



# Inspire Education Trust

Together we achieve, individually we grow

## Attendance Policy

### Blue Coat CE Secondary School

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**Policy Date:** January 2022

**Review Date:** January 2023

## Document History

Version	Status		Date	Author	Summary Changes
V1			January 2022	C Milbourne	Page 4 – additional BC responsibilities. Page 6 – additional lateness information. Page 11 – updated COVID-19 expectations in line with guidance. Removal of outdated appendices.

# Introduction

At Blue Coat Church of England School, our vision is “Living life in all its fullness”. We exist to equip our students to ‘live life in all its fullness’ by providing excellent education, which is distinctively Christian and inclusive of all. At the heart of this education are the values of Care, Hard Work, Respect, Integrity and Servanthood, working Together for the good of all individuals, the school and wider communities. The conviction that we are created and sustained by God for living together in families and communities is at the root of our dedication to educating for life together.

## Principles

The Trust Directors, Governors and staff of Blue Coat School recognise the importance of good attendance and punctuality in the development of personal character development, achievement in education and success in employment. Regular school attendance is also a key aspect of safeguarding. Therefore, as our role is to assist parents, who are the primary educators of their children, the aim of Governors and staff is to work together with parents and carers to maximise the attendance and punctuality of every student at the school, enabling them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Governors and staff believe in, and are committed to, promoting excellent attendance and punctuality. Regular attendance is crucial if students are to maximise their potential and to meet the five outcomes outlined in the *Every Child Matters* white paper:

- Be healthy
- Be safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing

Our team of dedicated staff provide a supportive learning environment, in which every child is challenged to exceed expectations and be ambitious for their future.

At Blue Coat Church of England School and Music College we work hard to ensure that all students receive full time education.

All students have an attendance target of 100%. Sometimes absence is unavoidable, however all absence impacts on a student’s attainment and progress.

## Rights, Responsibilities and Roles

Improving and maintaining the school’s level of attendance is the responsibility of everyone in the school community: Directors, Governors, staff, parents and students. Each year, there are 190 statutory school days. This means there are 175 days for holidays, family visits, shopping, birthday treats and non-urgent medical/dental appointments.

## Blue Coat School

- Governors and staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Staff will work closely with parents/carers to encourage and reward good attendance, provide sanctions for poor punctuality, and investigate promptly if absenteeism or lateness gives cause for concern.
- Staff will keep parents/carers fully informed of their child's attendance and punctuality, and the school will contact parents if a child is absent from school without explanation.
- Staff will work closely with all relevant agencies to safeguard children and ensure good attendance.
- Staff will act promptly when a child's whereabouts are unknown, by following the Local Authority's protocol for Children Missing in Education.
- The school will maintain a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance data.
- The school will promote effective partnerships with the local authority and with other services and agencies.
- The school will recognise the needs of individual students when planning integration following significant periods of absence.

## Parents/carers

- Parents/carers will ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually and ready to learn.
- Parents/carers will inform the school of the reason for any absence by phone call on the first morning of any absence, and in advance if possible. Parents will be required to call school on every consecutive day of absence. The school may require this to be confirmed in writing when a student returns to school.
- Parents/carers should avoid making medical appointments during school hours whenever possible. This includes opticians, dentists, doctors and orthodontist appointments.
- On the rare occasions when an appointment in school hours is unavoidable, parents/carers will make arrangements to collect their child from school and return them to school as soon as possible. Written evidence of the appointment will be submitted.
- Parents/carers should not arrange family holidays or visits during term time.
- Requests for leave of absence will be made at least two weeks in advance using the form available from the school office.

## Students

Students will ensure that they attend lessons and tutor time regularly and punctually.

- Students who arrive after the start of the school day will sign in with duty staff on the school gate or the main school reception, giving a reason for lateness.
- Students will not leave the school site without permission.
- Students will strive to have excellent school attendance and punctuality.

## The Law

Parents/carers are required by law to ensure their child's regular and punctual attendance to school. The Governing Body has endorsed the Local Authority use of parenting contracts and penalty notices for parents of persistent truants and for unauthorised absence.

Legal Framework section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of a compulsory school age receive full time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Compulsory school age is from the beginning of the term following a child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday and continues until the last Friday in the month June in the academic year in which they reach the age of 16 years old.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 if a child of compulsory age registered at school fails to attend regularly then parent/carers are guilty of an offence which may lead to prosecution.

The Government, from September 2013, amended the Education (Student Registration) Regulations 2006 to include the fact that Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents found guilty in a magistrate's court of failing to secure their child's education at school under the provisions of the Education Act of 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of £1,000 fine under section 1 offence and a £2,500 fine and up to 3 months prison sentence under section 1a offence.

