

The Blue Coat School Student Attendance Policy

The Blue Coat School is committed to the delivery of quality services to the students of the School. As such, regular attendance at School is very important for every student. Without this, the efforts of staff will come to nothing. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage.

The Blue Coat School recognises that parents are primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at School but the School will support the parents and take action to counter any possibility of non-attendance.

Leave of absence can be requested for a number of reasons and in the context of this policy includes leave requested for the purposes of a short-term or extended family holiday, and for students visiting their country of origin.

Attendance records are provided for each student within their annual School report each year. Attendance and other reports are passed on to receiving schools/colleges.

The Blue Coat School actively promotes and encourages 100% attendance for all students and celebrates success through Prize Giving.

Aims and objectives

- To maximise students' performance in School by encouraging a high level of attendance wherever possible.
- To establish consistent policy and practices and protect the rights of children in being given the best opportunities and potential outcomes from their education.
- To establish consistent recording mechanisms for students attending alternative activities both within and external to the School.
- To acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance.

Points of note

- The Blue Coat School is working to minimise the numbers of students with attendance levels of less than 95% as this is known to compromise student attainment.
- Regulations specify that a student is a student at the School from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed or has been notified that the student will attend the school. Deletions will only take place from the attendance register when a student's name has been deleted from the admission register and these will be notified promptly to the appropriate authority.
- It is noted that extended visits to the country of origin enables students to maintain important family, cultural and linguistic links or may be unavoidable. In

many cases such extended visits can provide students with positive personal and educational experiences.

There is however, evidence to indicate that such visits, where they result in significant absence from school during term time, disrupt significantly the students' continuity of learning and understanding. This can have a negative impact on attainment and also damage school performance as well as cause maturation problems for the student.

- The Blue Coat School considers the timing of school holiday periods and INSET days in relation to likely periods of demand for leave of absence (eg Eid, Easter and similar religious festivals)
- Schools across Liverpool and the Authority have a **clear and consistent** message to parents/carers that absences for the purpose of a Holiday is **not acceptable**. Entry to The Blue Coat School implies acceptance of this policy and unauthorised absences created by such leave will attract legal sanctions and/or the attention of the Education Welfare Officer. Unauthorised absence condoned by parents for the purpose of a holiday may also lead to the student being removed from the School roll and necessitate parents finding another school providing the correct procedure is followed.

The Law

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their children receive efficient, full time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The Blue Coat School is responsible for recording student attendance twice each day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry is made in the attendance register for all students of compulsory school age who are on the School's admission roll.

Regulations make it clear that the Headteacher has the final decision whether to authorise a leave period or not. Guidance states that family holiday leave applications should be considered individually on the merits of each case but with a presumption against granting leave.

The basic framework is now the 2006 Pupil Registration Regulations which amended and/or replaced the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 as recently as September 2006.

Authorised leave of absence may only be granted by the person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the School ie. the Headteacher.

On application made by the parent with whom the child normally resides, a student may be granted leave of absence from the School to enable him/her to go away on holiday

where an application has been made in advance; and the school considers that the leave should be granted due to the special circumstances relating to that application.

Under section 199 of the Education Act 1993, the parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at a school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law. An offence is not, however, committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- The student was absent with leave (defined as leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the Governing Body)
- The student was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause (as long as the School is satisfied that the illness has prevented them from attending School, otherwise further information may be requested from the child's parents)
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent belong (it is helpful if parents or students give the School advance notice of religious observance days).
- The School at which the child is a registered student is not within walking distance of the child's home and that no suitable arrangements have been made by the Local Authority or the Funding Authority for any of the following
 - a. The child's transport to and from school
 - b. Boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school and
 - c. Enabling the child to become a registered student at a school nearer to his/her home.

Regulation 11 of the Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations 1981 provides that leave of absence from school may be authorised to enable a student to undertake work experience or to participate in approved public performances.

Where a student is engaged on work experience as part of an approved scheme, the absence will be authorised. However the student should understand that they are required to attend work regularly according to the scheme agreed and to arrive on time.

