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|  | <u><b>Bicester Learning Academy Trust</b></u> |  | <u><b>Written By:</b></u><br><b>I Elkington - Headteacher (GFPS)</b><br><b>E Osborn - SENCo (GFPS)</b><br><b>K Clayton - Attendance Officer (TCS)</b> |  |  |
|   | <u><b>ATTENDANCE POLICY</b></u>               |  | <u><b>Applicable To:</b></u><br><b>ALL STAFF &amp; PUPILS/ STUDENTS</b>   | <u><b>Responsible Officer:</b></u><br><u><b>Headteachers:-</b></u><br><b>B J Baxter (TCS)</b><br><b>I Elkington (GFPS)</b> | <u><b>Date Adopted:</b></u><br><b>Spring Term 2017</b> |

Bicester Learning Academy (BLA) is a Multi-Academy Trust which incorporates The Cooper School (TCS) and Glory Farm Primary School (GFPS). It is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with registered company number 09053713 and its registered address at Churchill Road, Bicester, Oxon, OX26 4RS.

### **Introduction**

The Bicester Learning Academy Trust (BLAT) regards regular attendance and punctuality as crucial to the success of every pupil/student. Irregular attendance leads to pupils/students missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential. It may also place them at risk and may result in their being drawn into pattern of anti-social or criminal behaviour. BLAT takes the welfare and safeguarding of our pupils/students extremely seriously.

**The aims of this attendance policy** are as follows

- To consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils/students. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance including e.g. in end of term reports.
- To emphasise the importance of, and secure from our pupils/ students an attendance in excess of 96%
- To encourage pupils/students to take full advantage of their educational opportunity
- To provide a welcoming caring environment, so that each member of our community feels safe and valued
- To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers, pupils/students) the legal position with respect to attendance
- To engage with parents/carers to raise awareness about their legal responsibilities with respect to their son/daughter's attendance and punctuality
- To facilitate communication between home and school to work in partnership in order to achieve high attendance
- To establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges good individual attendance

- To challenge those pupil, students and parents who give low priority to attendance and

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE).

Each year the BLA will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. These will reflect both national and Oxfordshire attendance targets. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy contains within it, the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

## **School Expectations**

### **Expectations of pupils/students:**

- That they will attend school regularly, aiming for an attendance rate of 100%;
- That they will arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day;
- That they will inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may hinder them from attending school.

### **Expectations of parents/carers:**

- That they will ensure their child/ren attends school, aiming for a 100% attendance rate;
- That they will contact school as soon as it is reasonably practical (e.g. by 8.40 am) whenever their child is unable to attend;
- That any absence is followed by a letter stating the explanation of why the pupil/student was absent and for what period of time if it is more than one day;
- To ensure that the pupil/student arrives in school well prepared for the school day.
- To contact the school, in confidence, whenever any problem occurs that may keep the pupil/student away from school;
- To refrain from taking the pupil/student out of school for holidays, or occasional days, unless there are **significant** exceptional circumstances.

### **Expectations of the school**

- To ensure regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance;
- To make early contact with parents/carers when a pupil/student fails to attend;
- To refer to appropriate support agencies as required;
- To communicate clear expectations of what is good attendance.

### **Expectations of Governors and Directors**

- To monitor the effectiveness of the policy through Headteacher reports;
- To support the school in encouraging good attendance.

## **Legal Position –Attendance Legislation, Penalty Notices and Legal Action**

### **The Law**

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his/her age, ability and aptitude and  
[b] To any special needs he/she may have. Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Amendments have been made to the 2007 Regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2013. They set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent/carer who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. BLA supports the Local Authority in the issuing of these notices.

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the BLA reserves the right to ask the County Attendance Team to either issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a fine or further legal action through the courts.

A Penalty Notice is a fine that the County Attendance Team may decide to issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates' Court system.

