



“Inspiring learning, developing character, building futures”

## **Student Support Policies and Procedures**

### **Student attendance policy**

*Aim: To clarify the expectations in terms of student attendance/punctuality and the procedures to report absences*

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Policy Author	Head of Student Services

# Student attendance policy (student procedures)

## 1. Introduction

There is a strong link between attendance, progress, academic outcomes and positive progression. We recognise that the most effective way to achieve high attendance is to engage students in positive, enjoyable and high quality learning experiences. Excellent attendance is seen as central to outstanding academic performance.

Blackpool Sixth is committed to promoting the safeguarding and wellbeing of all of our students. Attendance plays a significant role in ensuring students are safe. Poor attendance is often an indicator of more complex issues within the student's life. Our approach recognises that absence represents one way that a student may respond to their personal challenges/experiences, in or outside college.

The college will observe the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 which protects individuals from unfavourable treatment related to a disability. A disability is defined as "a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term negative effect on a person's ability to do normal day to day activities". Where appropriate the college will make reasonable adjustments through the "Fitness to study policy".

This attendance policy is designed to clarify expectations and establish common practice regarding absence procedures and attendance monitoring.

## 2. Types of absence

There are 3 types of absence:

- **Authorised** - absence due to an authorised reason as noted in this policy.
- **Known** - absence due to a reason not noted as an authorised absence in this policy, but the reason has been reported to college
- **Unknown** - absence where no reason has been reported to the college

We report two different attendance figures:

- Actual attendance - this shows the % of sessions attended and includes all known and authorised absences.
- Official attendance - this does not include any authorised absences

Authorised absences – if college is notified in advance and appropriate evidence provided

- a hospital appointment or course of medical treatment that cannot be arranged outside college hours (usually up to one day)
- an orthodontist appointment (usually up to half day)
- visit to university to attend an open day/interview or a career-related interview or audition (usually up to one day)
- attendance at a wedding of an immediate relative\* (usually up to one day)
- attendance at a graduation, or similar ceremony, of an immediate relative\* (usually up to one day)
- attendance at a funeral of an immediate relative\* (usually up to one day)
- an external public examination. For example, a practical or theory driving test or performing arts examination (usually up to half day). Please note: this will not be authorised if it is on the same day as a public exam in college.
- attendance at court or an appointment with a legal adviser (usually up to one day)

\*Throughout this policy the term *immediate relative* includes parents, grandparents, brother, sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law. The college will also consider applications for leave in the case of individuals treated as immediate relatives but not included in the above.

#### Examples of unacceptable reasons for absence

- unauthorised holidays in term time.
- part or full-time work that is not part of the student's programme of study
- routine medical appointments (e.g. doctor, optician, physiotherapist and dental appointments) which can be made outside college commitments
- birthdays or similar celebrations
- driving lessons

Please note: this policy does not cover the following absences that are covered in the "Special leave policy":

- holidays in term time
- compassionate leave
- study leave for college examinations
- other special leave e.g. weddings (more than 1 day), graduations (more than 1 day) and extra-curricular representation

Please see the "Special leave policy" for full details.

### **3. Absence procedures**

It is recognised that there may be rare occasions where a student may miss lessons due to genuine illness or other extenuating circumstances. In such circumstances, students must follow the absence procedures below or the procedures in the special leave policy.

1. At Blackpool Sixth, we expect students to let their Progress Mentor and subject teachers know in advance if they are going to be absent from classes due to an unavoidable, scheduled appointment.
2. For unforeseen absences, we expect students, or their parent/carer, to email the student's Progress Mentor or telephone 01253 394911 before 09.15am on each day of absence.
3. Communication must include the student's full name, the reason for absence and expected length of absence. This will be recorded on the college's online registration system. Students should also email their subject teachers to get details of any work missed.
4. In normal circumstances during a period of absence, we expect students to maintain daily email contact with their Progress Mentor and subject teachers to ensure the student is able to maintain learning. If communication is not maintained then the absence will be followed up by college.
5. Persistent failure to follow the absence notification procedures may be formally investigated in accordance with the college's positive behaviour policy and disciplinary procedures.
6. Students who feel unwell whilst in college should report to their Progress Mentor or key support worker. If it is agreed the student needs to go home this will be recorded as a known absence. Students who go home ill without reporting will be marked as an

unknown absence, staff will respond in line with safeguarding or disciplinary procedures, as appropriate.