If a student is found to be absent from the work experience location without good reason, the absence will be treated as unauthorised. Similar considerations apply to performances.

An amendment has been made to the regulations under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(amendment) Regulations 2010.

- Last winter's heavy snow affected many schools, which were either forced to close or struggled to stay open but with many students absent as they were unable to get to school. Students were counted as absent unless they lived beyond walking distance where transport to School that was provided by the School or the Local Authority was not available. There is consequently a new 'Exceptional

Circumstance' where a student may be marked as unable to attend registration. This amendment is intended for use where students are unable to get to school because of serious disruption to travel caused by:

- A weather-related emergency, such as snow or flooding
- A natural disaster, such as the impact on air travel of a volcanic eruption
- A health-related emergency, such as restriction on travel in certain areas related to foot and mouth outbreak
- Travel disruption caused by the rationing or non-availability of fuel.

Therefore the exceptional circumstances in which a student may be marked as unable to attend, at the discretion of the Headteacher, are where:

- The School site, or part of it, is closed due to unavoidable cause at the time when students are due to attend, or
- In the case of a student for whom transport to school is provided by the school or a Local Education Authority, and whose home is not within walking distance of the school, that transport is not available
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the student from attending school.

The procedure for managing student attendance.

The School Day

The Blue Coat School's school day starts at 8.45am and students should be on site by that time. Registers close at 8.55am. Students who are not present for the start of registration will be marked as absent initially. Any students arriving after 8.45am will be recorded with unauthorised absence in the first instance. Between 8.55am and 9.30am a student can sign in and be recorded as late and the electronic details will then be amended by School Office Admin Staff.

Afternoon registration takes place between 1.45pm and 1.50pm. There is no lates procedure at afternoon registration. If a student has not been marked as present by 1.50pm they are deemed absent for that sessions.

Approved Educational Activities

The following are recognised as 'approved educational activities':

- An activity which takes place outside the school premises and which is:
 - Approved by a person authorised by the School
 - Of an educational nature including work experience and sporting activity
 - Supervised by a person authorised by the School
- Attendance at another school at which the student is registered.

Parents/carers and students responsibilities.

Lateness

Parents/carers are asked to ensure that children arrive by 8.40am. School is not open until 8am when a breakfast service is available in the Dining Hall.

If students arrive late on three or more occasions within a given week they may be spoken to by their Form Tutor or Year Group Manager and may receive a lunchtime detention as a result. If action taken by the School results in little or no improvement then School will contact parents in writing and they may be required to attend a meeting to discuss the issue. For Key Stage 3 and 4 if little or no improvement is then seen the Deputy Head will deal with the case with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). For sixth form students if little or no improvement is seen or detentions are not attended parents will be invited to meet with the Key Stage 5 Manager to discuss the future of the student at the School.

Seeking Leave of Absence

Parents/carers must apply to the Head Teacher in good time (defined as 4 weeks in advance notice minimum) for permission to take children out of School during term time. Where unforeseen events occur (eg bereavement) parents/carers are still required to contact the School to request leave of absence. Within this request letter the following details must be included for the case to be given due consideration:

- Student/s name and form
- Name and address of parent/carer
- Start and end date of the requested leave
- Reason for the request of leave of absence
- Names of adults accompanying student and their relationship to them.

The Headteacher will record the number and frequency of absences taken for this purpose throughout a student's school career.

As part of the application process parents/carers will also be expected to demonstrate a willingness to make arrangements that cause least disruption to their child's learning. This might involve:

- Wrapping days of absence around existing school holiday periods to minimise time out of School.
- Considering whether it is wholly appropriate for a child to accompany adults in some circumstances.
- Weighing the benefits to the family against detriment to educational process.

- Avoiding entirely any period of public examination and National Curriculum Assessments.
- Making arrangements to complete course-work, curriculum work or other materials provided for the purpose if an extended period of absence is sought.