### Registration

It is a legal requirement to keep accurate registers of students' attendance and punctuality:

- The official school day begins with a register taken by the form tutor during the first five minutes of tutor time which starts promptly at 8.45am.
- The official afternoon session of school begins at 1.15pm (period 4) with a register taken by the class teacher during the first five minutes.
- A register will also be taken by the class teacher during the first five minutes of every lesson as part of the school safeguarding policy.
- All teachers and form tutors are required to amend registers where students arrive late to lessons or tutor period for any reason.
- The register will record whether the student is present, absent or late.

### Punctuality

Good punctuality is essential in ensuring success at school, and in all walks of life. Therefore, it is vital that all students understand the following procedure and that there are clear consequences for lateness.

### Lateness to school

- Tutor time starts promptly at 8.45 am, by which time all students must have arrived at the classroom for registration.
- At 8.45 am, the main school gates will be closed, and entry to the school site must be made through the small pedestrian gate at the front of school, which will be staffed by two members of staff.
- Any students arriving at the school gate after 8.45 am will be registered as late.
- Any student arriving at school after 9am must report immediately to reception. The student will be asked to provide an explanation for their lateness and where necessary parent/carers will be contacted and a detention slip may be issued. (*Appendix B*)

- Any student arriving after 9.15am will be coded as a 'u' which is unauthorised absence. This will have a negative impact on attendance and parents are at risk of a fine.
- A note will be provided by reception staff.
- Reception staff will report any late arrivals to the Attendance officer.
- Lateness to school after the register has closed will be treated as a half session absence.
- Form tutors will monitor attendance and patterns in attendance of their students using the SIMS system.
- Where appropriate form tutors will place students on attendance report and contact home.

### **Lateness to lessons/tutor time**

- Teaching staff/form tutors will be waiting to greet students ahead of the published start time of all lessons and form periods, so that learning can commence at the published start time.
- All students are expected to arrive punctually to all lessons and tutor times, equipped and ready to learn. All students are expected to travel swiftly between lessons and respond positively to being reminded to move quickly by school staff.
- Any student arriving after the register has been taken will be deemed late, registered with an L code and, in the first instance, reminded about the need for good punctuality.
- If a student accumulates two gate lates in a week they will receive a late detention after school. Lateness to school is considered to be a safeguarding concern.
- If a student accumulates five late to lesson marks in a week they will be issued with an after-school detention and parents will be informed.
- Attendance to late detention is compulsory; no excuses for lateness or non-attendance will be accepted. A register will be taken at the start of the detention. Failure to attend late detention will lead to an escalation in line with the school behaviour consequence system and parents will be informed.
- Where a student is persistently late to a specific lesson or tutor time, the member of staff will contact home and will issue appropriate sanctions in accordance with the school behaviour consequence system.
- Form tutors will monitor the punctuality of their students using the SIMS system for patterns of lateness across subjects and in tutor time.
- Where appropriate, form tutors will place students on punctuality report and contact home.

### **Authorised/Unauthorised Absence**

It is the role of schools to decide whether an absence is to be authorised. Parents and carers must inform school of the reason for any absence by phone call (02476 223542) before 9am on the first morning of the absence and each subsequent day of absence. School staff will require this to be confirmed in writing when a student returns. Only the school's acceptance of the explanation offered authorises the absence. Should any information provided by parents or carers be inaccurate or deliberately false, this will result in an unauthorised absence, which may lead to a penalty notice being served.

Absence from school may be authorised for the following reasons:

- Student illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments for the student. Students should return to school immediately after the appointment
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

- Student attendance at an interview
- Exceptional circumstances, as deemed appropriate by the Headteacher
- Approved educational/sporting activities, as deemed appropriate by the Headteacher

Absence from school will NOT be authorised unless there is exceptional circumstance.

### **Exceptional Circumstances:**

The law allows schools to authorise absence for the reasons listed above, and only in exceptional circumstances.

In the case that a student's parent or carer believes there to be exceptional circumstances which require authorised absence from school, the parent or carer must complete an 'Exceptional Circumstances Leave of Absence Request Form'. These must be obtained by the parent or carer from the school office, who will not issue the form to a student without a written or verbal request from their parent or carer. Parents should explain the full reasons for requesting the absence, in as much detail including places of travel, ticket confirmation (if applicable), address of where staying and date of arrival back in school. The form must be submitted to the School Attendance Officer at least two weeks in advance of the requested date of absence. Should any information provided by parents/carers be inaccurate or deliberately false, this will result in an unauthorised absence, which may lead to a penalty notice being served.

