

BLACKFRIARS ACADEMY ATTENDANCE POLICY

September 2024

Review Date:
September 2025



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole Academy community. The Academy Councillors and staff at the school recognise the importance of excellent attendance to enable students to have full access to the educational opportunities. The Academy will drive a culture that values and encourages excellent attendance in collaboration with all stakeholders.

The Academy will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance and behaviour by students will be recognized appropriately.

All children should be at academy, on time, every day the academy is open. The academy day starts with registration at 08:45am, the students are expected to be at school at that time. Registration closes at 9.15am, arrival after this time will result in a late mark. Arrival after 9.45am without a reasonable cause will result in an unauthorised absence mark for that morning.

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to attendance are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individuals and families.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools should work in partnership with pupils and families to remove any barriers to attendance, building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance can therefore not be seen in isolation and effective practices for improvement will involve close interactions with the school's effort on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, SEN support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources including pupil premium. It cannot be down to one single person, rather the combined effort of all stakeholders from school, parents, pupils, health and social care agencies and the Local Authority.

Schools/academies are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the student is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a student of compulsory school/academy age is absent every half-day absence from the academy has to be classified by the academy, as either **AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only the academy can authorize the absence, not parents.** This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

This attendance policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of students.

Schools/academies have a duty in law to refer any absence of 5 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the academy for a good reason.

Unauthorised absences are those which the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This includes:

- **Parents keeping children off the academy unnecessarily**
- **Truancy before or during the academy day**
- **Absences which have never been properly explained**
- **Children who arrive at the academy too late to get a mark**
- **Holidays during term time**

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the academy at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the academy or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child’s attendance have failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the academy at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. In order to help us in this task we work with VIP Education. Blackfriars Academy employ VIP Education Ltd. They are an Independent Education Welfare Company who work with the school, to raise attendance and deal with welfare matters. They will communicate with you if there is an issue they can support us with. Pupil’s attendance will be monitored and may be shared with VIP Education Ltd if it becomes a cause for concern. VIP Education Ltd are GDPR Compliant and will not share personal data with any third party.



Persistent absence

Persistent absentees are defined as those pupils missing around **10%** or more of the typical number of possible sessions across a given period. Severe absence is when over 50% of sessions have been missed.

A penalty notice will be considered where there are at least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence during the current and previous terms. These absences do not need to be consecutive.

Parents will now only receive one warning notice period (of first 20 days for the purposes of issuing a penalty fine) in an academic year after which the Local Authority can automatically consider other statutory actions if unauthorised absence re-occurs in the remainder of the academic year.

Further a penalty notice can be considered for persistent late arrival at academy i.e., after the register has closed where there are at least 10 sessions of late arrival in the current and previous term. These lates do not have to be consecutive.

If a prosecution takes place, more information on the penalties and potential consequences can be found in the DfE guidance:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf

Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence

Penalty notice will be considered where

- Pupils take ten sessions of unauthorised absences (which do not have to be consecutive) and only last two sessions have to be for unauthorised leave of absence.
- The period for calculating the ten sessions will be based on the previous rolling calendar year.
- Parents can now receive more than one Penalty Notice per academic year.

The penalty notice fine would be:

For a first offence -

- £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £160 per parent per child if paid within 21-28 days

For a second offence within 3 years of the first penalty notice being issued, the penalty notice fine would be –

- £160 per parent, per child if paid between 28 days

Following the second offence every new offence within the 3 year-period, will be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996. If the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1000 per parent, per child.

Parents or children may wish to contact the EWW themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the academy and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the Academy office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

Procedures

The Academy applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

Clear instructions are laid down for the completion of attendance registers in each lesson.

1 – Class teachers are expected to request letters from home to support periods of absence.

2 – Absences not supported by absence notes must always be reported to the appropriate member of staff.

3 – Parents are requested to telephone Blackfriars on the first morning of an absence. If no telephone message is received the academy receptionist will generate a phone call or text message. Parents are asked to formally give reasons of any absence preferably in writing by letter, email or via the school-home communication service - Showbie.

Following NHS guidance, if a child has sickness and/or diarrhoea, we require a 48-hour absence from school after the last episode of sickness/diarrhoea.

The Academy reserves the right to authorise any absence, not parents.

4 - The academy will always endeavour to contact home for an explanation of absence on the first day. If after three days of absence there is still no contact, then the academy will contact other agencies such as LST or others depending on the circumstances and what is known about the student. Where it is known that a false excuse has been given by a parent for an absence, this will be challenged.

5 – The Academy will also conduct a Welfare / Safeguarding Visit in some instances if there has been no contact with parents in regards to a student's absence.

6 – The Attendance Officer will identify trends and patterns, and will often make spot checks on particular absences. Where attendance cannot be secured in spite of any known illness the EWW is expected to pursue such cases with vigour and keep the academy informed accordingly.

7 – Attending Academy regularly and attending on time are considered to be equally important. We expect both children and their parents to ensure punctuality.

8 – The Academy aims to have all of its students maintaining higher than 95% attendance. When an individual student's attendance level falls below 95% the academy will monitor attendance very closely and may require parents and students to attend regular meetings to implement improvement strategies.

If attendance continues to fall the student and parent will need to attend more formal meetings with senior staff within academy.

If attendance falls at or below 90%, without good reason, a referral to the EWO will be made by the Academy. Following investigation any unresolved issues could

result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

9 – We encourage making medical appointments outside of the school day wherever possible. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to the academy prior to the appointment. Students must attend the academy before and after the appointment wherever possible. If the appointment requires the student to leave during the day, they must be signed out by an adult listed on the student's record. Should a student arrive late to the academy following an appointment, they should report to the Main Reception where a member of staff will record that they are present. Any medical note or evidence of the appointments will be photocopied and kept in the student's personal file.