If a student is unavoidably detained from returning to School by the agreed date they must endeavour to contact the School and request an additional period of leave. Such cases will be considered on an individual basis. These may be:

- Unforeseen family circumstances, including illness/bereavement
- Delayed flights/unavoidable return travel issues.

Other types of absence such as illness, medical appointments or unexplained absences.

For other types of absences, it should be noted that only the School, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent offers a note or other notification in relation to a particular absence does not automatically oblige the School to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence.

It is recognised that some parents (eg those whose first language is not English, or those who are illiterate) may have difficulty in providing notes. Some parents also dislike using the telephone. In most cases it should however be possible to make alternative arrangements, eg through a neighbour, community worker, or older brother or sister which meet the School's requirements. Schools may authorise absence retrospectively where they are satisfied as to the explanation offered.

For all Key Stages parents should make telephone or e-mail contact with the School by no later than **12 noon** on the first day of the child's absence. If this notification is by telephone then a written note or an e-mail must later be provided before the absence will be recorded as illness or medical appointment etc. This can be forwarded to School upon the child's return to School if necessary.

If the School has not received notification with regards to the child's whereabouts the following applies.

- For Key Stage 3 and 4 students the School will contact parents on the first day of absence if the absence has not been reported to School. If the School becomes concerned (for those with less than 90% attendance) Form Tutors and Year Group Managers will be informed and students will be spoken to. If there is little or no improvement then parents will be contacted in writing and the School Education Welfare Officer will also be notified. If there is still little or no improvement then parents may be invited to attend a meeting at School.

- For sixth form students the School will contact parents if students have been absent for three days or more. The rest of the process remains the same but the School Education Welfare Officer will not be contacted. However if the issue reaches the stage of the parents attend a meeting at School their support will be sought in fulfilling a Home School Agreement according to their attendance and if the matter continues the parents will be invited to attend a further meeting to discuss the future of the student at the School.

Interviews

Where a student attends an interview with either a prospective employer or in connection with an application for a place at an institution of further or higher education and is absent for morning or afternoon registration, the School has discretion to authorise the absence. The School will expect, and ask for, advance notification and proof of the appointment (eg a letter of invitation).

Where leave of absence has been granted for a local appointment, the student will be left in no doubt that he or she will be expected to return promptly to the School and resume studies on completion of the appointment. If a student fails to return from a morning appointment and misses afternoon registration without adequate explanation, the afternoon absence will be treated as unauthorised and sanctions applied as necessary. Similarly considerations apply where the interview is for a place at another school.

End of term correspondence

The School is required to report unauthorised absences and patterns in absences to the Local Authority and as such will write to parents at the end of each term highlighting this information. Parents should use the appropriate reply documentation to notify the School of any information they are aware of regarding the absences, sign and return the information to School as soon as possible so that records can be amended.

Headteacher and Governing Body responsibilities.

Lateness

In responding to lateness, the School will of course need to take account of the individual circumstances of each case. In some instances enquiries may reveal that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances. The School will take the necessary action against students who persistently fail to arrive on time without valid reason and to seek an early meeting with parents.

Leave of Absence

The Headteacher and Governing Body are within their rights to turn down applications that do not meet the required criteria and so refuse permission for term time leave.

Such a decision will always be made in the best interest of the child's progress and attainment and with due regard to their previous attendance record but the general rule is that all requests for leave in term time will **not** be approved. The Authority fully supports Headteachers who decide not to authorise leave in term time.

The Headteacher will consider the following before approving or refusing any leave of absence during term time:

- No other holiday requests in that given school year,
- At least 4 weeks notice prior to the start date of the proposed leave of absence,
- Above 95% attendance during the previous academic year,
- Discretion may be shown for exceptional circumstances.

Recommended circumstances when application for leave of absence in term time should not be granted:

- Within transition periods (home-school and primary-secondary)
- Immediately before and during National Curriculum Assessments
- Immediately before and during GCSE and any other public examinations
- When the students attendance record is already at or below 90% or will fall to or below that level if the leave is granted.
- If the student already has unauthorised absences in the current academic year.