7. Reported student illness, unless supported by a doctor's note, will be classed as a known absence.

#### **4. Maintaining learning during/following student absence**

Whatever the reason for absence, it is the student's responsibility to request and complete the work missed as quickly as possible. This is key to maintaining learning and progress.

1. Staff will support students to do this through various methods. This can include signposting to online resources and inviting the student to ASTs or other catch up sessions. This will usually be communicated via email. It is the student's responsibility to request any missing resources and to maintain contact with the college.
2. It is recognised that during absences due to illness or injury, a student may not be able to engage with learning (a student's health is always the priority), but they must maintain communication with the college during periods of absence.
3. In exceptional circumstances, and where practically possible, the college may offer the option for students to engage with 'live' learning remotely via Google Meet. This will only be agreed as part of the Fitness to Study or special leave procedures or when a student is required to self-isolate in line with public health guidance.
4. It must be highlighted that Blackpool Sixth does not offer remote learning programmes. As a result, any agreement for an individual student to engage with remote learning will only be a short term, temporary measure.
5. If students do not take active steps to catch up on missed work, they will fall behind with their studies and may face disciplinary action in line with the positive behaviour policy and disciplinary procedures.

#### **5. Attendance monitoring**

Excellent attendance is seen as central to outstanding academic performance, whilst poor attendance is often an indicator of more complex issues within the student's life. As a result, early intervention is necessary to identify and address any underlying issues.

The college monitors student attendance through registers at every lesson and responds to poor or irregular attendance as follows:

1. Subject teachers will follow up absences from lessons to check the reason for absence.
2. Progress Mentors will monitor overall attendance of their Progress Mentor cohort daily and follow up any students who have missed a full day and the reason for absence is not known. This follow up may involve contact with parents/carers, if appropriate.
3. Progress Mentors, along with Heads of Department, will check attendance on a weekly basis to identify any patterns of absence or lateness.

#### **6. Dealing with persistent or prolonged absence**

1. Students whose attendance or punctuality is causing concern will be set clear and appropriate targets for improvement and will be supported to achieve these targets. This is likely to be via an intervention from their teachers(s) and/or Progress Mentor.
2. Staff at college will contact the parents/carers of students whose attendance or punctuality is causing concern.
3. Disciplinary action may be taken in line with the positive behaviour policy and disciplinary procedures
4. If the college has reason to believe that a student has reported that they are sick, when in fact they are not sick, or there are apparent patterns in the student's absence (e.g. sickness absence repeatedly on a Friday), this may also result in action in line with the college's positive behaviour policy and disciplinary procedures.
5. It is recognised that there may be reasons for persistent absence (e.g. long term medical conditions). The college will make reasonable adjustments to support a student to maintain learning during periods of long-term sickness or medical conditions through the Fitness to Study procedures.
6. During any period of unexplained absence, regular attempts will be made to make contact with the student or parents/carers to find out reasons for absence and an expected return date. Details will be recorded on EMRIS.
7. Throughout a prolonged absence, if there are any welfare concerns, a member of the safeguarding team will conduct a home visit and take appropriate action in line with the safeguarding and child protection policy.
8. A student may be deemed to have left college if they have not attended classes for four consecutive weeks for any reason. This will be confirmed by a letter sent to the student and their parent(s)/carer(s). For students under 18 the local authority will be notified and we will make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts and future plans of the student, working jointly with the local authority.