

BLOOMFIELD COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

Attendance Policy



Approved by the Board of Governors 29 February 2024

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Please note, throughout this policy, the term ‘parent’ is used to refer to the parent or guardian of the pupil.

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This policy is one of a number of inter-related policies which are concerned with pupil welfare including, for example, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Bloomfield Collegiate School is committed to working with parents, pupils and outside agencies in order to support and encourage the attendance of pupils at school. Bloomfield Collegiate School will seek to respond to difficulties or issues which might result in non-attendance.

The parents or guardians of pupils of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive efficient full-time education at school or otherwise. Bloomfield Collegiate School believes that, by adopting a positive and proactive approach towards attendance and by encouraging parents to take an active role in the schooling of their child/ren, the School may play a major role in improving levels of attendance and punctuality, and in reducing absenteeism.

1.2 RATIONALE

Bloomfield Collegiate School has a safeguarding ethos; thus, it is recognised that, not only does the School have statutory responsibilities in relation to pupils' learning, but it also carries pastoral responsibility towards all pupils in its care. The School accepts that all pupils in its charge have a fundamental right to be protected from harm and will seek to do whatever is reasonable to safeguard and promote the physical and emotional well-being of its pupils. Therefore, full attendance at school by pupils is an important aim of governors, staff, pupils and parents at Bloomfield Collegiate School.

The curriculum for each year group is wide and challenging and the programmes of study extend through the whole school year. Thus, in order to ensure that they are meeting the demands of these programmes of study, pupils must attend as fully as possible.

1.3 DEFINITIONS

There are legal requirements upon schools to:

- be open to all pupils for 380 sessions each school year;
- maintain attendance registers in accordance with the relevant regulations;
- record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness accurately;
- distinguish clearly between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised according to criteria laid down by the Department of Education. (Schools should remind parents that it is the decision of the Principal as to whether or not an absence will be authorised.);

- submit termly absence returns through School census and publish information relating to levels of attendance and absence and include details of these in the school's Prospectus and Annual Report; and
- set annual targets to reduce absence and submit these targets in accordance with the relevant regulations.

1.4 SAFEGUARDING ETHOS

Bloomfield Collegiate School sustains a safeguarding ethos. Thus, the School aims to take appropriate preventative measures to protect the pupils in its care and to promote their emotional and physical safety. Such measures include efforts related to attendance.

1.5 RELEVANT PERSONNEL

The School Safeguarding Team is comprised of:

- the Chairperson of the Board of Governors;
- the Designated member of the Board of Governors for Child Protection.;
- the Principal; and
- the Designated Teacher, and Deputies, for Child Protection

Other members of the Senior Leadership Team support this work.

The Learning Support Co-ordinator, and team, and Heads of Year, support pupils with Special Educational Needs.

Each member of staff has pastoral responsibility towards young people in their charge. The names of the relevant personnel are listed in the Pastoral Care Policy.

1.6 DISSEMINATION OF THE POLICY

The policy is made available to the school community through the School Website. Copies are available from the School Office.

1.7 AIMS

This Policy aims to ensure that there is an efficient and transparent system for registering attendance, recording reasons for non-attendance and responding to issues related to attendance.

This policy will:

- accord priority and value to attendance and punctuality, and ensure that specific strategies are in place to promote this;
- ensure compliance with all relevant statutory requirements (particularly with regard to the maintenance of attendance registers and setting of targets);
- ensure that clear attendance information is communicated to parents (parents should be specifically reminded of their legal responsibility to ensure their children's regular and punctual attendance);

- collect and make effective use of attendance data to monitor progress/trends and set targets for improvement – for individual pupils, classes, year groups and the whole school;
- provide clear guidance to members of staff on the practice of Registration and on related issues such as the appropriate categorisation of absence;
- recognise the crucial importance of early intervention and the provision of appropriate strategies;
- make provision for first-day-of-absence notification to parents of pupils who are known to be poor attenders (85% or below), or who might otherwise be considered to be at risk;
- identify a range of both proactive and reactive strategies to promote attendance and address absenteeism, especially in respect of persistent absenteeism;
- develop informal attendance incentive schemes which recognise pupils' attendance achievements;
- establish effective networks for working with other involved agencies and services;
- establish procedures for re-integrating long-term absentees and pupils who may, for specific reasons, have been on a reduced timetable; and
- help to sustain an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance, addressing potential school-based causes of poor attendance such as bullying.

