

Attendance Policy – Summary of Key Points

The aim of this summary is to help identify the key points within this policy, along with any significant changes to BMAT's approach to the issues it contains.

Please also take time to read the full policy, as this summary does NOT provide a complete picture of the entire policy contents.

Key Changes from Previous Versions of this Policy

Topic or Reference	Change to be noted
Step-by-step protocol	New addition to this policy.
Essex code of conduct	Updated guidance on penalty notices.

Important Points to Note about this Policy

Topic or Reference	Points to Note
Attendance register	Legal document
Missing in education and the removal of pupils from the register	Statutory guidance.

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**Schools,
teachers and
pupils freed
to succeed.**
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Attendance Policy

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Document Control

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1.0	21/11/19	N Carroll	Initial draft
2.0	9/12/19	R Canning	Edited to add/create appendices
3.0	26/2/20	R Canning	Appendices removed from main policy, as they are duplicated in a separate document.

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Context

This policy should be read in conjunction with BMAT's other policies, as set out below:

- Single Equality Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Exclusions Policy.

.Attendance and punctuality is a key priority for all BMAT schools. This policy sets out the expectations and requirements for pupils, parents and carers, the various roles and responsibilities associated with these requirements and the steps that will be taken where poor attendance and punctuality are identified. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and we strive to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern regarding attendance.

In order for this policy to be successful, every member of staff within BMAT, must make attendance a priority and convey to the students the importance of their education

We are committed to the promotion of community cohesion in our Trust, local, national and global levels, comparing our Academy Trust community to its local and national context and implementing all necessary actions in relation to:

- ethnicity,
- religion or belief, and
- socio-economic background.

In accordance with the values of BMAT we pledge:

- to respect the equal human rights of all our pupils;
- to educate them about equality; and
- to respect the equal rights of our staff and other members of the Academy community.

We will assess and analyse our current Academy practices and implement all necessary resulting actions to ensure pupils are not discriminated against because of their:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity

These 'Protected characteristics' have been set out in law in the Equality Act 2010.

BMAT is committed to eliminating practices, which could result in unfair or less favourable treatment for persons with a protected characteristic.

Key definitions used in this policy

Pupils	Children and young people on roll in Trust schools/academies
School/Trust School	An Academy or school within BMAT
Head of Year/Head of key stage	In secondary school, each year group or key stage is led by a Head of Year
Assistant CEO	The Assistant CEO oversee the Head Teachers/Heads of School
Head of School / Head Teacher	An Academy is led by a Head of School or Head Teacher the most senior leaders in the school.
The LGB	Local Governing Board
The Trust	BMAT
The Board/Directors/Trust Board	The Board of Directors of BMAT
DoEW	Director of education Welfare
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
ACT	Local Authority
LA	Local Authority

BMA	Burnt Mill Academy
CS	Cooks Spinney Primary Academy and Nursery
ESJ	Epping St John's
FHS	Forest Hall School
FW	Freshwaters Primary Academy and Nursery
LP	Little Parndon Primary Academy
MC	Magna Carta Primary Academy
RDA	Royal Docks Academy
RY	Roydon Primary Academy
SFG	Sir Frederick Gibberd
STEM	BMAT STEM

Each BMAT school is legally defined as an Academy, regardless of whether the term 'school' is used to describe it in the policy.

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1. Introduction

BMAT approves attendance targets for all schools across the Trust.

For the current academic year, the minimum school attendance target is 97%.

Pupils need to attend school regularly in order to fulfil their potential. This is central to raising standards. Missing lessons leaves our children vulnerable to falling behind.

Research has shown that children with poor attendance tend to achieve less.

The school will:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Work to ensure all pupils are punctual to school and their lessons.

BMAT expects parents/carers to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age, attend school regularly. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child is present at school during all school days, and between the hours specified for attendance, unless there is a valid medical reason for their child's absence. The Head Teacher/Head of School has responsibility for ensuring that this requirement is adhered to, by having appropriate communication with parents/carers and, if required, the use of sanctions.

2. Roles when implementing this policy

In addition to the roles in approving, monitoring and implementing this policy, described above, BMAT operates an Education Welfare service, led by the Director of Education Welfare (DoEW). Each BMAT school has an assigned Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who is employed to ensure parents/carers meet their responsibilities with regard to school attendance, work closely with families, pupils and school to resolve any attendance issues, arranging school and home visits where necessary. The DoEW works with key staff such as members of the school's SLT, Head teacher/head of school, Assistant CEO and EWO, to ensure outstanding attendance. The DoEW monitors overall attendance, collates data and reports on attendance information, as well as ensuring staff receive appropriate support in the requirements of this policy.

