

Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

The Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust recognises that good attendance is central to raising standards and student attainment and therefore seek to ensure that all of its students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for learning to enable each student to realise his/her true potential.

Regular attendance at campus is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable students to extend their potential. The Trust seeks to work actively with parents/carers to support them in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities and ensure good attendance is maintained. Attendance for all students is regularly monitored to ensure that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted on as quickly as possible. The Trust will challenge the attitude of those students and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. A student's late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Therefore we expect that all students will:

- Attend campus regularly.
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.

Aims

- To improve the overall attendance of students within The Trust.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the Trust including students, parents, teachers and governors.
- To provide support, advice and guidance about attendance and punctuality to parents and students.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication about attendance and punctuality between home and campus.
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

- To deal with extenuating circumstances appropriately showing sensitivity and understanding.

2. Academy's roles and responsibilities

All staff (teaching and support) at The Trust has a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent campus attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the campus community and look forward to coming to campus every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Leader

A designated member of staff for each campus will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the Trust's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the Trust. This person, known as the Attendance Leader, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, students and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good campus attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body termly. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

Registration

Each campus is required to mark the attendance register twice each day. Form tutors are responsible for completing the electronic attendance registers and the prescribed codes. (See Appendix A).

The register will be called promptly at the designated time on each campus by form tutors and a mark will be made during registration period in respect of each student.

The registers will close at the designated time on each campus. Any student who arrives after the closing of the register will count as absent. Students who arrive before the register closes but after the registration period has ended will be counted as present but will be dealt with under the protocol on punctuality and lateness.

For Health and Safety reasons it is important that each campus knows who is in the building. Students arriving late should therefore report to the office and sign in. **It is vital that all students arriving late follow this procedure.**

For the same reason it is important that students leaving the premises legitimately sign out at the office.

Categorising Absence

Every half-day absence from campus has to be classified by the campus (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

The Trust recognises the clear link between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding students. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a student's education as authorised absence; will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-campus attendance is acceptable and can render students extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a student is clearly unwell, staff at The Trust will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their student's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the campus in line with this Trust policy.**

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced that the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with the school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a medical professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- Out of school programmes such as performing arts or sports operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of the event will be required.

- To attend the wedding or a funeral of a close relative if the Head teacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; leave will only be authorised if the Head teacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for the wedding being held in term time. The onus WILL be on the parents to show that the absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance.

Some examples of reasons for absence that will not be authorised:

- No explanation has been given by the parent/carer.
- The campus is not satisfied with the explanation.
- The student is staying home to mind the house or younger family member.
- The student is shopping during campus hours.
- The student is absent for unexceptional reasons, eg a birthday.
- The student is absent on a family holiday without prior permission.
- The student has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for absence.

Approved Educational Visit

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the campus will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

Class registers

In order to track students' whereabouts throughout the day, deal with any truancy that occurs after morning or afternoon registration and to ensure the safety of the students, subject teachers will take a register at the beginning of every lesson to record absence and lateness. Any sudden absences that occur during the day will be picked up immediately by the Student Support Co-ordinator and measures taken to locate the student.

Staff Training

Senior leaders will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. Collection and analysis of data

The Attendance Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the campus target. The data will inform the campus' future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored by year group, tutor group, and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, students with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance.

Attendance has a very high profile at The Trust and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in tutor groups. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and meetings about the importance of good attendance and its link to attainment. For example, weekly attendance figures are displayed prominently. The Trust has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences within a week. Pastoral staff with responsibility for attendance at each campus deal with all such absences on the day they occur.

Absence Procedures

When a student is unwell, parents should contact the campus before 9.00am on the first day of absence giving the reason for absence. Calls from parents regarding absence are logged. After this time registers are updated accordingly.

If your student is absent please ensure you follow the correct procedure for the relevant campus.

First day calling

The Trust has in place a system of first day calling. This means that parents/carers will be telephoned on the first day a student is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage students who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parent's/carer's knowledge. Telephone calls will continue on the second and any subsequent days if no message has been received to confirm that the child is still unwell.

If a student is persistently absent due to medical reasons and their attendance falls below 95%, the campus may ask to see evidence of the student's attendance at the doctors in order to authorise the absence. Medical evidence will also be requested before authorisation of absence of more than three days due to illness or medical appointments.

Meetings with parents

Where there are any concerns regarding a student's absence through showing a particular pattern, or when no improvement occurs after identifying a problem, parents/carers will be called in to a meeting at to discuss how we can move forward together to ensure the situation improves.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day they can miss work as well as vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the student and can also encourage

absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our students as they progress through their campus life and out into the wider world. Parents are encouraged to contact the appropriate member of staff for help at any time.

Post registration Truancy

Post registration truancy occurs when a student goes missing, having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the student will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. The Trust takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. In the middle and upper phases, a register is taken in every lesson. If, however, a student appears to have left the premises without authorisation, a member of staff will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately. In some circumstances if a parent cannot be contacted the police may be informed.