A Parent/Carer can be issued with a penalty notice if:

- they fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as six or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six week period;
- they allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation;
- they fail to return their child to school on the agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence;
- their child persistently arrives late for school after registration is closed.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

### **Leave of Absence**

The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Parents/Carers should seek permission from the Headteacher prior to the leave of absence period in question.

The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a pupil/student can be away from school **if** the leave is granted. Parents/carers who remove their children from school without authorisation or do not return their child to school on the agreed date following an authorised period of leave of absence, may face a Penalty Notice Warning which could lead to a fine/prosecution (see Penalty Notices and Legal Action above).

Penalty Notice may be considered in the following circumstances:

- At least 20 sessions (10 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence in a period of no more than 10 weeks;
- A leave of absence that has not been approved due to **exceptional circumstances** during term time, of a least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a period of no more than 5 weeks;
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed) equivalent to 20 sessions of unauthorised absence in a period of no more than 10 weeks.

## **School Procedures**

### **Appendix 1 The Cooper School**

- With the Governing Body ensure that the policy and its related procedures and strategies are carried out
- To ensure that the relevant staff are aware of their responsibilities under the policy
- To receive regular information concerning school attendance data

#### **SLT Link**

- Liaise with the School Attendance Officer
- Liaise with Heads of House (HoH)
- Liaise with Student Support Managers (SSM)
- Report to Headteacher

#### **Attendance Officer**

- Monitor attendance of all students and instigate Attendance Support plans as appropriate
- Regularly update HoH, SSM and other relevant staff of student's attendance and concerns
- Liaise with County Attendance Team (CAT) and report concerns including referrals for Legal Proceedings
- To oversee accurate register keeping
- Liaise and meet with parents of students with attendance below the expected level
- Act as link between school and outside agencies

#### **Persistent absence**

Attendance below 90% is classified as 'persistent absence'. Being officially considered a persistent absentee has serious implications. Colleges and employers normally request student attendance information when requesting references. If a student is a persistent absentee they and their parents will become the focus of significant intervention to improve to improve the attendance of the student. This could involve the school, CAT and other agencies as appropriate. Parents of persistent absentees may be issued with fines and may be required to attend Court.

#### **Lateness**

The school is legally required to maintain two registrations on a daily basis. The attendance marks are recorded and make up an individual student attendance record and would be used in any legal proceedings. These registrations occur at the start of the school day at 8.45am and the start of the afternoon lesson. Students are expected to be on time and present in the classroom for these registration. A student arriving late will receive a late mark. A student who arrives in school in the morning between 8.45 a.m. and 9 a.m. is required to attend their form. A student arriving beyond 9 a.m. is required to sign in at the Attendance Office.

Any student who has two late marks in any week will be issued with a break time / lunchtime detention. The Parents/Carers of a student who accumulates five late marks in any period will be notified by the Attendance Office of the lateness for their child.

#### **Attendance Procedure**

It is most important that parents/carers and TCS are aware of student's absences in view of child safeguarding and truancy. In order to support this, the school uses the following procedure:

- Parents are required to telephone or e mail the Attendance Office on the first day/ part day of absence before 8.30 a.m. The information required by the school is Student name, Year group, Form and an indication as to the reason for absence and the likely period of absence. If an absence is for medical reasons an indication as to approximate time attending school. This information will then be recorded on the Attendance Records. If unable to speak directly to a member of the Attendance team callers are able to leave a message on the Attendance line by following the instruction given
- If the student is absent for 3 days continuous absence parent/carers are requested to contact school to confirm continuing of absence. Parents/Carers of students absent for 3 days or more for illness/medical reason may be requested for medical evidence confirming the illness/medical reason
- In respect of students who are absent for an excessive amount of periods for illness/medical reasons, the school can request medical evidence to authorise the absences.
- Upon return to school parent/carer are requested to place a note in their child's planner confirming the reason for the absence
- A student returning to school after a medical appointment is required to visit the Attendance Office and sign in when arriving in school

### **School Procedure re Attendance**

#### **First day of Absence Call**

The Attendance Office (AO) on a daily basis will identify those students marked absent for which no notification of absence has been received. The AO will then attempt to communicate with parents/carers to confirm knowledge of absence and confirm the reason for the absence.

