

Bedford College Academies Academy

Attendance Policy

Status: Statutory	Member of staff responsible: Principal, Wixams Academy	Implementation date: March 2021
Issue No: 1	Approved by: LAB	Next Review Date: February 2022

Our Vision

“The BCAT vision is to support students to achieve their absolute best whatever their ability or background. We aim to:

1. Work collaboratively to deliver an inclusive and outstanding education to all students, thereby driving up local standards.
2. Maximise social mobility and life chances, through the highest expectations of and aspirations for all students.
3. Encourage and support a range of high performing and distinctive educational establishments for local communities.”

Our Values

Student focus - We will seek to achieve a high quality learning experience for every student

High performance - We will strive for consistently high levels of performance in all aspects of our work

Respect, openness and honesty - We will treat everyone with respect, encourage openness and honesty, and recognise each other’s contribution and achievements.

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1. Aims

This document describes Wixams Academy's policy for attendance. Regular and punctual attendance is a significant contribution to educational achievement. Wixams Academy aims to meet its obligations with regards to attendance by:

- Safeguarding
- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- To support students and parents in improving attendance

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#).

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Academy procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register is taken at the start of the morning session each school day and again at the beginning of the afternoon session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- Excluded

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be kept for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school by 08:00, or as soon as is practical, on the first day of an unplanned absence, eg, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health.

Notification can be made by telephoning the Academy's office on 01234 608950 (there is an answer phone facility for messages) or by emailing the Academy on info@wixamsacademy.co.uk

If the Academy has not heard from parents and the pupil is marked as absent reason unknown at morning registration, the Attendance Officer will telephone parents by 9.30am to ascertain the reason for the absence. For safeguarding purposes, it is vital that the Academy knows the whereabouts of its pupils during a school day.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the Academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the absence is longer than three days, the Academy will ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the Academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours, where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of the Academy for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late will be marked as such, using the appropriate code.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Attendance is published in pupils' interim and end of year reports. However, where there is cause for concern, parents will be sent a letter, and/or inviting them to the Academy to meet with the Principal and the Attendance Officer.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The Principal may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless it is considered to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The Academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs. If necessary, the Academy will seek advice from the religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Principal, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment is not made within 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

The Academy will only apply to the local authority for the issue of a fixed penalty notice after it has exhausted all other avenues in trying to resolve a pupil's unauthorised absence.

5. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are required to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above three days, we will contact parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

See appendix 2 for attendance process flowchart.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 The governing body

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the Academy as a whole on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

6.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the Academy, and for monitoring absence data and reporting it to the governing body.

The Principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and works with the local authority to tackle persistent absence and to issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

6.3 The Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the Academy and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Principal
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Liaises with the Principal on when to issue fixed-penalty notices

6.4 Form Tutors

Form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the Academy's office.

6.5 Office/Reception Staff

Office/reception staff will take calls from parents about absence and record it on the Academy's database.

7. Monitoring arrangements

The Attendance Officer will review this policy annually. At every review, the policy is shared with the governing board.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Authorised absence		
Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
B	Educated off-site	Pupil is at an approved supervised off-site facility
C	Authorised leave of absence	Special circumstances (agreed by the Academy)
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness	The Academy has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late for registration
M	Medical appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the Academy
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved by the Academy
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement
#	Planned Academy closure	Whole or partial closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Unauthorised absence		
Code	Definition	Scenario
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is absent due to a holiday
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code will be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided within 7 days)
O	Unauthorised absence	The Academy is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence

Appendix 2: Attendance process flowchart

