



**Bexhill**  
Academy

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Adopted : 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018

Next Review: 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019

## INTRODUCTION

At Bexhill Academy, we aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to achieve their best. For our students to be able to gain the most from their education it is vital they attend regularly and should be at school, on time, every day unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

## WHY IS REGULAR ATTENDANCE SO IMPORTANT

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts the learning of others in the same teaching groups by disrupting the classroom routines. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## 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:

- Give you details on attendance in our school newsletter and the parent bulletin board
- Report to you termly on how your child is performing in school and what their attendance rate is
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying house achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through the Rewards Policy

## UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why we require information about the cause of any absence.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoons away from school for a good reason, like illness, medical/dental appointments which UNAVOIDABLY fall in school time, emergencies or other reasons the **school** deems to be unavoidable. Students will not be allowed to leave school for medical appointments without a note or appointment card.

Students with on-going medical conditions may have an Individual Health Care Plan in place that outlines reasonable adjustments to a student's timetable where CURRENT medical evidence to support this is in place.

Regular days off ill may be challenged by letter. Lack of medical evidence for these days off will lead to school unauthorised absence leading to the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

High levels of authorised absence can lead to the involvement of the East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This type of absence can lead to sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absence includes:

- Parents/carers keeping students off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other siblings or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

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 resolved between the school, the parents/carers and the student. If the student is reluctant to attend, it is never advisable 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 usually makes things worse. Please contact your child's Pastoral Manager if you have any concerns regarding their attendance.

### **Persistent Absenteeism**

A student becomes a "persistent absentee" when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for **whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any student's educational prospects and we need parents/carers' 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 the parent/carer will be informed of this. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our regular attendance tracking. Students are also likely to be involved in other interventions where absence affects attainment.

Selected PA students and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan with a Pastoral Manager or Assistant Principal. The plan may include: additional support through a mentor and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

### **Absence Procedures**

If a student is absent it is the parent/carer's responsibility to:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- Send a letter in on the first day of return with an explanation of the absence, even if you have already telephoned us
- You can call into school and report to reception

If a student is absent we will:

- Text/phone the parent/carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Send a letter informing you of their absence if we have received no notification from you
- Carry out a Home Visit

- If absence persists your child's Pastoral Manager or the Attendance Officer will contact you to discuss this. Our administration team will also write to you to highlight this.
- If after 3 weeks there is still no improvement we will refer the matter to the SLT Lead for Attendance
- Medical evidence will also be requested for absences of 3 days or more
- Where absence is related to family illness, family medical evidence may be requested.

Where a child has been absent for 2 or more days without parent/carer contact, the police may be called to carry out a welfare check.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student missed the start of the day they can miss essential work, late arriving students also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the student and also encourage absence. Students who are late to school will serve a break time detention.

The school day starts at 8.30am and we expect all students to be in class at that time. The school is open from 7.45am.

Registers are marked immediately and submitted by 8.45am and a student will receive a late mark if they are not in class by 8.30am.

At 9.00am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a student arrives after that time 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. This may mean that you could face the possibility of prosecution if the problem persists.

### **WITHDRAWALS FROM LEARNING IN TERM TIME**

Taking holidays in term time will affect a student's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking your child away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday and at Bexhill Academy holidays in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, for example a parent/carer in the forces being deployed for a tour of duty overseas.

Children must attend every time the school requires. The only exceptions are the ones set out in the legislation: sickness, unavoidable causes, religious holidays, authorised absences, local authorities' failure to make statutory travel arrangements, or, where the child has no fixed abode, the parent's need to travel for business (subject to certain conditions).

If there are very exceptional circumstances the school may authorise a leave of absence – in these circumstances the parent/carer should apply to the Principal using the Withdrawal from Learning Form available from reception or the academy website. All applications in these exceptional circumstances must be made in advance. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of absence in term time. It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- In the month of September
- When a student is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence

### **Targets**

The school has targets to improve attendance and every student has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our school magazine and we ask for your full support.

### **Expectation for students**

Irregular attendance means that students will miss out on aspects of the educational experience on offer at Bexhill Academy.

Students need to understand that if they are absent or late they will not get access to their entitlement of learning for success. Furthermore, their development of their social skills, key learning skills and their ability to achieve academically will be severely compromised.

Students should:

- Aim for 100% attendance, only being absent through genuine illness
- Arrive at school by 8.20am in time for Period 1 at 8.30am and be punctual to every lesson
- Register at reception if they are late
- Bring a note from home explaining the reason for absence following every session of absence
- See individual teachers and catch up work missed during the period of absence

Through our Ed Lounge alternative provision, students may have access to qualified teachers and officers within their designated e-portfolio whilst in inclusion or off-site learning to enable the B attendance code.

**Attendance Officer – Mrs N Ashdown – [nikki.ashdown@bexhillacademy.org](mailto:nikki.ashdown@bexhillacademy.org)**

The role of a School Attendance and Welfare Officer is to help the Academy improve attendance and meet the needs of children and young people by supporting and advising them and their families using a range of different tools, i.e. group mentoring, liaising with outside agencies, informing parents/carers of their rights and responsibilities in relation to regular school attendance and the process of legal proceedings in relation to non-school attendance.

They also help the Academy develop appropriate strategies in partnership with other agencies to maintain and/or improve levels of attendance to help ensure the Academy's performance indicators and targets are met. The Attendance Office works together with Pastoral Managers and SLT on a

weekly basis to ensure consistency and delivers training to staff regarding school attendance strategies as appropriate.

### **Summary**

**The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure their child attends and arrives on time. All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.**

**Nationally, only 20% of students with attendance below 80% achieve 5 Levels 5-9 grades at GCSE**