At the end of each week parents will be contacted by letter to confirm the reason for absence for any outstanding absences still recorded. If no response is received contact will be made with parents on a monthly basis. Note: Any unexplained absences will remain recorded as unauthorised.

#### **School Intervention - Low Attendance**

We will become concerned when a child's percentage attendance drops below expectation. The AO will monitor all students' attendance and implement the following proceedings

**Attendance Below 95%-** The AO will send a letter informing parent/carer of our concern with the attendance level and asking if there are any ongoing medical issues or issues in school that the school is not aware of.

**Attendance Below 90%** - Arrangements will be made to invite parents in for an interview with the Attendance Officer or a home visit to discuss the reason for the poor attendance.

**Attendance Below 85%** - A School and Home Contract will be completed with parents/carer prior to consideration of a formal referral being made to CAT.

#### **Recognition of Excellent Attendance**

Excellent attendance is recognised on a termly basis at House Assemblies with Certificates for student with 100% attendance. Congratulatory postcards are also sent home termly to students with 100% attendance. A form attendance competition takes place in school. The form with the highest attendance is rewarded at the end of each school year.

## **Appendix 2 Glory Farm Primary School**

### **Registration**

- Registration time is at 8.40 am and 1.00 pm and registers will be completed and returned to the office at the end of registration. Any pupil that arrives after 8.50 am or 1.10 pm for the afternoon will be marked as a late (before the register closes). After this time they will be marked with U for unauthorised absence;
- Registers will be completed using the codes identified in Appendix 3;
- If no information, regarding the absence of a child, has been received by 9.00am, the office will telephone the parents to check the reason for absence;
- If there is no reason or explanation of the child's absence this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

The decision to authorise an absence is taken by the Headteacher or Acting Headteacher, following statutory requirements and the BLA policy on attendance.

### **Authorised Absence**

- Absence will be authorised if the school has notification from the parents/carers that their child is ill. This should usually take the form of an initial notification at the beginning of the period of absence and regular communication during the absence to update the school of the child's well-being;
- If the child has a medical appointment that cannot be made outside school hours, this will be considered as an authorised absence. Children are expected to attend school prior to and after a medical appointment where possible;
- If an absence has been requested and approved in line with the school procedures then this will be an authorised absence.

An absence may not be authorised, even if the parents give a reason, if the absences are persistent. In the case of repeated absence due to illness, the school will request confirmation from the GP that the child has a medical condition that seriously impacts on their ability to attend school regularly.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

- Any absence that is not considered to be the result of extenuating circumstances may be unauthorised.

### **Persistent Absence**

- The government classifies pupils with attendance below 90% as persistent absence:

Attendance below 95% The Inclusion Manager will send a letter informing parents/carers our concern with the attendance level and asking them to attend a meeting to discuss any issues or concerns;

Attendance below 90% The Inclusion Manager will arrange a meeting with parents/carers to discuss reasons for the low attendance and may involve other agencies to work together to improve the child's attendance. At this point it is likely that a CAF will be undertaken and TAC meetings will ensue. A Home/School Contract may be written.

### **Lateness**

Children are recorded as Late if they arrive after 8.50am but before 9.10am (or after 1pm but before 1.20pm). If they arrive after the registers are closed the absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

### **Persistence Lateness**

In the case of persistent lateness the parents/carers will be asked to work with the school to address this.

### **Holiday Absence**

The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Parents/carers should seek permission from the Headteacher prior to the leave of absence period in question.

- Requests for absence for holidays during term time will be considered by the Headteacher/Acting Headteacher;
- Requests for absence for holidays during term time will only be considered if there are exceptional extenuating circumstances. Parents will be expected to attach a letter outlining their extenuating circumstances with the absence form.