Decisions on authorising absence requests will be made by the Headteacher, who will inform parents of the decision. Written communication approving requests will state the expected date of return. Parents/ carers are responsible for notifying the school if anything delays the student's return. If a student fails to return when expected the school will inform the relevant authorities. Written communication refusing requests will explain the reasons. Refusal to comply will result in an unauthorised absence being recorded, which may lead to a penalty notice being served.

The following will be taken into consideration:

- Amount of time requested
- Age and curriculum key stage of the student
- Proximity of examinations and other assessed components of public examinations
- Previous attendance and punctuality record
- Student's educational needs
- Student's prior and current attainment, including their perceived capacity to catch up with missed work
- General welfare of the student
- The impact of the student's absence on their peers
- Purpose of the leave requested
- Circumstances surrounding the request, including when the request was made
- National and local guidance on the authorisation of absence
- Information provided by the Head of House, Student worker or representatives of any external agencies

### **Approved Educational Activities**

There are a number of activities that form a valuable part of a student's education which take place off the school site. These include courses and activities delivered by external providers,

where participation by Blue Coat students has been arranged by the school. These could include sporting or cultural activities, retreats, participation in acts of worship and work experience. These take place within the legislative framework and are subject to the school's Educational Visits Policy. All students participating in approved educational activities will be coded appropriately on the school register system.

Requests for students to take part in educational activities made by parents, carers or external agencies will only be approved if the Headteacher believes that the activity satisfies regulatory requirements, including supervision of the activity by someone authorised to do so. Such requests should be made using the procedure and 'Exceptional Circumstances Leave of Absence Request Form', as detailed above.

Consideration of such requests will include:

- The nature of the activity
- The benefits to the student
- The impact of the student's absence on their peers
- The impact on the student's education and welfare
- The amount of time requested
- The timing and frequency of the activity

### **Procedures for Following up Absence**

The school will require written confirmation of the reason for a student's absence, especially where their attendance is a cause for concern. Form tutors will collect written explanations from returning students and pass them to the Attendance Officer on the day of receipt.

All unexplained absences will be followed up with parents and carers by the tutor or School Attendance Officer, in order to establish a reason for absence. Should a student be absent for more than two consecutive days without an explanation, a member of the school staff will contact parents and visit the home address with another colleague

If a student has a poor attendance record, the local authority Student Welfare Officer may visit the home address on the first day of absence, or at any other time if there are concerns.

Should a written explanation not be provided by parents/carers when requested, or should a parent/carer ignore a decision made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, a member of the Senior team will write to parents to request them to attend a meeting with a member of the Pastoral Team/Local Authority Student Welfare Officer. Where parents/carers have taken their child overseas, they will be required to provide detailed evidence of travel plans. Refusal by a parent or carer to attend the meeting and adhere to requests for evidence could raise concerns and may result in a referral being made to external agencies, such as social care or the police.

Where absence is a cause for concern, action will be taken to promote better attendance patterns by the student's tutor in the first instance. Such action will be scaled according to the level of poor attendance/punctuality developing.

## **Persistent Absence**

A student becomes a persistent absentee (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% irrespective of the reason(s) for absence. Absence at this level is a cause for concern and will impact on a student reaching their true academic potential.

Student attendance is monitored carefully by tutors and pastoral staff. Where a student has low attendance, parents will be invited in to school and an agreed attendance improvement plan implemented. The pastoral team may refer to appropriate external agencies to provide targeted support for the individual student.

Students who are PA or on track to becoming PA will be required to meet regularly with pastoral leaders to support them in improving their attendance.

Where a student is persistently late or absent without good reason, and the school's efforts to effect improvement have been unsuccessful, the school may refer the matter to the Local Authority who may complete a home visit.

Attendance below 90%, or persistent patterns of lateness may trigger legal proceedings as appropriate.

Where appropriate, external agency involvement, Early Help and Parenting Contracts will be used as a strategy to improve attendance/punctuality. If a student has ten or more half day unauthorised absences within a five-week period, the school may apply to the local authority to issue a £60 penalty notice per parent per child. All parents/carers at risk of receiving a penalty notice will be informed.

## **Strategies for Promoting Attendance and Punctuality**

The curriculum is monitored and developed to meet the needs of all students. A variety of teaching and learning strategies are used to engage and enthuse all groups of students. Student voice feedback is used in the planning and evaluation of the curriculum, teaching and learning and pastoral systems. Attendance statistics are collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices and interventions.

Good attendance and punctuality are monitored by form tutors, the pastoral team and senior leaders. Students with 100% attendance will be rewarded at the end of each term, and at our annual prize giving celebration.