11 – Students are NOT allowed to take holidays during academy time. Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into effect on the 1 September 2013, now make it clear that head teachers will only authorise a holiday in academy time under **exceptional circumstances**. Parents who take their children out of academy for a holiday could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution, even if their attendance has been at or above 95%. In cases of unauthorised leave of absence both parents or carers will be fined regardless of which one applied for the leave.

12 – The academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. Academy staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure a high a level of attendance.

Blackfriars Academy recognises the importance of the Equality Act (2010) and will take every opportunity to ensure it is implemented for the benefit of all students, staff, parents and visitors.

The below will be given to Parent/Carers together with the appropriate form –

Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time

1. Parents who want the academy to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully, **complete the attached form and send it to the Academy Principal**. This form should be sent to the academy in time for the request to be considered **well before** the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any booking arrangements before receiving the academy's decision regarding their request. The Academy Principal cannot authorise any leave of absence unless the request is received before the period of absence begins.
2. The Department for Education makes it clear that the Academy Principal may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Academy Principal's now also determine the number of school days a child can be away from academy if the leave is granted.
3. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.
4. Staffordshire County Council understands the challenges that some parents face when booking holidays particularly during academy holidays. However, we believe that, in order to ensure children receive the best education and prospects, that they should be in academy during term time.

5. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence. In considering a request, the Academy will take account of: -
 - the **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
 - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
 - the overall attendance pattern of the child
 - frequency of similar requests
 - whether the parent made the request in advance
 - students/pupils on examination courses or due to take exams will **not** normally be granted leave of absence.
6. Where parents have children in more than one school/academy a separate request must be made to each school/academy. The head of each school/academy will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school/academy. However, head teachers/Academy Principal's may choose to liaise with each other as part of their decision-making process.
7. Should the academy decide to grant leave of absence, but the child **does not return to Academy at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e., following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and no information is available to the academy to explain/justify the continuing absence this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
8. Should the academy decide **not to grant leave of absence** and parents still take their child out of academy, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**, which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £80 **per parent* per child**. This fine will increase to £160 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £160 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.
9. The Local Authority will continue to monitor all academy absences during term time and support head of academies in challenging parents who ignore the law.

* Generally the DfE states that parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.

Table of responsibilities for Working Together to Improve Attendance

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.	Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence. Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance and act as lead practitioner if attendance is the only issue and/or the local threshold for formal early help is not met. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. If a case meets the local threshold for formal early help/family support, this includes conducting the early help assessment and acting as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Hold a regular conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so. Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, and there are multiple needs consider whether the threshold for early help is met and facilitate access where it is. Regardless, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner in cases where threshold is met and all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

All pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies. Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness). Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand. Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance. Accurately complete admission and attendance registers. Have robust daily processes to follow up absence. Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on. Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.	Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures. Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. Use data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with other local schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed. Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.	Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services. Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance. Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice. Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

Persistently absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention. Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through a referral to statutory children's social care. Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including attendance contracts and education supervision orders. Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).

Severely absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and: Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and: All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision. Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Not applicable.	Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them. Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance. Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed. Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals. Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families. Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.

Support for pupils with a social worker

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Know who the pupils who have, or who have had, a social worker are. Understand how the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced, can have an impact on attendance – whilst maintaining a culture of high aspiration for the cohort. Provide additional academic support and make reasonable adjustments to help them, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there can be a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes. Work in partnership with the local authority at a strategic and individual level, sharing data on attendance including, at an individual level, informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Ensure that all Children's Social Care practitioners understand the importance of good attendance for pupil's educational progress, for their welfare and their wider development – and understand their role in improving it. Through the work of Virtual School Heads, they should: - Undertake systemic monitoring and data sharing of the attendance of children with a social worker in their area: developing and implementing targeted cohort level interventions to improve attendance. - Provide advice, challenge and training to schools on how to promote and secure good attendance for children with a social worker. - Develop whole system approaches, with social care, to support the attendance of children in need.

Looked after and previously looked after children

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand the child's barriers to attendance – including the development of Personal Education Plans. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Have high expectations for the cohort – with expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after pupils. Work in partnership with the local authority Virtual School Head to develop and deliver high quality Personal Education Plans for looked-after children that support good attendance. Work directly with parents to develop good home-school links that support good attendance. For previously looked-after pupils this could include discussion on use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding managed by the school.	Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils. Monitor and review attendance of the cohort and consider how school policies, including behaviour policies, are sensitive to their needs and support good attendance.	Promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children – doing everything possible to minimise disruption to education when a pupil enters care. (LA that looks after the child:) Appoint an expert Virtual School Head (VSH) – will: - Monitor, report on, and evaluate the education outcomes of looked after children, including their attendance, as if they attended a single school - wherever they live or are educated. - Ensure schools know when they have a pupil looked after by the authority on their role and that information is shared with the school on issues that may impact on their attendance. - Ensure that all looked-after pupils have high quality, up to date, effective Personal Education Plans developed in partnership with schools, social workers and carers – including, where necessary, clear interventions and use of pupil premium plus funding to support good attendance. - Provide expert advice and information on the education of previously looked-after pupils to schools and parents – including their attendance.

Name of Policy	Attendance policy	
Approved	September 2024	
Review Date	January 2026	Review Cycle: 2 yrs
Signed by Principal	<i>JCampbell</i>	Jamie Campbell
Signed by Chair of Academy Council		Heather Ashton