

Authorised unforeseen absence

RBA should be notified on the day of the absence where possible (before 9am), and then a letter should be sent to the school explaining the absence.

Examples:

- Illness
- Bereavement or other emergency family situation
- Severe disruption to transport with no possible means of getting a pupil to school (e.g. very heavy snow)

Planned absences which may be authorised

These require the Leave of Absence Form to be completed and should be submitted to the school 6 weeks in advance of the absence.

Examples of planned absences that may be authorised:

- Medical appointments which cannot be arranged outside of school hours
- Occasional care for a member of the family if a pupil has a known caring responsibility (this will be judged on a case by case basis)
- Religious holiday (guidelines are 3 days maximum)
- Visit to another school/academy
- Occasional extra-curricular activity which gives the pupil significant opportunity for personal achievement or improvement
- Attendance at a family wedding or funeral

Planned absences which are unlikely to be authorised

Examples:

- Holidays (unless holiday is requested under exceptional circumstances in which case the Leave of Absence Form, which can be obtained from the front office or school website, should be submitted as soon as possible)
- Leisure activities
- Birthdays or similar celebrations
- Babysitting younger siblings
- Shopping
- Persistent and regular lateness
- Moving house

Term-time holiday

Amendments to the 2006 regulations (The Education regulations 2013) remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Principals may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Principals should determine the number of academy days a child can be away from academy if the leave is granted. A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued where a pupil takes a holiday during term time and the absence has not been authorised by the academy.

Appointments during school hours

We do ask parents/carers to avoid taking pupils out of school for medical appointments, however, when this is unavoidable, the pupil must sign out (or in if arriving late after an appointment) at the Front Office. They must provide written evidence of the appointment. If a series of regular appointments are necessary (e.g. for dental work) then we ask parents/carers to try to make these during school holidays or after normal school hours.

Persistent absence

Persistent Absence (PA) is a term used by the Department for Education (DfE) to denote absence of more than 10% for an individual pupil, whether authorised or unauthorised. There are clear links between poor attendance and poor attainment. Any child whose attendance falls to unacceptable levels will be referred to the Access and Inclusion Service.

Medical evidence

Parents/Carers may be asked to provide medical evidence to explain why their child is/has been absent.

Missing Children Procedure (November 2012)

A Missing Child School Referral Form should be used when a child 'disappears' e.g. when parents move without providing a forwarding address; when it is suspected that the family has gone on an extended holiday without school agreement; when a child does not return two weeks after the expected return date of a family holiday. If the school has child protection concerns, Social Services should be contacted and if the school suspects that a crime may have been committed the Police should be contacted. The Local Authority Business Support Officer for Access & Inclusion should be contacted in such a situation. He/she will take referrals from a variety of outside agencies for any student who has been out of school for more than four weeks. Such children are recorded on the DfE S2S (school to school) website and may be removed from school roll in accordance with the guidance in the Central Bedfordshire Children Missing Education Procedures (July 2011), section 25

3. Procedure

a) Rights and responsibilities

Improving attendance at Robert Bloomfield Academy is the responsibility of everyone in the academy community: pupils, parents and all staff.

Academy staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Staff should convey high expectations to pupils regarding attendance and punctuality; Form tutors, in conjunction with Heads of Learning, should investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff should respond to absenteeism firmly and consistently. Staff should use the standard template letters and refer to the attendance timetable.

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending,

parents are required to notify the school of the reason, by telephone, and by 9am on the first day of absence and follow this up with a letter of explanation on the child's return. A pupil's absence from school will remain unauthorised until a satisfactory note of explanation is received from a parent. If no note is received a letter will be sent to the parent/carer to explain the absence.

When registers are completed a list of non-attendees will be printed off and used in case of an emergency evacuation or invac. Parents/carers of pupils on the list who have not rung in to explain their absence will be contacted by the front office by 9.45am. Contact will be made via telephone, text (call to parents) and email. If contact cannot be made with parents, we may contact the police if we have concerns about a child's failure to turn up at school and have been unable to get in touch with the parent/carer or other named contacts on their list.

Pupils are expected to attend school and lessons regularly and punctually. At the end of each term pupils with full attendance will receive a certificate in the Awards Assembly. This will run concurrently throughout the year. In addition the class with the highest attendance rate in each year group, each term, will have a non-uniform day. A lottery system will also operate termly, here all pupils who have achieved over 96% attendance in the term will be put in to a lottery system to produce an individual winner who will receive a prize (Amazon/iTunes voucher).

b) Registration

Pupils are allowed to attend breakfast or early morning clubs from 8am. Pupils will be allowed to go onto the playground at 8:30am, no pupil is to arrive later than 8.50am. Registers will be called promptly at 8.55am and 3.10pm. Attendance should be recorded on SIMS as (/ or \), absence is recorded as an (N). Notified absences can be pre-coded using the correct abbreviation.