SECTION 2: PROCEDURES

2.1 PUNCTUALITY

Punctuality is essential to good time management. It is also a courtesy. The school day begins at 8.45 a.m. and ends at 3.20 p.m. Each pupil is expected to remain in school for the duration of the school day.

Registration takes place at 8.45 a.m. each morning in classrooms by the Form Teacher. Any pupil who arrives later than 8.45 a.m. must report to the School Office.

Throughout the school day, pupils are expected to arrive to class promptly.

If any pupil is ill, they should inform her teacher, who will make a record on Lesson Monitor in SIMS and send the pupil to the Medical Room. No pupil may go home without following this procedure.

2.2 ATTENDANCE

No pupil may leave school before the regular time without obtaining appropriate permission from the school. Permission will normally be granted in receipt of a written note or email.

Absence from school without permission is a serious breach of school regulations.

2.3 ABSENCE

If a pupil is ill for three days or more, parents should make contact with reception or via School Comms to inform the school of the reason for absence. If parents fail to notify the School, School may contact home.

A pupil who has been absent must, on the day of return, via electronic communication, state the period and cause of the absence. All electronic communication should be sent using School Comms sc1410315a@Schoolcomms.com.

In cases of anticipated absence, pupils must notify school via electronic communication at least 48 hours in advance.

2.4 LONG TERM ABSENCE

A pupil may be absent for a longer period of time due to illness or medical problems. If relevant or necessary, School will liaise with parents, medical practitioners, the Educational Welfare Officer and relevant additional/special needs staff from the Education Authority.

In consultation with parents, Educational Welfare Officer, external agencies such as CAMHS, and hospital consultants, a pupil may be referred for Exceptional Teaching Arrangements. If accepted, the panel recommends the type of EOTAS.

The School will maintain regular contact with pupils in EOTAS, to ensure their pastoral and academic needs are being met, and is expected to contribute to the learning opportunities a registered pupil receives within EOTAS. Every pupil placed in EOTAS will receive an education plan, tailored to their individual needs and abilities, setting out appropriate attainment and personal development targets. This plan will be drawn up and reviewed by the EOTAS centre with input from the pupil's registered school.

EOTAS Centres will provide schools with attendance information on their registered pupils. Schools must record this in line with attendance data for all their registered pupils. EOTAS Centres will provide the school with regular progress reports against the pupil's education plan. A school must formally report this progress to the parents/guardians of the young person, in line with its normal reporting arrangements and timeframes. Educational outcomes of registered pupils in EOTAS must be reported by the school at the end of all Key Stages, in line with their reporting on all pupils.

The School uses Education Authority regulated EOTAS Centres. This ensures adherence to Child Protection and Safeguarding policies and procedures.

2.5 PARTIAL ATTENDANCE AND PHASED RETURN

In certain circumstances, perhaps due to a diagnosis of illness or due to recovery from surgery, a pupil may be unable to attend school for a full day. Through negotiation between the parent and the relevant Senior Teacher, such a pupil may be permitted to attend school on a partial basis only, signing in and out at Reception.

2.6 ABSENCE OF A PUPIL FOR WHOM THERE ARE CONCERNS

On occasions, Bloomfield Collegiate School may arrange to make contact with parents, Social Services or otherwise should a particular pupil fail to arrive in the morning. Likewise, should such a pupil be absent due to illness, the adult responsible for their welfare is asked to make contact with the School.

