

BLACKFRIARS ACADEMY ATTENDANCE POLICY

*Developed:
September 2018*

Review Date:
September 2021



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole Academy community.

The Academy will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance and behaviour by students will be recognized appropriately.

All children should be at academy, on time, every day the academy is open. The academy day starts with registration at 08:45am and students will be expected to be in the classroom at that time.

Mondays

08:45 - 09:15	Registration
09:15 – 10:15	Lesson 1
10:15 – 10:30	Break
10:30 – 11:30	Lesson 2
11:30 – 12:30	Lesson 3
12:30 – 13:15	Lunch Break
13:15 – 14:00	Assembly
14:00 – 14:15	Dismissal

Tuesdays to Fridays

08:45 - 09:15	Registration
09:15 – 10:15	Lesson 1
10:15 – 10:30	Break
10:30 – 11:30	Lesson 2
11:30 – 12:30	Lesson 3
12:30 – 13:15	Lunch Break
13:15 – 14:15	Lesson 4
14:15 – 15:15	Lesson 5
15:15 – 15:25	Dismissal

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend a school setting. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from Blackfriars without a good reason is an offence by the parent / carer.

Schools/academies are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the student is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a student of compulsory school/academy age is absent every half-day absence from the academy has to be classified by the academy, as either **AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only the academy can authorize the absence, not parents.** This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

This attendance policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of students.

Schools/academies have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the academy for a good reason.

Unauthorised absences are those which the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This includes:

- **Parents keeping children off the academy unnecessarily**
- **Truancy before or during the academy day**
- **Absences which have never been properly explained**
- **Children who arrive at the academy too late to get a mark**
- **Holidays during term time**

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the academy at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the academy or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Persistent absence

Persistent absentees are defined as those pupils missing around **10%** or more of the typical amount of possible sessions across a given period.

A penalty notice will be considered where there are at least 20 sessions (10 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence during the current and previous terms. These absences do not need to be consecutive.

Parents will now only receive one warning notice period (of first 20 days for the purposes of issuing a penalty fine) in an academic year after which the Local Authority can automatically consider other statutory actions if unauthorised absence re-occurs in the remainder of the academic year.

Further a penalty notice can be considered for persistent late arrival at academy i.e. after the register has closed where there are at least 20 sessions of late arrival in the current and previous term. These lates do not have to be consecutive.

If a prosecution takes place please be advised that the maximum fine is £2500 per parent per child and/or 3 months imprisonment. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from Academy.

Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence

Penalty notice will be considered where

- Pupils take ten sessions of unauthorised absences (which do not have to be consecutive) and only last two sessions have to be for unauthorised leave of absence.
- The period for calculating the ten sessions will be based on the previous rolling calendar year.
- Parents can now receive more than one Penalty Notice per academic year.

These ten sessions will be based on the previous rolling calendar year.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWW themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the academy and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the Academy office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

Procedures

The Academy applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

Clear instructions are laid down for the completion of attendance registers in each lesson.

- 1 Class teachers are expected to request letters from home to support periods of absence.
- 2 Absences not supported by absence notes must always be reported to the appropriate member of staff.
- 3 Parents are requested to telephone Blackfriars on the first morning of an absence. If no telephone message is received the academy receptionist will generate a phone call or text message. Parents are asked to formally give reasons of any absence preferably in writing by letter or in planner. **The Academy reserves the right to authorise any absence, not parents.**

- 4 The academy will always endeavour to contact home for an explanation of absence on the first day. If after three days of absence there is still no contact, then the academy will contact other agencies such as LST or others depending on the circumstances and what is known about the student. Where it is known that a false excuse has been given by a parent for an absence, this will be challenged.
- 5 The Attendance Officer will identify trends and patterns, and will often make spot checks on particular absences. Where attendance cannot be secured in spite of any known illness the EWW is expected to pursue such cases with vigour and keep the academy informed accordingly.
- 6 Attending Academy regularly and attending on time are considered to be equally important. Sanctions are put in place for persistent poor punctuality which may include detention at break, lunch or after the Academy day. Very firm pressure is put on children and their parents to ensure punctuality which will include regular contact with parents, meetings with the Academy Principal.
- 7 There are a few families who have great difficulty in organising their affairs to secure good attendance and punctuality and whose aspirations for their children are low. Great efforts are made by the senior staff to provide support and encouragement, using a mix of understanding and resolution that works in some cases but not all. Penalty notices will be issued where necessary.
- 8 The Academy aims to have all of its students maintaining higher than 95% attendance. When an individual student's attendance level falls below 95% the academy will monitor attendance very closely and may require parents and students to attend regular meetings to implement improvement strategies.

If attendance continues to fall the student and parent will need to attend more formal meetings with senior staff within academy.