Registers will close at 9.15 am and 3.20pm. Pupils arriving at school after the register has been taken but before the register period has closed are marked with the late symbol (L). If a pupil arrives after the registration period has closed without a legitimate reason the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Please note a U code is recorded as an unauthorised absence. If the registration period has finished the late pupil must sign in at Reception, the Receptionist will subsequently complete the register with the appropriate code. Pupils who are late because of a school bus must not be coded as late.

Parents will be informed if the pupil is persistently late (using late letter template), in order to avoid formal action.

c) Recording absences

Office staff will record absences, either as authorised or unauthorised, using the agreed symbols (in accordance with the Registration Procedures), once the reason for the absence has been established during the first day of absence phone call.

If staff have reason to doubt the explanation offered about an absence or whether it is from the parents, they should consult the Head of Learning (Staff and Pupils) and then Head of School. Advice will be sought from the Education Welfare Service.

d) Following up absences

Where no reason for absence has been received a standard letter will be sent to Parents requesting reason for absence. If no response is received from this, the Head of learning should be notified and they should make contact with the Parent(s)/carer(s) in order to decide whether

to authorise the absence. Unauthorised absences could be referred to the Access and Inclusion Service or a Penalty notice could be issued.

Action on irregular attendance will initially involve the Form tutor contacting the parent to discuss the matter and an initial attendance letter being sent (using letter of concern template – Appendix 1). If the attendance does not improve the Head of Learning will send a follow-up letter will be sent (using Medical 1 template letter – Appendix 2) or invite the pupils in to school for a meeting. The aim of the meeting will be to identify and resolve any difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parents will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance.

If the pupil's difficulties are not resolved and the attendance does not improve, a pre-referral meeting will be called and if necessary a penalty notice or a formal referral will be made to the Access and Inclusion Service and formal intervention planned.

Absences will not be authorised after the Medical 1 letter has been sent, unless medical evidence is provided. Absences that remain unauthorised once a Medical 1 letter has been sent may warrant a pre-referral meeting with School and the Access and Inclusion Service. It is in the interest of parents to get a medical certificate from their doctor in order for school to authorise the absences and avoid this action.

In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence, then an individual re-integration programme will need to be implemented.

If a pupil is likely to be absent long term due to illness or incapacity, please notify the appropriate Head of Learning who will consider whether the criteria/referral for home tuition is met. An application could then be sent to Medical Needs provision.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Attendance rates are available on the Ofsted School Data Dashboard. Academies also publish their figures on their website. Consultation will take place between the Head of Learning (Staff and Pupils), and the Access and Inclusion Attendance Officer to develop and maintain the Attendance Policy. Attendance procedures will be evaluated by senior managers, governors and the Access and Inclusion Attendance Officer.

5. Implementation and Review

This policy will be made known to all staff, parents/carers and governors, and published on the RBA website. Copies are also available upon request from the Front Office. This policy will be reviewed yearly or as required.

6. Author and Date

S.Fox March 2017

Appendix 1

20th October 2016

Dear Parents/Guardians of

A recent register check has drawn our attention to _____'s attendance.

As a school we regard regular attendance as a priority, and communication between parents and school as very important. Any pupil's attendance that falls below 90% is classified as a persistent absentee by the new measures the Government have introduced and therefore falls under the scrutiny of the local Education Welfare Officer.

In addition to this we would also like to draw your attention to the guidance on Penalty Notices set by the Local Authority. Please be assured this is a sanction that the school very rarely uses as we wish to work collaboratively with our parents.

In Central Bedfordshire schools and academies may ask the local authority to issue a Penalty Notice.

A Penalty Notice may be issued when:

- 1) a pupil is taken out of school during term time for a holiday which has not been authorised by the school;
- 2) a child's school attendance has been poor and his/her school believe that the issuing of a Penalty Notice may lead to an improvement in the child's attendance (for example, when a child is persistently late for school and his/her parents fail to address the situation).

When a Penalty Notice is issued it is issued on a per child/per parent basis. This means that if a mother and father have two children and take both children out of school they may be issued with a total of 4 Penalty Notices – one to each parent for each child.

We note that _____'s percentage attendance so far this year amounts to only ??%, the target attendance for the whole school is 96%. We understand that there may be circumstances surrounding some of the absences included in the figure stated.

We will be monitoring _____'s attendance rate for the next 2 weeks. Should his attendance levels not improve we will be contacting you for a pre referral meeting in order that the Education Welfare service can become involved.

Yours sincerely

Mr. S Robson
Senior Teacher - Head of Learning

Appendix 2

Dear _____,

We have contacted you before to express our concern at _____'s low rate of school attendance. _____'s attendance rate has improved this year compared to last year, but it still does not meet our expectations.

The Education Welfare Officer has noted that attendance has not improved and we have therefore arranged a date of _____, for a Pre Referral meeting to take place in order to discuss our concerns. Please could you bring to the meeting a letter from your doctor explaining _____'s last period of absence.

Please would you contact me at the school as soon as possible in order to confirm your attendance at this meeting or arrange a mutually convenient time for the meeting to take place.

Please note failure to attend or ignore this request to meet will leave the school with no alternative but to refer the matter direct to the Education Welfare Service, which could infer legal action.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. S Robson
Senior Teacher – Head of Learning