



Bexhill
Academy

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Adopted: July 2021
Next Review: July 2022

ATTENDANCE POLICY

For Bexhill Academy

This policy was adopted on July 2021
This policy is due for review on July 2022

Aims and Principles:

Regular school attendance is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. Bexhill Academy believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. Our expectation for attendance is 100%.

Bexhill Academy values all students and we will work with families to identify the reasons for unsatisfactory attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and SEN.

Responsibilities:

Parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

We ask you to support the academy by sending your child into school to access their learning. Do not keep them at home for unnecessary reasons, including minor illness. If you have any concerns regarding your child's attendance at school, your first action should be to contact your child's Form Tutor so that any issues or concerns can quickly be resolved.

Context

Bexhill Academy is a community school that recognises the staff, parents/carers and students play an important part in making it successful. We aim for an environment that enables and encourages all members of the community to reach for "Brilliance". School closures over the past two years has meant education had been disrupted for all students. Therefore, 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.

- Bexhill Academy is a larger than average mixed Academy with students serving the coastal town of Bexhill with 1453 students on roll.
- 32.57% of students are currently eligible for support through the pupil premium.
- The proportion of students on the special needs register is 25.26% The proportion of students supported through a statement of special educational needs is 1.93%
- The academy has a small, local authority funded, unit for students with autism (LINK) with 12 places.
- The academy is in the 4th quintile (more deprived) for deprivation, higher than the National Average
- 87.8% of students are White British, with 93.8% having English as a first Language. EAL – 6.4 (93 students)
- Children with medical condition : 17.3%
- CLA : 1.1%
- Young Carers : 2.6%

Why is Regular Attendance so Important

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

Learning at our school is very interactive, requiring the participation of the students with the teacher and one another during class. This is adversely affected when a student is absent or habitually late – not only for that student, but for the dynamics of the entire class both during their absence as well as upon their return, when time is taken to reintegrate them into the learning context of the class.

In addition, non-attendance at school can be detrimental to developing the confidence and resilience skills required to be successful adults. We want our students to “Be the Best” and this means being a fully engaging member of our community.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at the academy is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from the academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. Being absent for a cold, “not feeling up to it” or having a headache would not be tolerated in the work place and so at Bexhill Academy we mirror these same expectations.

Safeguarding

Students may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school,

promoting the welfare and life opportunities for every student encompasses: Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying. Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter. Priority students will be monitored daily to review their attendance and appropriate safeguarding actions taken as required.

In accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021, we recognise that Children Missing Education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Promoting Regular Attendance

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

We expect all parents/carers to promote good attendance at the academy.

To help us all to focus on this the academy will:

- Give you details on attendance in our academy newsletter
- Report to you throughout the academic year on how your child is performing in school and what their attendance rate is
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements and individual achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance
- Take appropriate disciplinary action on students who arrive late to school and lessons
- Promote student attendance through tutor time activities, assemblies and attendance incentive programmes

We understand the concerns of many of our parents/carers and students regarding the impact of the Covid 19 school closure period on learning and progress. The academy will be working with you and your child to provide additional learning and support opportunities. Where students are unable to access this support due to absence they may be required to attend additional sessions after school and/or catch up sessions on a Saturday – these will be non-negotiable. At Bexhill Academy we want every student to succeed.

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 the academy 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 without parent/carer contact, the police may be called to carry out a welfare check.

Targets

The academy has targets to improve attendance and every student has an important part to play in meeting these targets – we expect 100% attendance for all of our students. Through the academy 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 academy 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

Attendance Officer – Mrs N Ashdown – nikki.ashdown@bexhillacademy.org

The role of the Academy's 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 academy 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 Officer works together with Pastoral Managers and SLT on a weekly basis to ensure consistency and delivers training to staff regarding academy attendance strategies as appropriate.

Summary

The academy 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 academy 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.

APPENDIX – OTHER INFORMATION

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the academy (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 the academy for a good reason, like medical/dental appointments which UNAVOIDABLY fall in academy time, emergencies or other reasons the **academy** deems to be unavoidable (e.g. family grievance). Students will not be allowed to leave the academy 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. Where possible, a doctor's note, hospital notice or prescription should be presented to the academy following a medical absence or illness. Lack of medical evidence for these days off will lead to the academy unauthorising the absence. This may result in 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 academy 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 academy day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at the academy too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other siblings or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time. Holidays should be taken during the school holidays. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, SI 2013 No 756, amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006 No. 1751, to remove references to family holiday and extended leave.

Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued by East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service for unauthorised holiday absence during term time. This fine is payable at £60 per child, per parent

Whilst any student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend the academy. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the academy, 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 or the Attendance Officer 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 academy 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 may be subject to an Action Plan with a Pastoral Manager, Attendance Officer or Assistant Principal. The plan may include additional support through a mentor and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

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 the academy will receive Behaviour Points in line with the academy Behaviour Policy and an after school detention.

The academy day starts at 8.30am and we expect all students to be in class at that time. Students should aim to be at the academy by 8.20am. The academy is open from 7.45am.

Registers are marked immediately and submitted by academy staff by 8.45am. A student will receive a late mark if they are not in class by 8.30am. All students arriving after 8.30am will be required to sign in with a member of the morning Duty Team via reception.

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

As parents/carers, you can best support your child by encouraging good attendance at school.

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 academy 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 academy 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 academy 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 academy 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 academy 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 academy. 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

Excluded children

When a child is excluded from school, the parent will be responsible for ensuring that their child is not found in a public place during normal school hours on the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion. (Section 103 Education and Inspections Act)

Legislative Framework for School Attendance and Absence

The legal framework governing school attendance and the responsibilities of parents of excluded pupils, schools/ academies and the LA is set out in a succession of acts, regulations and other guidance.

Education Act 1996

Under Section 7 of the Act: the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that the child may have, this can be by regular attendance at school, or otherwise (the parent can choose to educate their child themselves). If it appears to the LA that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise then they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend the school regularly the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. In addition, if it can be proved that a parent knew of the child's non-attendance and failed to act, then they may be found guilty under Section 444(1 A). This offence (known as the higher or aggravated offence) can lead to a warrant being issued compelling a parent to attend court and conviction may result in a higher level fine and/or a custodial sentence.

On 6 April 2017, in the case of Isle of Wight Council v Platt [2017] UKSC 28, the Supreme Court ruled that the word 'regularly' means 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.'

Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/38/contents>

The Act added two new sections (444A and 444B) to the Education Act. It introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under Section 444; the issuing of penalty notices is governed by:

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) 2013

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/757/contents/made>

Children Act 1989

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/36>

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37/section/16>

Education and Inspections Act 2006

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2013)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/756/regulation/2/made>