2.7 MEDICAL/DENTAL APPOINTMENTS

Medical appointments should be arranged outside school hours when it is possible to do so. If an unavoidable appointment takes place during the school day, a written request should be given to Reception or an email request sent to the school email address.

The pupil must sign in/out at Reception.

2.8 CARERS

In exceptional circumstances, Bloomfield Collegiate School may sanction limited absence for young carers until other arrangements can be made. The Principal will set a time limit for such absences in consultation with a Head of Year. Advice may be taken from the Education Authority or other appropriate agency before arriving at a decision. In such circumstances, consideration will be given to the welfare of the young person.

2.9 REQUESTS FOR HOLIDAYS

The Governors, Principal and staff request that holidays for pupils are organised outside of the school term. If a pupil goes on holiday during term time, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents and pupils will take full responsibility for any work missed during that time. (Special work programmes will not be organised by staff.)

2.10 APPROVED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

If so approved by the Principal, absence from school due to participation in an educational activity may be recorded as an approved educational activity.

2.11 RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Applications for absence due to Religious Observance Days should be made to the Principal in writing and well in advance. The Principal will review each application reasonably and in consultation with the Head of Year.

2.12 REMOVAL OF A PUPIL FROM THE REGISTER

The Principal will authorise the taking of a pupil's name off the Register in accordance with the current regulations.

2.13 ATTENDANCE RECORDS

Attendance and all forms of absence are recorded using the Attendance and Absence codes.

Bloomfield Collegiate School works with Educational Welfare Officers (EWO). Queries linked to poor attendance are channelled via the relevant Senior Teacher to the EWO.

Although the majority of referrals made to the Education Welfare Service are on the basis of non-attendance, some are occasionally taken in relation to child protection concerns, transport or school-age employment issues.

Before accepting a referral from a school, the Education Welfare Service will expect the school to have undertaken a number of steps to address the pupil's non-attendance. These may include:

- action by the class teacher/Form Teacher;
- action by the Head of Year; and
- contact with parents by telephone or letter.

A referral will be made to the EWO in the following circumstances:

- (i) there is concern about an erratic pattern of absence;
- (ii) there is concern about a poor attendance record;
- (iii) communication by the School to the parents has met with little or no response;
- (iv) there is evidence of a lack of parental co-operation in ensuring a pupil's regular attendance;
- (v) a pattern of post-registration truancy is persisting despite the School's efforts to prevent it;
- (vi) there is concern about the reason(s) for absence;
- (vii) a parent withdraws a pupil from school having expressed an intention to educate them otherwise than at school (Elective Home Education);
- (viii) a pupil is withdrawn from school by the parents who are moving to another area and the school does not have a confirmed destination/school provider where the pupil will resume their education (such pupils will be treated as 'pupils missing education');
- (ix) there are child protection concerns; and
- (x) there are specific and identifiable welfare issues which are preventing a pupil from accessing education.

Parents are always informed if a referral is being made. All referrals to the Educational Welfare Service are recorded on CPOMS.

Following referral, the EWO will liaise with the parents, pupil and school staff (and external agencies, if relevant) to address the problem and agree a strategy to improve the situation.

SECTION 3: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 GOVERNORS

The Board of Governors will:

- consider proposed changes to the Attendance Policy and, when agreed, approve the Policy;
- receive reports on attendance from the Principal termly.

3.2 PRINCIPAL

The Principal, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team and members of the Pastoral Team, will:

- set attendance targets in accordance with the School Development Plan and target-setting processes;
- monitor progress;
- ensure that strategies to promote and implement the Attendance Policy throughout the School are in place;
- determine whether to authorise any proposed absences requested by parents, or absences which have occurred for which no request was made;
- notify parents as appropriate that if a pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly, their parents commit an offence;
- initiate appropriate staff strategies to improve attendance;
- liaise with the Education Authority regarding persistent absentees;
- liaise with the Education Authority and PSNI when they wish to exercise their powers to enforce the return of truants to school; and
- make an annual report with statistics to the Board of Governors.