Where the Headteacher is satisfied that there are genuine and pressing reasons for leave of absence in term time they may agree up to a maximum of 10 consecutive days in any one school year.

Where a parent/carer **requests leave totalling more than 10 days** per school year each case must be carefully assessed on its own merits. Whilst the presumption is to discourage leave in term time, there are specific circumstances in which a Headteacher might consider such applications sympathetically:

- Return to country of origin for family, religious or cultural reasons. (These must have firm return dates in place and a clear programme from the parents/carers demonstrating the educational benefits.
- ‘Once in a lifetime’ family trips to distant destinations (where at all possible such trips must wrap around existing School holiday times. The School must be made aware of a firm return date and also be satisfied of the educational benefits of such a trip and should consider how this might be incorporated into an educational programme).
- Parent/carer recuperation or convalescence from serious illness or surgery.
- Death of a parent or sibling.
- Life threatening or critical illness of a parent or sibling.

If the Headteacher accepts an application they will:

- Encourage parents to talk to their child about the experience
- Encourage parents to take books and ensure regular reading sessions take place
- Encourage the child to record his/her experience in diary form, through drawings and photographs – these can be shared with peers and teachers on return.
- Arrange a contact point to which the teacher and class can write to the student.

However the potential impact of the absence should still be noted and therefore granting any such block of leave should be an absolute exception.

Where a prolonged period of **extended leave in excess of 20 school days** is requested the School may seek to agree with the family a planned withdrawal of the student from the School roll. Wherever possible the School will re-instate the student upon their return and parents/carers will be made fully aware of their responsibility to approach the School for this purpose. However if the School is over-subscribed intake re-admission may not always be possible. In this case the Headteacher will ensure the appeals process is clearly explained.

As a primary condition of granting any leave, a **home-school agreement** stating the agreed date of the students return to School, must be agreed and signed by the Headteacher and parent/carer in every case of term time leave. A copy is retained by the School as it may be particularly important where there is a subsequent appeal against any resulting action such as loss of a School place or the use of enforcement sanctions by the Authority.

The Headteachers' Responsibility in Managing Failure to Return by an Agreed Date.

Parents/carers will be informed at application stage that they may lose their child's place at the School if they do not return when agreed. Where a student does not return by the agreed date a further period of 10 school days is allowed for the School and Authority to investigate the circumstances before de-registration is considered. The Headteacher will write to the family informing them that the agreed return date has passed and that the child is at risk of losing his/her place at the School unless they return by a date of no more than 10 school days beyond the agreed return date. The period of investigation will count as unauthorised absence.

Leave of absence will not be granted to enable a student to undertake employment (whether paid or unpaid) during school hours except:

- Employment in pursuance of arrangements made or approved under the Education (Work Experience) Act 1973.
- Employment for the purpose of taking part in a performance within the meaning of section 37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, under the authority of a licence has been granted under that section, or
- Employment abroad for a purpose in section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, where a licence has been granted under that section.

Taking Students off the School Roll.

- Where a student fails to return by an agreed date, or where permission was not originally given for leave of absence **and** the absence exceeds 20 school days, the student is at risk of de-registration.
- The Authority will be informed in advance of a possible case of de-registration. The school and Authority should make every effort to contact the family and establish the circumstances to comply with the legal grounds for taking students off role the Authority must be able to agree that efforts to locate the student have failed.
- Where no acceptable cause can be established and the School has followed procedures by informing the family in writing of the possible consequences of non-return, then that student can be taken off the school roll at the conclusion of the 10 school-day investigation period. This complies with Regulations 8(1)(f), of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.
- The Headteacher will inform the parent/carer of this decision in writing. The School will also inform the Authority of the removal from roll by sending a copy of this letter to the Admissions Section and PAEWO. This will trigger enquiries about the students future schooling arrangements.

- Every effort will be made to maintain the attendance at School of students in Authority Care and leave of absence for students placed with foster-parents or within Care Homes will be discouraged. Support professionals will be made aware that this is not acceptable practice. However a student will not be removed from the roll if they are in Authority Care. The Looked After Children Education Service will be informed of the situation at the earliest opportunity.