Data is analysed, evaluated and reported on so appropriate attendance procedures are followed, developed and implemented.

The Head teacher, Assistant CEO, CEO, Trust board and LGB will require such reports periodically.

The DoEW actively works to promote outstanding attendance across all Trust schools, including for example delivering or supporting assemblies from time to time. This is to ensure our policy is clear to all stakeholders.

3. Attendance register

Please see Appendix A for school start, finish times, and register open and closing times.

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register; all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will mark whether every pupil is:

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

Only the school (not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to authorise, using the

appropriate code. It is the school's discretion to authorise absences, or not, where attendance is below the school target, the decision may be taken to unauthorise absences unless medical evidence is provided.

The school will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system, which is used to download data to the School Census.

The School will also inform the LA of any pupil deleted from the admission/school register where they:

- Have been taken out of the school by their parents/carers and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education (see below on home educated children);
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
- Have been permanently excluded.
- Mid-term transfer.

4. Strategies for improving school attendance

For pupils with attendance below the school target of 97% the parent/carer will receive written notification informing them of this, in some circumstances the pupil may be placed on an attendance report, parents/carers will also receive written notification of any such report.

For all pupils with poor attendance (below 96%), the parent/carer will be invited to attend an Attendance Improvement Meeting with our EWO. If, after this meeting, there is no improvement in attendance (without medical evidence being provided) cases may be referred to Local Authority for possible legal action.

A pupil whose absence reaches or exceeds the threshold of 10% will be classed as a 'persistent absence' pupil.

Should it be considered appropriate, the school will not hesitate to use all the legal remedies available.

Parents/carers may also be asked to attend a strategy meeting held by the Director of Education Welfare, and a member of the LGB linked to attendance.

We require parents/carers to contact the school to explain their child's absence on the first day and all subsequent days thereafter. The parent/carer of a child who has not attended registration will be contacted electronically or by telephone, unless there has been prior notification of absence. If the parent is unobtainable, a home visit may be carried out and a letter requesting information will be sent home.

After 3 days of absence, parents/carers will be expected to provide the school with medical evidence e.g. appointment card, hospital letter or copy of a prescription/medication. If a parent/carer has attended an Attendance Improvement Meeting **every** absence would need to be supported by medical evidence.

NOTE: We ask that all medical appointments are made outside of school hours, if this is not possible we will require medical evidence as described above and we will only authorise half a day's absence, unless sufficient evidence is provided to warrant a whole day's leave from school.

5. Missing in education and removal from the admissions and attendance register

We will no longer use the term 'absent' as this does not adequately safeguard our children and when a child is not in school and their whereabouts are unknown we will refer to them as missing.

Step-by-Step Protocol:

1. Daily absence texts/phone calls.
2. Vulnerable Calling List checked and phone calls made (any child on a social care plan, including CIN, CP, Family Solutions, year 5/6 pupils who walk to school alone or any other pupil you have any concerns about)
3. Email to Safeguarding Team and EWO of any pupils missing from school.
4. Any outside agencies working with our families will be informed by email and/or phone call.
5. Texts followed up by phone calls to establish whereabouts of child
6. Phone calls made going 1 downwards on emergency contacts – all contacts used to establish whereabouts of the child/ren
7. If no contact can be made with any contact on our electronic system, then the child is classed as missing.
8. EWO and DSL informed and a call made to 101 to report the child missing
9. Home visit carried out by EWO/Student Support Workers where possible – but police reporting takes priority.

If a child is absent from school for more than 3 days with no contact, a social care referral will be made.

If a child is absent for more than 5 days, schools must ask the EWO or allocated school member of staff to record this with the LA as a Child Missing in Education, where we have safeguarding concerns regarding a child, we will report as a Child Missing in Education immediately.

On return to school after a missing Episode a Pastoral Worker/Learning Mentor/EWO or relevant member of staff will meet the child and check on whereabouts and offer support if need be. School will share all information necessary with police and Social Care to safeguard the child.

We may remove a child from roll after a set amount of days if their whereabouts cannot be ascertained.

