Blackfen School for Girls

Attendance Policy

Head Teacher: Mr M Brown

Chair of Governors: Mr S Fitz-Gerald

	Date	Name	Signature
Policy Date	January 2024		
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Lead Person	DHT	Ruth Makepeace	
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Approved by	Chair of Governors	Stuart Fitz-Gerald	

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

> Promoting good attendance aiming for no less than **96%** attendance

> Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence

> Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled

> Acting early to address patterns of absence

> Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

> Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

> Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

> Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

> The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

> The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The governing body

The governing board is responsible for:

> Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

> Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties

> Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

> Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school

> Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

> Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

> Link meetings with Link Governor bi-annually

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

> Implementation of this policy at the school

> Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

> Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students

> Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

> Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

> Leading attendance across the school

> Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement

> Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

> Having an oversight of data analysis

> Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

> Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

> Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

3.4 The Attendance Advisory Officer

Blackfen School works with SEAAS: South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service

The attendance advisory service is responsible for:

> Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

> Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

> Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher

> Working with Education Welfare Officers from Bexley to tackle persistent absence

> Advising the Headteacher/Student Welfare Manager (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.5 Class teachers/form tutors

> Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the attendance office via SIMs (the Schools MIS).

   o   Registers are taken on SIMs in the first 10 minutes of every lesson/community time

   o   If paper registers are being used e.g., where Supply staff are used, paper registers must be completed in the first 10 minutes of every lesson and ONE student brings the paper register to the Attendance Office for input.

3.6 School Attendance staff

The School Attendance Officer will:

> Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

> Text families of students absent. First Day Calling to be referred to Student Support Officers if no response received

> Transfer calls from parents to their Student Support Officer (SSO) in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

> Monitor data with SSOs daily and AAO weekly (see section 7)

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

> Make sure their child attends every day on time

> Call the school to report their child's absence before **8am** on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return

> Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

> Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Students

Students are expected to:

> Attend school every day on time

> Attend every timetabled session on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all students onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

> Present

> Attending an approved off-site educational activity

> Absent

> Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

> The original entry

> The amended entry

> The reason for the amendment

> The date on which the amendment was made

> The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

> Whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised

> The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity

> The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive in school by 8.20am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken by 8.45am and will be kept open. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.15pm, (and by 12.30pm)

4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence (and each subsequent day of absence) by **8am** or as soon as practically possible by calling the school absence line (see also section 7).

- Call 0208 303 1887 and press 1 for Student Absence

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment:

- Parents/carers should email the school and mark it for the attention of the Attendance Officer
- Parents/carers should write a note in their child's Planner on the day detailing the time they are to leave. This will be checked when they sign out.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and Punctuality

A student who arrives late:

> Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
> After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

All students are expected to be on time to school and on site by 8.20am daily. Lessons start promptly at 8.30am.

Students arriving between 8.30am and 8.45am will be met at the school gate and their name taken.

Students that arrive after 8.45am are expected to sign in with the Attendance Officer and go straight to lesson. If the student does not sign in, they will receive an automatic B3 sanction from the Attendance Officer and an email will be sent to parent/carer.

Students who are late to Lesson 1 will receive a 10-minute (B1) detention at break time. Failure to attend will result in the sanction being raised to the next level.

Persistent lateness/issues with punctuality will result in the student being on Punctuality Report.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

> Text the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. Texts will be sent daily and logged as a Safeguarding concern if a response is not received. By the third day, if the school receives no response from the student's parent/carer, the students Student Support Officer will call. If a response is still not received then the absence will be referred to SEAAS and a visit to the family home may be carried out
> Identify whether the absence is approved or not
> Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

> Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will advise SEAAS

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels both at parents evening and with Progress Updates sent out termly.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as

- acute family trauma

- terminal illness or death of a family member

- if a family member serves in the Armed Forces - Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays

- following advice from a health professional

- out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted in writing as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least **FOUR** weeks before the absence. All requests should be emailed to the school and **marked FAO Attendance Officer**. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

> Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

> Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

> Traveller students 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 student is attending educational provision

> Adjusted timetables agreed between the school and parents/carers in exceptional circumstances, time limited to support reintegration

> Study leave for Year 11 students

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5.2 Legal sanctions

The school and Bexley local authority have the authority to fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

> The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

> One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

> Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The school has a scaled approach (Appendix 2) to promote, track and monitor attendance, which includes rewards, sanctions, assemblies and meetings with parents/carers. By communicating with parents/carers, the school will discuss the link between attendance and attainment as well as the wider wellbeing of the student and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like, in line with DfE recommendations.

Every term we hold celebration assemblies and as part of this 100% attendance is celebrated and rewarded.
At the end of every year all students with 100% attendance go into a prize draw for a significant reward.