3.3 SENIOR TEACHER IN CHARGE OF ATTENDANCE

The Senior Teacher in charge of attendance will:

- monitor the Late Register and apply sanctions as required; see Citizenship and Behaviour Policy for details;
- liaise with parents in the creation and implementation of a School Refusal plan;
- monitor and review School Refusal plans and report to SLT;
- oversee the work of Heads of Year, ensuring that the correct procedures are followed;
- enter into a Service Level Agreement with the Educational Welfare Service and meet with the EWO at agreed intervals;
- authorise referrals to the Educational Welfare Service when appropriate; and
- ensure targets are being monitored.

3.4 HEADS OF YEAR

The Heads of Year will:

- in collaboration with Form Teachers, Office Manager, Senior Teacher identify poor attenders (85% or below) or those who might otherwise be at risk;
- ask Office Manager to alert parents to a low attendance when below 90%
- identify and follow-up ad hoc absences or unusual patterns or trends, record all concerns on CPOMs;
- monitor Form Teachers to ensure that all pupil absences are recorded and that reasons for absence has been received from parents;
- ensure that all suspected truancy is followed up and sanctioned in line with Citizenship & Behaviour policy;
- contact parents regarding pupil absences by telephone or interview;
- make reports to the Senior Teacher in charge of attendance on the efficiency of the system, required training needs and upon pupils who are giving cause for concern;
- when made aware that a pupil has been absent for three consecutive days, liaise with the Office Manager and Form Teacher to arrange a phone call to the parent; and

3.5 OFFICE MANAGER

The Office Manager will:

- in collaboration with Form Teachers and Heads of Year, identify poor attenders (85% or below) or those who might otherwise be at risk;
- make checks on the efficiency of the registering and alert the relevant Head of Year when required;
- ensure that registers are completed and up-to-date;
- make checks on absence notes;
- generate Absence Letters and record the outcomes; and

3.6 FORM TEACHERS

Form Teachers will:

- ensure that pupils are registered accurately and consistently;
- when aware that a pupil has been absent for three consecutive days, liaise with the Head of Year and arrange a phone call to the parent.
- follow up cases of unaccounted for absence;
- inform the Head of Year of any signs of suspected truancy;
- inform the Head of Year of any possible underlying problems which may account for absences;

3.7 CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Classroom teachers will:

- check the attendance of pupils at their lessons using Lesson Monitor; and
- if concerned or suspicious regarding the absence of a pupil, inform the Head of Year at the earliest possible opportunity.

3.8 PARENTS

Parents are responsible in law to ensure that their children attend the school at which they are registered regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. Parents are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered.

Parents can support the regular and punctual attendance of their children by ensuring that:

- their child arrives at school on time each day;

- their child misses school only for unavoidable or justifiable reasons such as illness or days of religious observance;
- they notify the school as soon as possible (preferably on the first morning) of any absence;
- they take an active interest in their child's school life and work;
- their child completes their homework;
- their child goes to bed at an appropriate time;
- they attend parents' evenings and other school events;
- they do not book holidays during term time; and
- they talk with the Head of Year if they are concerned that their child may be becoming reluctant to attend school.
- provide a reason for absence and send via electronic communication, on the day of return to school;

3.9 PUPILS

Pupils are required to:

- attend regularly (registering before the attendance register for that session is closed) unless ill or excused through authorised absence;
- follow procedures for entry to the Medical Room and leaving School due to illness; and
- make a request for any planned absences from their Form Teacher/Head of Year well in advance of the event.

Dates of Policy Review

Nature of Change	Date Review Completed	Date Ratified by Board of Governors
		June 2002
Policy re-written	November 2010	3 March 2011
Minor amendments	June 2012	N/A
Minor amendments	June 2013	N/A
Minor amendments	September 2016	29 September 2016
Minor amendments	January 2020	26 November 2020
Various amendments	May 2023	22 June 2023
Procedural amendments	January 2024	29 February 2024