6. Returning to school

In the event of a student, returning to school after a significant long-term absence an individual reintegration programme (IRP) will be implemented via the Head of year/key stage or Designated Safeguarding Lead or designated member of staff, working in liaison with our EWO. This is to ensure the transition back to school is smooth, supportive and will provide the best possible opportunity for future outstanding attendance. The nature of such reintegration programme will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

7. Leave of absence

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday.

It is a rule of this Academy/School that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered exceptional by the Head of School/Head Teacher or EWO/DoEW, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Head of School, EWO or DoEW can authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing to the Academy. Where a parent/carer removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the Academy, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by this Academy to Local Authority.

8. Truancy

This is defined by the Department for Education as 'absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school'.

Absence from school is determined by the school, not the parent/carer. Where truancy is detected, the school will implement sanctions. For example, students may receive a detention in order to catch up on

work missed, isolated from peers for a period of time, removal from school trips/visits. This is detailed in our behaviour (rewards and sanctions) policy. Parents/carers will be informed and, depending on the nature of the case, invited into school to discuss the issue and next steps. These decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account any exceptional circumstances deemed by the Head Teacher/Head of School.

9. Child performers

There are times when a parent of a 'child performer' may request a leave of absence for their child to take part in a performance. The Head of School, EWO or DoEW can grant leave for this purpose i.e. to undertake employment (for the performance) during school hours.

A Local Authority (LA) licence must be sought in order for the child to take part in a performance. The Head Teacher/Head of School, EWO or DoEW must be shown this licence by the parent/carer. Where the license specifies the dates that a child is to be away from school to perform, then the Head Teacher/Head of School, EWO or DoEW will authorise those days. However, where the terms of the license do not specify dates it is at the discretion of the Head Teacher/Head of School, EWO or DoEW to authorise leave of absence. The Head of School, EWO or DoEW will be sympathetic to requests that are supported by a licence, as long as the school in question remains satisfied that this would not have a negative effect on a child's education. School attendance will be taken into consideration before authorising any request.

10. School Trips and attendance

All pupils are expected to attend school the day after any school trip. If a child is absent the day following a school trip, without medical evidence being provided, they may not be included on subsequent reward school trips.

Pupils who are not included in school trips for whatever reason must attend school. If a pupil is absent on a day of a school trip without medical evidence being provided, parents/carers will be contacted and, where necessary, invited into school to discuss the absence and any consequence given.

School attendance is taken into account before any pupil is authorised to attend a school reward trip.

11. Approaches to supporting good attendance and punctuality

The school gives recognition, in whatever way the Head of School/Director of Education Welfare deems appropriate, to those children and young people who have good punctuality and attendance records.

Please see appendix B for additional approaches.

12. Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late to school but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives to school after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

All pupils are expected to be punctual to school and to each of their lessons. Parents/carers are expected to support the school in ensuring this happens, unless the parent/carer provides good, reasonable explanations for lateness e.g. circumstances beyond their control, a sanction will be given.

Sanctions are in place to tackle lateness, including the enforcement of detentions, and missing of break/lunch times.

All pupils who arrive to school late **must** enter via the Reception. Pupils will have their name recorded and a C3 or appropriate sanction issued.

The EWO will meet with parents/carers if poor punctuality becomes persistent.

Further actions to tackle poor punctuality:

- Contact with parents/carers by phone call and/or letter

- Monitoring report
- Attendance Improvement Meetings
- Assemblies led by the EWO where punctuality (and attendance) issues are addressed
- Positive guidance issued to parents/carers periodically and on key events (e.g. parent consultation evenings) from the attendance team to give practical strategies for parents/carers on how to support good punctuality
- New parents/carers evenings/events: presentations by attendance team at such meetings with an accompanying letter in the parents/carers' packs to reflect this policy.

13. National codes

There are **national codes** for registering pupil attendance or absence. These are listed below. The school records and monitors attendance and absence in a consistent way, which complies with the national statutory regulations. This data helps our school to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for absence.

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Definition	Scenario
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Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness. (It is schools discretion if absences are authorised. BMA may not authorise absences without medical evidence if attendance is below 96%)
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

This is the end of the standard, **BMAT Attendance Policy** applicable to all our schools.

For school variations, please also request the completed appendices (templates are below), or view them on the school's website.

Appendices

Please see separate document containing appendices for this policy.