



# **Attendance Policy**

**2015-2016**

## **PRINCIPLES**

Birches Head Academy seeks to ensure that all students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for them to realise their true potential. This policy aims to improve the attendance of students at Birches Head Academy, to ensure their continuity of education.

## **STATUTORY FRAMEWORK**

- Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act a student is required to attend regularly at school where he or she is a registered student or the parent/s, carers could be liable for prosecution.
- The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not itself authorise an absence.
- Only if the school is satisfied to the validity and appropriateness of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below)

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including students, parents, governors and staff.

### **Students will:**

- arrive at their registration class by 8.30am;
- attend all lessons punctually according to their timetable;
- inform their Personal Tutor, Pastoral Leader or any other member of staff if they are experiencing problems in attending school regularly and on time.

### **Parents will:**

- ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, fully equipped, with a positive attitude to learn;
- notify the school as soon as possible if a child is prevented from attending school or is late by either in writing or by telephoning the school;
- arrange medical or dental appointments out of school hours wherever possible;
- inform the school in advance of any known absences;
- attend meetings to discuss their child's attendance and/or punctuality as requested.
- work in partnership with the school to improve the attendance and punctuality of students.
- liaise with the school when requesting absence of leave under exceptional circumstances during term time as advance permission from the school must be sought, the majority of applications will be declined without this
- if the reason for request is due to employment reasons, submit a covering letter from the employer with a written letter of application

Parents whose first language is not English, or who have literacy difficulties, can be offered appropriate support from the school in matters of communication.

### **School will:**

- make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents, staff and governors;
- strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure;
- work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually
- provide support, advice and guidance and regular information to parents and students on issues relating to attendance and punctuality;
- develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data;
- promote effective partnerships with the Intergrated Educational Welfare Officer and with other services and agencies;
- refer all students/parents to the Education Welfare Service where attendance is identified as a concern.
- conduct regular home visits where attendance is a concern

## **ATTENDANCE REGISTERS**

Attendance registers are taken electronically twice a day. Personal Tutor morning registers open at 8.30am and ends at 8.45am. The school also operates a lesson by lesson registration system in order to identify post-registration truancy. Students who arrive after the registers have closed must report to Student Reception where they will be issued with a late slip and the school register will be amended by the Attendance Officer to show their presence in school. Similarly, students who leave school during the day, for example because of illness or medical appointments need to sign out and back in at Student Reception.

### **Approved Educational Activities Off-Site**

The absence of students to take part in supervised educational activities outside the school but authorised by the school is recorded as 'approved educational activity'. This is the equivalent of 'present' for the purposes of the annual absence return. The following activities show when the approved educational activity category can be used:

- dual registration arrangements with another educational establishment such as a PRU or Alternative Provision which is registered as a school
- field trips and educational visits, in this country or overseas;
- participation in or attendance at approved sporting activities;
- work experience (Year 10 and 11 students only)
- attend a further education college for part of the time;

## **RECORDING ABSENCE**

Where a student is absent from school the school must differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. By law, only the school can approve absence, not parents. School staff need not accept a parental explanation for a student's absence, whether written, telephoned or given in person, if they question the explanation, or the student's attendance to school is persistently poor.

## **PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING ABSENCE AND IMPROVING ATTENDANCE TO SCHOOL**

Student's attendance should at all times be 95% and above, except in agreed exceptional circumstances. Parents/carers are responsible for their child attending school regularly and can be liable to receive a fixed term penalty fine from the Local Authority.

- If a student has 10 or more unauthorised sessions absence within a 12 week period each parent/carer will be issued with a notice to improve letter, this is in conjunction with the Local Authority (10 sessions equate to 5 days).
- This 12 week period will go over consecutive terms including the end of an academic year into the next.
- Should a student have 20 or more sessions absent within a 12 week period parents/carers will be part of the Education Welfare caseload and are likely to be fined.
- Where students are absent for more than 3 consecutive days. Parents/cares must produce medical evidence as no further absence will be authorised
- The Attendance Officer will visit the homes of students whose attendance is a concern or is fast approaching the above absence thresholds

## **AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES**

### **Authorised Absence**

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval for a student to be out of school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards. All absences will be treated as unauthorised until the school has agreed to a satisfactory explanation.

### **Family Holidays During Term Time/ Leave Of Absence Requests**

Any Absence of Leave request during term time can only be granted under exceptional circumstances. As a rule the school will not authorise any absence of leave unless deemed by the Governing Body as

an exceptional circumstance. If it is believed to be exceptional, Parent/Carers need to document the circumstances and intended dates of leave and return in writing to the Board of Governors and deliver to Birches Head Academy for the attention of Director Student Services 6 weeks prior to the request leave date. This will be presented to the board of Governors at the next calendared meeting, each request will be judged upon its own merits. Parents/Carers will be informed of the decision by telephone or letter. Any leave of absence that has been declined or have not sought approval will be recorded as unauthorised. It is recognised that sometimes due to a family death or crisis, this time constraint cannot always be adhered to, these requests will still be presented and again judged upon its merit. **No absence of leave will be granted to students in year 11.**

**Public performances, including film or TV work** - The Local Authority must licence a student to take part in a public performance. The school will only authorise an absence where participation has been agreed and a licence produced, if a student's attendance is below expectations this will not be approved.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

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

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- external truancy
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after registration has closed)
- Birthdays
- Weddings

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school will refer the child to the Integrated Education Welfare Officer. They 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. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the IEWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

**Review Date:            September 2016**