Term Time Holiday

The Trust will consider every application individually. However its policy is **NOT** to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off campus for a holiday **is not a right**. An application must be made on the correct request forms, with appropriate evidence attached **in advance** of the intended holiday. Where there are siblings in more than one Trust campus, head teachers will discuss the outcome prior to reaching an agreement.

When parents/carers take students out without authorisation penalty notices will be issued once the trigger point of 5 days or 10 sessions of absence is met.

The Trust will consider authorising holidays for:

- Service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside of term time.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.
- Parents who are subject to a strict and non-negotiable holiday rota and satisfactory evidence is provided to this effect.

Requests for holidays for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Cheaper cost of holiday
- Availability of the desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in campus holiday periods
- Overlap with beginning or end of term.

The Trust will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

We will not agree leave of absence from campus during term time under the following circumstances:

- When a student is just starting the campus. This is very important as your student needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods eg SATs for Year 6 or GCSE examinations.
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a student's attendance rate is already below 94% or will fall to, or below that level, as a result of taking leave of absence.

5. Extended leave of absence

In considering absence for extended trips overseas The Trust will take account of the following:

- A visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal holiday
- Such visits may be important in terms of student's identity and self-esteem as they grow up
- The reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved

Where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the student undertakes some campus-set work during this period.

6. Fixed Penalty Notices

Missing school seriously affects student's longer-term life opportunities. Statistics show a direct link between attendance and attainment. Penalty Notices come under the Education Act 1996 as amended by Section 23 of the Anti -Social Behaviour Act 2003.

Parents/Carers commit an offence if a student fails to attend campus regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days.

Penalty Notices are issued to **each** parent or carer of the student at £120. However, if they are paid within 21 days the cost is reduced to £60.

Before a Penalty Notice is considered a student must have had a minimum of the equivalent of 5-4 campus days lost to unauthorised absence during the past 12 month period.

7. Parents'/Carers' Responsibility

The prime responsibility for ensuring students receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a student), who will be supported and encouraged by the Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust.

The Trust expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their child attends regularly;
- support their child's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- **not** expect any campus to automatically agree any requests for absence, and **not** condone unjustified absence.

Parents will also be expected to:

- notify the campus office on the first day of absence;
- ensure children arrive on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the Trust, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their child's work and activities;
- contact the relevant campus without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child's school lives. The Trust will endeavour to support parents/carers to address their concerns.

8. Students' responsibilities

- All students should be aware of the importance of regular attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending regularly, they should speak to their form tutor.
- Students should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent they should give their form tutor a note from their parents to explain the absence. Students also have a responsibility for following campus procedures if they arrive late.

9. Governors' responsibilities

The Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the All-Through Trust are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are students at the campus.

10. Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents, students and all members of the Trust's staff. We encourage attendance by:

- Consistent, clear communication with parents and students about the importance of regular, prompt, attendance.
- Discussing attendance with parents at consultation evenings, with the current percentage attendance being reported.
- Reporting to parents on their student's attendance within campus reports.

- Celebrating attendance each term. For example awards for 100% attendance to individual students and a certificate to each tutor group and each House which has the highest attendance figure every term.

11. Conclusion

Regular campus attendance is a necessary contributor to high standards, safety and future prospects.

Be healthy –

- Attendance at campus supports children's emotional and social health and development
- The campus curriculum teaches children to be healthy.

Stay Safe –

- Campus' have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- The best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend campus regularly

Enjoy and achieve –

- Good campus attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings

Make a positive contribution –

- Membership of a campus community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others

Achieve economic well-being –

- Good campus attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

APPENDIX A

| CODE | DESCRIPTION | MEANING |
|------|--|-------------------------------------|
| / | Present (AM) | Present |
| \ | Present (PM) | Present |
| B | Educated off site (NOT Dual registration) | Approved Education Activity |
| C | Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) | Authorised absence |
| D | Dual registration (i.e. student attending other establishment) | Approved Education Activity |
| E | Excluded (no alternative provision made) | Authorised absence |
| F | Extended family holiday (agreed) | Authorised absence |
| G | Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement) | Unauthorised absence |
| H | Family holiday (agreed) | Authorised absence |
| I | Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments) | Authorised absence |
| J | Interview | Approved Education Activity |
| L | Late (before registers closed) | Present |
| M | Medical/Dental appointments | Authorised absence |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence | Unauthorised absence |
| O | Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description) | Unauthorised absence |
| P | Approved sporting activity | Approved Education Activity |
| R | Religious observance | Authorised absence |
| S | Study leave | Authorised absence |
| T | Traveller absence | Authorised absence |
| U | Late (after registers closed) | Unauthorised absence |
| V | Educational visit or trip | Approved Education Activity |
| W | Work experience | Approved Education Activity |
| X | Non-compulsory school age absence | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Y | Enforced closure | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Z | Student not yet on roll | Not counted in possible attendances |
| # | Campus closed to students | Not counted in possible attendances |