Issues such as parents' employment conditions related to non-negotiable holiday dates, the time of year and level of previous attendance will be taken into consideration. Leave under exceptional circumstances can only be granted as a 'one off' occasion in the child's attendance at Glory Farm Primary School.

**If a holiday request is refused by the school, but the child is still taken on holiday the absence is then unauthorised. The matter can be referred to the County Attendance Team who can issue a Penalty Fine.**

### **Frequent Absence**

- In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve any concerns with parents/carers. The Headteacher or Inclusion Manager will liaise with the County Attendance Officer or other relevant professionals to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and/or punctuality are identified;
- Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward. This may include external support e.g. from the Inclusion Manager, Home School Link Worker or other external support that the BLA may from time to time employ.

### **Response to non-attendance**

- If a child is absent, and contact is not received from the parents/carers, the parents/carers will be contacted on the first day of absence by telephone. If no contact can be made, either through work or mobile numbers, the school will use the contacts list provided by parents;
- Where there has been no response, or explanation, the school will make a home visit or post a letter to the parents/carers requesting information regarding the absence;
- Where there continues to be no response to the school intervention, and the absence has persisted without explanation, the school will refer the issue to the County Attendance Team or other relevant services e.g. Social Care;
- If a child's attendance falls below 95% the school will initially write to the parents/carers expressing concern about levels of attendance and offering support. If the situation does not improve, the Inclusion Manager will invite the



parents in to discuss the issue and may request the support of the County Attendance Team if appropriate;

- If a child is repeatedly late, the school will initially write to parents expressing concerns about late arrival and offering support if required. If the situation does not improve, the Headteacher will invite the parents in to discuss the issue and may request the support of the County Attendance Team if appropriate.

### **Recognition of Excellent Attendance**

- This is encouraged throughout the year in whole school assemblies and 100% attendance is recognised with a certificate;
- Good attendance is celebrated whenever possible e.g. Gatherings, newsletters etc.

### **Attendance Targets**

The school sets attendance targets of 100% each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and a senior school manager will be responsible for overseeing this work.

## **Appendix 3 Register and Admission Roll keeping**

The legal requirements regarding register and admission roll keeping can be found in The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006.

### **Categorisation of Absence**

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school at the time of registration must be recorded within one of these categories:

- [1] Unauthorised Absence
- [2] Authorised Absence
- [3] Approved Educational Activity

#### **1. Unauthorised Absence**

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without a valid reason.

#### **2. Authorised Absence**

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

#### **3. Approved Educational Activity**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits;
- Sporting activities;
- Link courses or approved education off site;
- Most types of dual registration.

**Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.**

### **Absence Attendance Codes**

/ Present (AM)  
\ Present (PM)  
B Educated off site (not Dual reg.)  
C Other authorised circumstances  
D Dual registration  
E Excluded  
F Extended family holiday (agreed)  
G Family holiday (not agreed)  
H family holiday (agreed)  
I Illness  
J Interview  
L Late (before registers closed)  
M Medical/Dental appointments

- N No reason yet provided for absence
- O Unauthorised Abs
- P Approved Sporting Activity
- R Religious observance
- S Study leave
- T Traveller absence
- V Educational visit or trip
- W Work experience
- # School closed to pupils & staff
- Y Enforced closure
- X Non-compulsory school age absence
- Z Pupil not on roll
- All should attend / No mark recorded

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|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Policy/Procedure Title</b>      | <b>Attendance Policy</b>   |
| <b>Issue Date to Committee</b>     | <b>Autumn Term 2016</b>  |
| <b>Author (Name/Department)</b>    | <b>K Clayton - Attendance Officer (TCS)<br/>E Osborn - SENCo (GFPS)<br/>I Elkington - Headteacher (GFPS)</b> |
| <b>Approved by Directors</b>       | <b>Spring Term 2017</b>  |
| <b>Review Date - Every 3 years</b> | <b>Spring Term 2020</b>  |