Parents and carers are kept regularly informed of their child's attendance and punctuality through the reporting system, as well as via school staff in the event of concerns. A range of strategies, targeted at low attending students, are used by pastoral staff throughout the year in order to promote excellent attendance and punctuality.

Attendance analysis statistics are produced each week by the Attendance Officer. Attendance data is monitored in a weekly meeting with the Attendance Officer and the pastoral team and intervention strategies may be put in place for those students whose attendance is cause for concern. The Local Authority School's worker will liaise with the pastoral team on a regular basis

and students who are cause for concern will be referred by a member of the Senior Leadership Team to a Local Authority School's worker for extra support.

Prior to admission in Year 7, visits are made to feeder primary schools in order to ensure the fullest support for all students during secondary transfer and in order to help identify any students who may need special support.

Students whose attendance falls below 90% are set targets for improvement and referred to the Local Authority Student Welfare Officer where deemed appropriate. In the case of Looked After Children, the threshold is 95% attendance. These targets will be regularly reviewed by the pastoral teams.

Students who have been absent for any extended period of time, or who are at risk of becoming a 'school refuser', should follow a structured programme, agreed by parents/carers and relevant staff and external agencies.

### **Contents of Attendance Register**

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

### **Absence and Attendance Codes**

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, Local Authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence. Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

The codes are:

Code /: Present in school

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Code B: Off-site educational activity

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

Code V: Educational visit or trip

Code W: Work experience

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Code R: Religious observance

Code S: Study leave

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Code Z: Pupil not on admission register

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

Code Y: Unable to attend due to unavoidable circumstances. This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

### COVID 19 - Attendance expectations

From the start of the autumn term 2020, student attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with the Local Authorities' codes of conduct
- the duty on Local Authorities to put in place arrangements for identifying, and to follow up with, children missing education.

Although school attendance is mandatory, there are some circumstances where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19 from UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19.

## Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms of COVID-19

Pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test, should follow the latest government guidance on whether they need to take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

Where a pupil is required to take a PCR test, and they test negative and feel well, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the PCR test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I (illness). Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result.

After a pupil tests positive for COVID-19 (LFD or PCR), they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school. They should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance.

## Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

From 14 December 2021, adults who are fully vaccinated and all children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months (pupils) identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 are strongly advised to take a LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result.

Daily testing of close contacts applies to all contacts who are:

- fully vaccinated adults – people who have had 2 doses of an approved vaccine
- all children and young people aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months (pupils), regardless of their vaccination status
- people who are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons
- people taking part, or have taken part, in an approved clinical trial for a COVID-19 vaccine

Although close contacts are strongly advised to get a test, they should continue to attend school unless they are symptomatic. Schools should follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools can request supporting evidence from the family. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they may record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes, in line with the [school attendance: guidance for schools](#).

Pupils with SEND identified as close contacts should be supported by their school and their families to agree the most appropriate route for testing including, where appropriate, additional support to assist swabbing. For further information please see [SEND guidance](#).

## [Government attendance information](#)

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is

required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, the school should use code X in the register.

## Appendix A

### Signing in and out process

On arrival to school (due to lateness or appointment) students are required to sign in at student reception.

Any student arriving at school after 9am must report immediately to reception. The student will be asked to provide an explanation for their lateness and provide evidence of any appointments. Where necessary parent/carers will be contacted and detention slip may be issued.

All students are required on site between 8.45am and 3.15pm in order for us to ensure we are supporting them fully and that they are meeting their requirements of student participation and attendance. We currently operate a staggered dismissal from 3pm which does not reduce the required attendance time on-site.

Students are not permitted to leave site during the school day and we encourage parents to book medical appointments outside of the school day where possible.

Students should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time therefore an early morning or late afternoon appointment would be desirable.

If this is unavoidable, parents are requested to either: -

- Telephone the school and discuss with the appropriate Head of House
- Telephone the school attendance officer on 02476223542 and select option 2
- Email the school directly on [admin@bluecoatschoo.com](mailto:admin@bluecoatschoo.com)

Please note we will require medical evidence for appointments

The school will require 24 hours' notice confirming details of the appointment including what time an authorised exit will be required and approximate time of arrival back to school if appropriate.

Where it is not possible to give 24 hours' notice, an appointment card or letter needs to be shown to Reception in advance in order for the absence to be authorised.

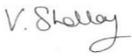
Blue Coat School has a duty of care to ensure pupils remain safe, if school have not been notified by Parent/Carer the student will not be released from school.

Reviewed by: Claire Milbourne January 2022

Next Review Date: January 2023

Approved by Directors: 01.02.2022

Signed:



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Victoria Shelley  
Headteacher



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Lyn Johnson  
Chair of Governors