Illness

Where a School has reason to doubt the validity of an explanation offered in respect of a particular absence, further information will be requested from the child's parents. If the School continues to be dissatisfied then the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

Where there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness the School and Education Welfare Officers can refer the matter to the School Nurse to arrange a special medical, or to make contact with the student's GP. If a student is absent for a prolonged period or the School notices a pattern of absence emerging, early contact will be made with the Education Welfare Service and/or the School Health Service.

Special Tuition

Where a registered student, for example a dyslexic child, requires special tuition off-site and the arrangements have been agreed by the School, leave of absence may be granted and the absence treated as authorised. It is for the School to decide whether to agree to such an arrangement in the light of the individual circumstances, but in general one hour off-site tuition per week might not be regarded as unreasonable.

Excluded Students

Where a student has been temporarily excluded he or she will remain on the school roll. Since the absence results from specific action by the Headteacher (ie the decision to exclude) it will be treated as authorised absence.

Where a student has been permanently excluded, his or her absence will be treated as authorised while any review or appeal is in progress but on conclusion of that process, if the permanent exclusion is confirmed he or she will be struck from the school roll. This will normally happen on the school day immediately following confirmation by the appeal committee of permanent exclusion, or upon expiry of the time allowed for appeals to be made. While the student remains on the school roll, the school will recognise its responsibilities towards the student by setting work for the excluded student. In the case of a permanently excluded student such formal responsibilities cease once the decision is confirmed and the student is removed from the school's admission register.

Form Tutors, Year Group Managers, Key Stage Managers, Teaching Staff and Support Staff Responsibilities

Recording attendance/absences.

- The School records the presence or absence of every student on the electronic registration form including reasons for absences and this is carried out every morning and every afternoon session by the Form Tutor, who should ensure accuracy of the information entered. For sixth form students lesson monitoring is also recorded in the same way.
- If a Form Tutor is unsure as to the category under which a student's absence should be recorded then he/she should consult the Year Group Manager or Pastoral Manager.
- If it is not possible to record at the commencement of a session whether or not a student's absence is authorised, that information will be recorded as soon as it is known and practicable to do so and should initially be recorded as 'N' unauthorised absence until support staff receive written notification and then details can be amended.
- Any amendments to these records can only be made by support staff in the School office upon written evidence of the need for the amendment which can be received by either the Form Tutor or office staff.
- If a student is recorded in the register as having an unauthorised absence then office staff will make contact with home on the first day of the absence, for Key stages 3 and 4, unless they receive notification of the absence and on the fourth day of absence for stage 5. Office staff will then record the details of the telephone calls and will notify Form Tutors and Year Group Managers of this detail. To ensure that unnecessary and sometimes worrying telephone calls are not made to parents of students who are in School (and have not been recorded as such) or we have been notified of their whereabouts, it is imperative that office staff make comprehensive checks of all information received such as late and absence entries in the book and notes in registration trays.
- Since office staff will make contact with parents if students are recorded as absent it is imperative that teaching staff notify the office in the form of an e-mail or written documentation if they are holding sessions with students which will prevent them from attending their Form Tutor Registration (ie music lessons or sports events). Office staff will then amend registers and therefore not make contact home causing unnecessary distress to parents and an unprofessional appearance of the School. This will also prevent end of term letters to parents being sent out when students are in fact in School.
- Office staff will generate a weekly cumulative % attendance report and pass to Form Tutors and Year Group Managers, students with less than 90%

attendance. Form Tutors will check the details to ensure the accuracy of the record and Form Tutors will then be responsible for discussing absences with students affected. If there is little improvement the Year Group Manager will then speak to students affected and a letter will be sent home. Copies of notes from the meeting will be held on the students file. The School's EWO will also be informed by the Deputy Headteacher (Personal Development). If there is still little improvement parents will be invited to attend an interview with the Year Group Manager, notes will be kept on the students file. (A home school agreement may be considered). If there is still little improvement the Key Stage Manager or Deputy Headteacher will be informed and will meet with parents to discuss the future of the student at the School and/or aim to resolve the issue.