7. Attendance Monitoring

The school will monitor and SEAAS will review student absence data weekly via the Management Information System (MIS) reports generated. SEAAS will also review data weekly in person and/or remotely to promote attendance, using the scaled approach as reference. The analysis of attendance data will include data for each group (e.g., SEND, Disadvantaged, Others, EAL, ethnic groups), by year group using the MIS.

School attendance data is discussed through the two weekly MAG and Welfare Team Meetings.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will

> Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level

> Monitor attendance bi-weekly for MAG students

> Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

> Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families

> Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

> Provide regular attendance reports to Form Tutors, Student Support Officers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with students and families

> Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

> Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

> Hold regular meetings with the parents of students who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school. Student Support Officers will make a Wellbeing Call to check in with the student on a weekly basis.

> Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

> For students with an attendance percentage of less than 80%, SEAAS and the school work together to find reasons why. These students may have more barriers to their being in school than 'just' attendance and intensive support may be needed across a range of support services. A referral will be made for a full social care assessment to ensure all avenues of support and intervention are met. Where severe absence continues (for unauthorised reasons), it is likely to constitute neglect

For reintegration into the school for students who have had long term absence e.g., illness, the school will:

> Welcome the student back to the school and value their return to both lessons and Form Group.

> Provide support for the student in consultation with parents/carers to enable a successful return to the school.

> Ensure that all relevant staff are informed of the circumstances.

> Work with other agencies, where appropriate, to ensure a successful outcome.

> Consider a personalised programme of return, if appropriate.

> The student's SSO to monitor and review the student's return

7.5 Children at risk of missing education (CME)

Where the school has completed all reasonable steps to locate a missing student but have been unsuccessful, then a CME form will be completed. All schools must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school

regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more. This could be a safeguarding issue; leaders should ensure that regular follow up contact is made with the Local Authority if the whereabouts of the student is not known or communicated to school. If a vulnerable student cannot be contacted on the first day of absence, the Headteacher should be advised and a home visit requested by SEAAS; a non-vulnerable student by the third day of absence. This should continue until the information has been secured.

8. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum as detailed on the cover sheet by the person stated as responsible. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with Other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

> Child protection and safeguarding policy

> Behaviour policy

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

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I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Student from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time: 5 days)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

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Appendix 2: Scaled approach for attendance

Scaled Approach	Descriptor	Attendance threshold	Actual	Days Absent	Lost learning in hours	Letters
* Celebrate students who attend school every day on time in assemblies and in conversation with individuals	**Excellent**	100%	190	0	0	**100%**
		99%	188	2	10	**Letter A***
* During briefings and bulletins Headteacher reminds and thanks staff for their commitment to attendance	**Very Good**	98%	186	4	20	**Letter A if < 96%**
*Attendance lead thanks parents and students for their commitment ensuring high attendance (via half-termly text message, postcard, bulletin)	**Good**	97%	184	6	30	
* Rewards – distributed to students and tutor groups each week and Rs awarded		96%	182	8	40	
* Attendance has fallen below 96% leading to increased monitoring * Student added to monitoring list and discussed at MAG and Welfare Team meeting * AO/SSO/FT makes contact and offers additional support to family * SSO or HoY to support student and involve any other relevant agencies * Discussions start with SEAAS to prevent further decline * Parents informed of penalty notice possibility * FT to have weekly conversation with student about successes/EBIs for attendance	**Improvement needed**	95%	181	9	45	**1st Letter if <94%**
		94%	179	11	55	
		93%	177	13	65	
		92%	175	15	75	
		91%	173	17	85	
	At this point students achieving HALF a grade lower than expected Source: Pixl					
* **Pupil is persistently absent from school** * Attendance Lead calls parents to notify that attendance has dropped below 90%. * HoY/SSO invites parents to open a CAF/Early help referral – attendance contract drawn up * Family to be referred to SEAAS * HOY/SSO lead to continue weekly check-ins with student	**Cause for Concern**	90%	171	19	95	**SEAAS letter if < 90%**
		89%	169	21	105	
		88%	167	23	115	
		87%	165	25	125	
		86%	163	27	135	
	At this point students achieving ONE grade lower than expected Source: Pixl					

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* **Parents invited to attend an Attendance meeting** with DHT/AHT, HOY/SSO, AO, DSL and SEAAS * A 4-weekaction plan agreed to improve attendance with clear targets set * Make parents aware of potential next steps if little/no improvement	**Serious** **Cause** **for** **Concern**	85%	162	28	140	**SEAAS**
		84%	160	30	150	**meeting**
		83%	158	32	160	**if**
		82%	156	34	170	**<85%**
		81%	154	36	180	
* If little/no improvement meeting with local authority lead and external agencies * The attendance contract will be reviewed and will be shared with agencies * Parents will be informed of referral to the LA for prosecution and type * SEAAS and the LA will continue to monitor attendance	**Extreme** **Cause** **for** **Concern**	80% and below	15	38	190	**Penalty** **Notice** **or** **Prosecution**