

# **Blackwater Integrated College**



## **Attendance Policy**

Date ratified by Board of Governors: November 2024  
Date of review: October 2024

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## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this attendance policy is work towards all students attending school regularly and punctually, thereby maximising their educational opportunities and achievements. Regular attendance is crucial for students' academic and personal development. This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of the school, parents, and students in promoting and maintaining high attendance rates.

Blackwater Integrated College will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each student feels valued and secure, in a welcoming, supportive, and caring environment. Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole College community.

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

## **2: Main aims**

- To improve the overall attendance of students at Blackwater Integrated College
- To develop a framework that defines the roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To provide advice, support and guidance to parents / guardians and students.
- To promote positive relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

## **3: Role of the College**

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance. Pastoral Coordinator and Year Heads should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to their attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing college attendance figures and targets and ensure it is a standing agenda item at each meeting.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of students by ensuring that attendance is recorded during registration sessions and class.

Office staff review attendance daily and monitor the absence information presented by parents / guardians.

To accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way, the college will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular **Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording By Schools – Circular**

**2024/13, which can be found at the following link:**

**[Circular 2024-13 - Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording By Schools.pdf](#)**

Blackwater Integrated College is committed to working with parents / guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

#### **4: Role of Parent/Guardian**

Parents/guardians have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

If a child is registered in a school, their parent/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

If a parent/guardian chooses to de-register their child from school, it may not be possible to re-register them again at the same school.

It is the parent/guardian responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a student's absence. This should be confirmed with a written note in the student planner – on their return, or a telephone call to office staff informing them of the absence.

All absences need to be followed up with the college and parents/guardians within a 5 day period.

If the absence requires their child to be absent for a prolonged period, the college needs to be made aware of this, as alternative arrangements may be possible to help support the student.

Students are expected to be in school for 8.45am registration. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded on the student register.

If attendance becomes an issue with your child, please contact your child's Form Tutor or Year Head straight away, so everyone feels supported. Attendance issues need immediate attention before they spiral and become a barrier to regular attendance.

Throughout the year key attendance messages will be sent home as published by the Department for Education. Please take time to look at these links.

#### **5: Role of Students**

All students of Blackwater Integrated College should attend school regularly and on time. If you have been absent from school, a written note from a parent / guardian must be provided to your Form Tutor when you return. You can use the notes section in your student planner for this.

If for any reason you are concerned about your attendance, speak with your Form Tutor as soon as possible.

Students should be encouraged to take responsibility for catching up on missed work due to absences.

## **6: Absence Procedures**

Parents will be contacted by office staff on the first day of an unexplained absence – unless parent/guardian has notified the college that morning or absence has been explained prior.

All absences need to be accounted for and will be categorised as authorised or unauthorised based on the reasons provided.

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

## **7: 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, medical appointments, or other unavoidable cause.

## **8: Unauthorised Absences**

All other absences must be treated as unauthorised. Parents/guardians do not authorise their children's absence by offering an explanation - the school authorises the absence by accepting it. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- parents keeping students 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 student from school without good reason) as a more widespread problem than truancy (where the child is absent without the parent's knowledge).

Family holidays taken during term time are categorised as an unauthorised absence.

## **9: Importance of Home - College Partnership**

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents/guardians, 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 often more successful.

## **10: Educational Welfare Service**

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents/guardians meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

If a student's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85% and there is also a concern, they will be referred to the Education Welfare Service. They will help college staff, students, and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

The EWO can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

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.

Pastoral Co-ordinator meets with EWO each month.

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 Education Authority.

## **11: 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 always maintained.

Regular attendance is crucial for students' academic success and personal development.

By working closely together, the college, parents and students can achieve high attendance rates and create a positive learning environment.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE**

If a student is absent the College will contact the parent/guardian (unless the parent/guardian has already notified the College)



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



If attendance falls to 90% the teacher with responsibility for attendance will contact the parents/guardians



If no improvement is observed contact will be made, inviting the parents/guardians into the college 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 that a referral is being made to the Educational Welfare Service for support.