- Office staff will generate weekly unexplained absence reports and pass to Form Tutors for identification of any school based activities which may be identified and amended on the records before letters are issued home to parents.

Lateness

If a student is late he or she must not be marked present in the Registration form but will be marked as 'N' and amended by support staff in the office from the details recorded by the student in the late book held at reception on their way into School. It will then be recorded in the register as 'L'.

The School office will generate a Lates report for students who have been late to registration (both morning and afternoon) on three or more occasions during a week. This report will be given the Form Tutor at the end of each week and a copy will be given to Year Group Managers.

For sixth form students this will result in a detention. If the student attends the detention but no improvement is made a letter will be sent to parents asking for their support, students will continue to be monitored to decide if further action is needed. If the student does not attend the detention, a letter will be sent to parents and parents could then be invited to a meeting to discuss the future of the student at the School.

For Key Stages 3 and 4 the Form Tutor will speak to any student causing concern and a note kept on file. If Form Tutors feel it necessary in specific instances they will notify Year Group Managers who will then interview the student and where appropriate arrange detentions. If there is little improvement the Year Group Manager will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the issue and a note will be placed on file. The student will be highlighted to the Deputy Headteacher to deal with via the EWO too. If the situation continues the Key Stage Manager will speak to parents to discuss the issue further, seeking a permanent and sustainable solution.

Illness

If a parent/carer notifies School of a student's absence by telephone on the first day they will still initially be booked as 'N' for unauthorised absence but with a note entered onto the register and once written documentation has been received from the parent or carer this will be amended by office staff.

Leave for medical or dental appointments may be given (ie the absence may be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parent (either in person, in writing or by telephone) or on production of an appointment card.

Where a student is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment, the School will take no action beyond recording the fact that (for emergency evacuation purposes) the student, although registered, is not physically present, except for sixth form students who are also registered in lessons and will therefore be marked as 'M' (medical or dental appointment).

Similarly, the School office admin staff will record the return of a student (again for purposes of emergency evacuation) who are not present when the register is taken but return later from an appointment. A book is maintained at reception for the purpose of recording students leaving or returning to the site.

Points of Note

Pupils Taking Leave of Absence Without Permission.

Where a parent/carer takes a student out of School in term time without asking for or not receiving permission, a period of unauthorised absence is immediately created. The Headteacher will then also write to the family and advise them that the absence is unauthorised and that there is a risk of their child losing his/her place at the School.

Parents/carers will have been advised of the possible consequences of such actions. The School may ask the PAEWS to consider a Penalty Notice being issued under the provisions of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003. The local protocol for Penalty Notice use provides for such cases to receive an immediate issue of a Notice (waiving the 15 day warning period). Payment of the Notice within 28 days is £50 and £100 if paid after 28 days but before 42 days of issue (per parent). Non-payment of a Notice automatically triggers action in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of poor attendance. Failure to return to School within 20 school days also places the student at risk of losing his/her place at the School.

Recording and Monitoring Leave of Absence.

The Blue Coat School will monitor and record the leave of absence patterns of individual students.

Attendance Coding, Data Collection and Analysis.

All leave sanctioned in term time will be recorded as 'H' which counts as Family Holiday (agreed).

Where the period of leave has **NOT** been sanctioned **OR** exceeds the agreed period this is coded 'G, O or N', G for Family Holiday (not agreed), O for Unauthorised Absence or N for No Reason Yet Provided for Absence, all will count as Unauthorised Absences.

Where the Headteacher agrees that there are exceptional circumstances that merit an extended period of leave in term time (up to 20 school days) this is coded 'F' for extended family holiday (agreed), and counts as authorised absence.

The School provides information to the Education Welfare Officer who will also interrogate these codes to inform the School and Local Authority for trends, patterns and responses.