

# Attendance Policy



---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Blackwater Integrated College seeks to ensure that all its students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each student to realise his/her true potential. Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole College community.

The College will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance and behaviour by students will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

The college will strive to provide a welcoming, supportive and caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

All college staff will work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually. The law requires that children attend school regularly.

The college will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives Blackwater Integrated College will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

## 2. ABSENCE

Improving school attendance in schools is vital if all children are to make the most of their educational opportunities. Children who do not regularly attend school rarely achieve their full potential. Not only do they miss lessons, but sporadic attendance makes it more and more difficult to catch up.

Children can miss school for many reasons. Some are understandable, for example, illness. Schools are required to take an attendance register every day. The register shows whether the student is present, engaged in approved educational activity outside the school, or absent. If a child is absent, the

register must show whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

## 2.1 Authorised Absence

**Authorised** absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the student to be absent or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for the absence. **Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.**

## 2.2 Unauthorised Absences

All other absences must be treated as **unauthorised**. Parents do not authorise their children's absence by offering an explanation - the school authorises the absence by accepting it. But accepting inadequate explanations can be as damaging to a child's education as 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**
- **truancy before or during the school day**
- **absences which have never been properly explained**

A judgement must be made as to whether continued absence is justifiable and should be authorised. Many schools consider parentally condoned absence (where the parent keeps the child from school without good reason) as a more widespread problem than truancy (where the child is absent without the parent's knowledge).

## 2.3 College- Home Partnership

One way to tackle truancy is to work with parents to improve their child's attendance; with parentally condoned absence, it is the attitude of the parent rather than the child that needs changing. All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

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

## **2.4 Parental Contact**

The College will phone parents/guardians of children who are not in school on their first day of absence to ask why they are absent and when they will be returning to school.

Form Tutors along with the teacher with responsibility for absence will continue to monitor attendance and make regular contact with parents by phone and letter if a student is frequently absent.

## **2.5 Educational Welfare Service**

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Service. The College Educational Welfare Officer will try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed. The EWO can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO 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. A list of students who have been referred to the Education Welfare Officer will be kept on file by the teacher with responsibility for attendance.

## **3. AIMS OF COLLEGE POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE**

The following outlines our **basic** expectations and aims for student attendance.

### **3.1 To Improve the Overall Percentage Attendance of Students at School**

- Apply Whole School Attendance Policy consistently
- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality
- Attendance issues will directly link to the College's values, ethos and curriculum
- Monitor progress in attendance, measurable outcomes

### **3.2 To Make Attendance and Punctuality a Priority for All Those Associated with the College Including Students, Parents, Teachers and Governors**

- Use of College Staff handbook
- Produce termly/annual reports to parents/governors
- Hold induction Year 8 day for parents/students
- Produce newsletters
- Provide INSET training for staff
- Display materials at focal points – form rooms etc.
- Discuss attendance issues in relevant staff meetings
- Introduce reward systems, including certificates and end of year prizes, etc.

### **3.3 To Develop a Framework Which Defines Agreed Roles and Responsibilities and Promotes Consistency in Carrying Out Designated Tasks**

- Maintain unambiguous procedures for statutory registration
- Make phone contact, using designated school staff, on first day of absence.
- Ensure clearly defined late registration procedures
- Respond swiftly to lateness
- Define clearly the roles and responsibilities within the school staffing structure
- Form tutors must tell appropriate staff about any planned student absence
- Timetable staff to meet with Education Welfare Worker, making best use of Educational Welfare Officer's time (advertise the times to parents)
- Have clear procedures prior to referral to Education Welfare Service
- Review attendance regularly
- Be familiar with the Education Welfare Services' referral and recording system

### **3.4. To Provide Support, Advice and Guidance to Parents and Students**

- Highlight attendance in:
  - LLW
  - Assemblies
  - Staff available to talk to students
  - School counsellor
  - Form Periods
  - Making use of available resources
  - Homework clubs
  
- Set aside area/time for parents to speak to staff
- Seek improved communication with parents eg when parents ring in
  - Provide accurate and up-to-date contact information for parents
  - Involve parents from earliest stage

### **3.5. To Use a Systematic Approach in Gathering and Analysing Attendance Related Data**

- Use SIMS to record attendance
- Form tutors to encourage recording student attendance in Planner
- Be consistent in the collection and provision of information.
- Decide what information, if any, is provided for:
  - governors
  - pastoral staff
  - other school staff
  - parents
  - students (individual or groups)
  - education welfare service
  
- Identify developing patterns of irregular attendance and lateness.

### **3.6. To Further Develop Positive and Consistent Communication Between Home and College**

- Initiate Parental Contact
- Make full use of attendance letters
- Promote expectation of absence letters/phone calls from parents
- Explore the wide range of opportunities for parental partnerships (see Aim 2)
- Provide information in a user-friendly way
- Encourage all parents into school

### **3.7. To Implement a System of Rewards and Sanctions**

- Identify finance for a system of rewards
- Actively promote attendance and associated reward and effective sanctions
- Ensure fair and consistent implementation
- Involve students in system evaluation
- Make use of imaginative and immediate sanctions
- Take action which accords with objectives agreed between school and others, eg. Education Welfare Service, parent

### **3.8. To Promote Effective Partnerships With the Education Welfare Service and With Other Services and Agencies**

- Designated key staff for liaison with Education Welfare Service and other agencies
- Give priority to timetabled meetings with Education Welfare Service
- Carry out initial enquiries/intervention prior to referral
- Gather and record relevant information to assist completion of Education Welfare Referral

- Hold termly attendance review with key school staff and Education Welfare Service
- Establish and maintain list of named contacts within the local community eg community police contact officer
- Encourage active involvement of other services and agencies in the life of the college
- Develop understanding of agency constraints and operating environments

### **3.9. To Recognise the Needs of the Individual Student When Planning Reintegration Following Significant Periods of Absence**

- Be sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of returning students
- Involve/inform all staff in/or reintegration process
- Provide opportunities for counselling and feedback
- Consider peer support and mentoring
- Involve parents as far as possible
- Agree timescale for review of reintegration plan
- Include Education Welfare Service, parents and student in reintegration plan

## **4. Summary**

The College has a legal duty to promote attendance and parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. College staff are committed to working in partnership with parents to ensure the highest level of student attendance is maintained at all times.

## APPENDIX 1

### PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE

If a student is absent the College will contact the parent/guardian



Form Tutors continue to Monitor attendance and will contact parents/guardians if a student is frequently absent



If attendance falls to 95% the teacher with responsibility for attendance will write to the parents/guardians



If no improvement is observed a second letter will be sent, inviting the parents/guardians to an interview to discuss concerns and agree on an action plan to improve performance



If at this stage there is no improvement in attendance, parents/guardians will be informed by letter that a referral is being made to the Educational Welfare Service



**NB- PROFORMAS OF ATTENDANCE LETTERS ARE AVAILABLE FROM COLLEGE OFFICE**