

SIR GRAHAM BALFOUR MAT



ATTENDANCE POLICY

CHANGE CONTROL

<i>Date</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Details of change</i>
07/04/2017	0.a	Initial Draft
30/06/2017	0.b	Updated following review by Trustees
19/07/2017	1.0	Updated following approval at Board Meeting 18/07/2017
Nov 2019	1.a	Minor Changes made
27/11/2019	2.0	Updated following approval at Board Meeting 27/11/2019
21/06/2021	2.a	Updated following review by Trustees
30/06/2021	3.0	Updated following approval at Board Meeting 30/06/2021

Next Review	June 2023
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AUTHORISATION

Approved at Board Meeting on 30/06/2021

Signed:



30-6-21

Chair of Board

Date

Attendance Policy & Procedure

Introduction

Regular school attendance is the key to enabling students and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of every member of the Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust (SGBMAT).

All students should be in school, on time, every day that school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

This policy accords with “School attendance: Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities” (Department for Education, October 2014).

Aim

1. To raise the profile of attendance by encouraging and promoting a positive attitude to school attendance so that all students within the SGBMAT are encouraged to achieve a good rate of attendance in order to maximize opportunities available to them throughout their time at school. The school set target for attendance is 96%.
2. To foster a high expectation of students’ attendance in school on a regular basis.
3. To raise family awareness of the importance of a child’s regular attendance.
4. To inform parents/carers as to the legitimate reasons for absence.
5. To maintain an accurate system for registering and monitoring attendance.
6. To maintain a clear policy on attendance which is known to all staff, students and parents/carers within the SGBMAT.
7. To maintain clear communication both within the school and between school and parents.

Under Section 44 of the Education Act 1996, parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he or she is a registered pupil. Failure to discharge this duty may result in the LA prosecuting the parents/carers and each parent may be fined.

Key Elements

Roles and responsibilities

The SGBMAT believes that promoting positive attendance is the responsibility of the community as a whole.

The SGBMAT expects individual schools responsibilities to include:

- To promote positive behaviour and attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials and will recognise good attendance appropriately
- To work with parents/carers to resolve problems which may affect a child's attendance and will involve representatives of other agencies that work with the school such as the School Nurse or representatives of the Local Support Team such as Education Welfare Workers where required in order to ensure all students can benefit from consistently good punctuality and attendance. We will use the Early Help Assessment process to support this.
- To be proactive in encouraging attendance for all students through ensuring parents/carers and students receive information on the importance of good attendance and punctuality and will react swiftly to intervene to improve attendance of individual students should this become a concern.

The SGBMAT expects Parents or Carers responsibilities to include:

- Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure that their students of compulsory school age attend school regularly.
- Inform school straight away if their child cannot attend and give the reason.
- Ensure medical evidence is provided, where appropriate.
- Try to make medical, dental or other appointments outside the school day
- Ensure the school is aware of any circumstances at home that may be likely to affect their attendance
- Encourage good routines at home which promote a healthy lifestyle including enough sleep
- Talk to their child about school and let the school know if their child is worried about any issues such as difficulties with homework or friendship problems.
- Do not book holidays in term time – this will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances
- Seek advice from their G.P. if you are not sure how long to keep their child off school with an illness
- Ensure school has all their up to date contact details.
- Encourage their child to enjoy school and make the most of all the opportunities available to them
- Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Key Definitions

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from a school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those that a 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
- Students who arrive at school after registration has closed

Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service. The SGBMAT requires individual schools to take an attendance register every lesson, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents/carers. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required and on occasions medical evidence provided.

Parents/carers whose students 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. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent/carer may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the relevant agency working with the relevant school. He/she 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/carers or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

The penalty notice fine would be:

- £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 per parent per child if paid between 21 – 28 days.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

If prosecution takes place under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 the maximum fine is £1000 per parent per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school. Alternatively, parents/carers or students may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

The SGBMAT has a Service Level Agreement with VIPeducation. They visit the schools to monitor attendance and provide welfare support. VIPeducation can be contacted at any time by the

SIR GRAHAM BALFOUR MAT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

relevant school if there are any additional concerns. Where concerns are identified regarding attendance/punctuality/welfare then a home visit might be made. Individual plans may be drawn up between the school/authority and the parent/carer and pupil to support improvements. Their telephone number is available from the relevant school office.

What are “exceptional circumstances”?

Leave of absence due to urgent and unavoidable circumstances (such as a family bereavement) would clearly be considered exceptional. Other than this, however, it will be appropriate for the school to deal with applications on a case-by-case basis.

Within the SGBMAT, exceptional circumstances means “being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time”.

Factors that will be taken into account include:-

- the nature of the event for which leave is sought;
- the frequency with which requests are made for that child;
- the length of absence; and
- the pupil’s attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

This is not an exhaustive list, however, and there may be other factors which are relevant to a particular application.

Can leave still be granted for family holidays?

Authorising holidays in ordinary circumstances during term time was not allowed prior to the law changes of 2013. Taking holidays in term time for financial reasons or ‘once in a lifetime’ experiences will not be considered exceptional, but giving permission might be justifiable where, for example, it has not been possible for the family to go on holiday during school holidays because either parent is in military service and is not able to take leave during school holidays, but the number of those to whom this will apply will be limited.

Another possible exception could be where the impending health of a member of the family would make a delayed visit impossible (for example because someone in the family will be unable to travel in future or the health of someone being visited is failing).

Circumstances Where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) over a 12-week period lost due to unauthorised absence during the current and previous term. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
- Unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to a leave of absence (including holiday related) in term time not agreed by the Individual Academy Headteacher (or delegated person).
- Persistent late arrival at school, ie after the register has closed, in the current and previous term. “Persistent” means at least 10 sessions of late arrival.

SIR GRAHAM BALFOUR MAT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An "excluded child" is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspection Act 2006.

Elective Home Education

Elective home education is the term used by the Department for Students, Schools and Families (DCSF) to describe parents/carers' decisions to provide education for their students at home instead of sending them to school. Parents/carers may choose home education for a variety of reasons. If a parent/carer chooses to electively home-educate their child then they must notify their child's school in writing of their intention to do so.

Students whose parents/carers elect to educate them at home are not registered at mainstream schools, special schools, independent schools, academies, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), colleges, students' homes with education facilities or education facilities provided by independent fostering agencies. Some parents may choose to engage private tutors or other adults to assist them in providing a suitable education, but there is no requirement for them to do so. Learning may take place in a variety of locations, not just in the family home.

Children Missing in Education

Children who do not attend school for 20 sessions and we are unable to make contact with families can be described as Children Missing in Education. The Local Authority will be contacted and students can be removed from roll.

Attendance Rewards

The SGBMAT believes that rewards are an important part of Behaviour for Learning and this should be applied to encouraging good attendance.

Students with outstanding attendance and above will receive rewards in accordance with the individual school's rewards policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Staffing & Standard Sub-Committee of the MAT Board will formally review this policy every two years or more frequently if circumstances or legislation suggest it is appropriate.