



“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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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
1. Introduction	3
2. General principles	3
3. Types of absence	4
4. Compassionate leave	4
5. Holidays in term time	5
6. Absence reporting procedure	5
7. Maintaining learning during/following student absence	5
8. Prevention/intervention strategies	5
9. Prolonged absence	6

# Student attendance policy

## 1. Introduction

Attendance is closely linked to academic success and positive progression. At Blackpool Sixth, we believe that engaging in high-quality learning experiences is key to outstanding outcomes. Missing just one day a week can result in performing two grades lower across a level 3 programme. To prepare students for employment, our expectations in terms of attendance are aligned to expectations in the workplace.

Teachers carefully plan the building of knowledge and skills over time and only those students who are there all the time experience exactly what was intended. Teachers plan assessments carefully in terms of what learning should be secured by the time of the assessment. Only those who are there all the time know what they should know, and have a strong chance of knowing what they don't understand.

Regular attendance is crucial for safeguarding and wellbeing. We recognise that children who are frequently absent from education may be at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Staff are trained to be alert to patterns of irregular attendance or sudden changes in behaviour that may signal a safeguarding concern. We acknowledge that absence from college may reflect a range of challenges in a young person's life, including mental health issues, family difficulties, or other vulnerabilities. For this reason, our attendance monitoring is not only a mechanism for supporting academic achievement, but also a critical part of our safeguarding and wellbeing practice.

The college delivers full-time programmes of study designed to be delivered in a classroom situation where students are expected to be physically present. We are not a distance-learning college, and whilst on a temporary basis it is reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible with attendance due to ill health, prolonged and/or regular periods of absence cannot be sustainable.

We comply with the Equality Act 2010 by making reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities, ensuring fair treatment through our "Fitness to Study" policy.

This attendance policy clarifies expectations and standardised procedures for managing absences and monitoring attendance.

## 2. General principles

Every member of staff has a role to play in promoting, monitoring and supporting students to maintain high levels of attendance and punctuality. Our approach to managing attendance is consistent and structured:

- **High expectations** - an unwavering belief that high levels of attendance and punctuality will lead to academic success. Blackpool Sixth expects students to have a minimum of 95% attendance and to be on time, or early. The same expectation applies to all curriculum lessons, Progress Mentor sessions and extracurricular commitments
- **Accurate and timely recording** so we can monitor effectively, identify patterns early and respond quickly to any concerns.
- **Monitor and use attendance data effectively** to identify individual students or groups of students who are underperforming and take appropriate action.
- **Professionally curiosity** - Seek to gain a better understanding of the underlying causes of poor attendance and the challenges students are facing both in and outside college.

- **Support** - Work together with students, staff, and families to address concerns.

### 3. Types of absence

There are 3 types of absence:

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

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

- Serious illness supported by a doctor's note
- Specialist medical or dental appointments (e.g consultant, hospital, orthodontist)\*
- Career related open days/events (a maximum of 3 across the academic year)
- University interviews and other final career choice interviews.
- Immediate relative's wedding, graduation or funeral
- Religious holidays
- Practical driving test or driving theory test
- Extra curricular activity that supports a student's career aim, or involves significant personal achievement. For example one off sporting events, if the student is participating at the equivalent of county level or above.
- Work experience that is arranged and agreed in collaboration with the college

\*Where possible it is expected that appointments are arranged outside of lesson time

#### Unauthorised Absences:

- Sickness that is not supported by a doctor's note
- Holidays during term time
- Routine medical or dental appointments
- Non-study related work (e.g. part time employment)
- Birthdays or celebrations
- Driving lessons

Note: The listed examples of authorised and unauthorised absences above are not exhaustive, and other reasons for absence will be considered case by case.

### 4. Compassionate leave

Compassionate leave is intended to be used in exceptional circumstances, for example in the event of a bereavement or serious illness of an immediate relative.

A student or their parent/carer should, in the first instance, inform the student's Progress Mentor of the need to take compassionate leave as soon as possible, or at the latest on the first day of absence.

Every bereavement or serious illness is different; some students may feel able to return to college very swiftly, whilst others may need more time. The relationship with the relative, and the circumstances will all have an impact on the student, particularly if the death or illness was sudden

or traumatic. It is often difficult for students in these situations to judge how they will feel when they return to college, and a swift return does not necessarily mean that a student will not need support.

The amount of compassionate leave granted will be at the discretion of a member of the Student Services leadership team taking into account the circumstances of the case and the impact on the student's welfare and future academic success.

Extended compassionate leave will be considered, for example in cases where students may have to travel significant distances to attend a funeral, when caring for a terminally ill immediate family member or for religious observance which may extend the mourning period.

## **5. Holidays in term time**

The college does not authorise holidays in term time, as even short breaks can significantly disrupt learning, affect progress, and undermine future outcomes. This policy applies from the point of enrolment. Students and their parents/carers are asked to plan holidays outside the published term dates.

## **6. Absence reporting procedure**

At Blackpool Sixth, we expect that parents/carers notify college of all absences before 8.30 am on each day of the absence. This can be done by:

- Reporting an absence on the CEDAR Parent Portal
- Email to [student.absences@blackpoolsixth.ac.uk](mailto:student.absences@blackpoolsixth.ac.uk)

## **7. 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 minimising the impact of absence on learning and progress.

Staff will support students to do this through various methods. This can include signposting to online resources, additional support 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.

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.

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.

## **8. Prevention/intervention strategies**

The list below provides examples of the range of prevention strategies and interventions that the college may use to promote high attendance and address poor attendance. The examples are not exhaustive and other appropriate interventions/strategies may be used.

- Clear, concise and consistent communication about expectations in terms of high attendance and excellent punctuality

- Communication of the impact of low attendance on academic progress and future employment
- Progress Mentors will monitor attendance of their cohort daily and follow up any unknown absences.
- Recognition of excellent and improved attendance
- Communication with students. This can be via email, phone call or text.
- One-to-one meeting(s) with a student with a focus on setting improvement targets related to attendance and punctuality
- Communication with parents/carers. This can be via email, phone call or text.
- Meeting(s) with student and parents/carers in attendance
- Higher level monitoring of attendance/punctuality supported by the college's Attendance Officer and/or a member of the Student Services Leadership Team.
- Formal meeting(s) arranged in line with the college's positive behaviour policy or fitness to study policy
- Formal intervention in line with the college's positive behaviour policy. For example issue of a caution or formal warning
- Referral to the college's review of college place panel to agree appropriate next steps
- Arrangement of a review of college place meeting with the student and parents/carers invited to attend.
- Where welfare concerns arise during absence, the safeguarding team will act according to the safeguarding and child protection policy. This can include referral to local authority safeguarding and early help services.

## **9. Prolonged absence**

Where a student has been absent without explanation for more than five consecutive college days, a wellbeing check will be undertaken. This may include contact with parents/carers and, where appropriate, a home visit. Students will receive a concern email/letter, with copies sent to parents/carers. This communication may mention possible home visits, Review of College Place meetings, or referrals to social care if no contact is made by a specified date.

A student may be considered to have left college if they miss four consecutive weeks of classes without valid reason. Confirmation is sent to the student and their parent(s)/carer(s), and the local authority is notified for students under 18. Reasonable enquiries are made to establish the student's whereabouts and future plans, in coordination with the local authority.

If welfare concerns arise during prolonged absence, the safeguarding team will act according to the safeguarding and child protection policy. This can include referral to local authority safeguarding and early help services.