If attendance falls at or below 90%, without good reason, a referral to the EWO will be made by the Academy. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.
- 9 We encourage making medical appointments outside of the school day wherever possible.
- 10 Students are NOT allowed to take holidays during academy time. Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into effect on the 1 September 2013, now make it clear that head teachers will only authorise a holiday in academy time under **exceptional circumstances**. Parents who take their children out of academy for a holiday could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution, even if their attendance has been at or above 95%. In cases of unauthorised leave of absence both parents or carers will be fined regardless of which one applied for the leave.

- 11 The academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. Academy staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure a high a level of attendance.

Blackfriars Academy recognises the importance of the Disability & Discrimination Act and will take every opportunity to ensure it is implemented for the benefit of all students, staff, parents and visitors.

Attendance during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

From September 2020, all pupils are required to attend school. As such, the arrangements set out in the main body of this policy (above) will be adhered to. This appendix has been developed in line with the latest government guidance to set out the additional measures that have been put in place to support pupils' attendance at school.

The school will have due regard for the DfE's '[Recording attendance during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)' guidance when recording attendance during the pandemic.

1. Attendance expectations from September

As of September 2020, attendance is mandatory for all pupils.

From September, the usual rules on school attendance (as set out in the main body of this policy) apply, including:

- Parents' duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly.
- The school's responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence, in line with the procedures in the main body of this policy.
- The availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with the LA's code of conduct.

2. Shielding or self-isolating pupils

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August. This means that pupils who were shielding can return to school, as can pupils who have family members who were shielding.

Pupils who are no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional should discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school. Parents should inform the school of any particular measures that need to be in place to ensure their child can return to school safely.

The school understands that there will be occasions where some pupils may not be able to attend school due to coronavirus, including for the following reasons:

- They are self-isolating and have symptoms of coronavirus or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus.
- Rates of coronavirus in the local area have risen and certain individuals are asked to temporarily shield.

Absences relating to pupils following clinical and/or public health advice will not be penalised.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, they will be immediately offered access to remote learning, in line with our remote learning procedures

3. Reluctance to return to school

Parents are advised to contact the school if they have concerns about their child returning to school.

If a parent raises a concern, a relevant staff member will hold a discussion with the parent to discuss their concerns and explain the measures that are, or could be set in place to reduce risk in the school.

4. Monitoring attendance

We will monitor the school's attendance rates once the school is open to all pupils in September.

Any trends in non-attendance will be identified (e.g. due to anxiety) and measures will be put in place to re-engage affected pupils with the school.

Name of Policy	Attendance policy	
Approved	September 2020	
Review Date	September 2021	Review Cycle: 1 year or as necessary to reflect national law and guidance on the pandemic
Signed by Principal		Alison Parr
Signed by Chair of Academy Council		Steven Cropper



LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

Full name of pupil	_____
Address	_____
Reason for Request	_____

First day student will be absent from school	_____
Date student will be back at school	_____
Signature of parent/carer	_____

Office use only

Total number of days requested	_____	Current attendance	_____ %
Request seen by Head of School	Y/N		
Meeting with parent/carer required	Y/N		
Agreement reached	authorised/ unauthorised		
Signed _____	Head of School		

The Head of School will consider the following points before authorising leave:

1. The student's previous attendance history.
2. The age of student.
3. The student's stage of education.
4. The time of year (exams/assessments).
5. The nature of the absence (an exceptional experience)
6. Leave of absence already taken/granted within current academic year.
7. Whether the parents/carers are restricted in terms of leave from their employer

Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time

1. Parents who want the academy to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully, **complete the attached form and send it to the Academy Principal**. This form should be sent to the academy in time for the request to be considered **well before** the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any booking arrangements before receiving the academy's decision regarding their request. The Academy Principal cannot authorise any leave of absence unless the request is received before the period of absence begins.
2. The Department for Education makes it clear that the Academy Principal may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Academy Principal's now also determine the number of school days a child can be away from academy if the leave is granted.
3. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.
4. Staffordshire County Council understands the challenges that some parents face when booking holidays particularly during academy holidays. However, we believe that, in order to ensure children receive the best education and prospects, that they should be in academy during term time.
5. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence. In considering a request, the Academy will take account of: -
 - the **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
 - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
 - the overall attendance pattern of the child
 - frequency of similar requests
 - whether the parent made the request in advance
 - students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will **not** normally be granted leave of absence.
6. Where parents have children in more than one school/academy a separate request must be made to each school/academy. The head of each school/academy will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school/academy. However head teachers/Academy Principal's may choose to liaise with each other as part of their decision-making process.
7. Should the academy decide to grant leave of absence, but the child **does not return to Academy at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and no information is available to the academy to explain/justify the continuing absence this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
8. Should the academy decide **not to grant leave of absence** and parents still take their child out of academy, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**, which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 **per parent* per child**. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.
9. The Local Authority will continue to monitor all academy absences during term time and support head of academies in challenging parents who ignore the law.

* Generally the DfE states that parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.