Pupil Attendance Policy

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Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust | Reg. in England: Company 08156759

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1. Introduction

The Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust (DBAT) is a multi-academy trust with a faith designation and a Christian religious ethos that is both distinctive and inclusive. Distinctive in the sense that all decisions about the nature and purpose of the Academy are taken through the lens of Christian values, inclusive in the sense that all students and staff are equally valued for their uniqueness in the eyes of God and their belonging to the school community.

2. Ethos statement

Vision
The Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust (DBAT) shares the Church of England's Vision for Education 2016, "Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good", which includes four basic elements wisdom, hope, community and dignity. We aim to deliver values-led education with the very best outcomes for children and young people.

Purpose
To provide high quality education enabling young people to flourish and grow: spiritually, in love and in understanding.

3. Scope/ aims

In the Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust, we believe that attendance and punctuality at our Academies is vital to the wellbeing and future prospects of all our pupils. Attendance and punctuality are intrinsically linked to our Trust's strategy for raising achievement.

Aims
- To improve the overall percentage attendance and reduce unauthorised absence.
- To reduce the number of students who are persistent absentees (PAs).
- To establish a clear system for maintaining full attendance and excellent punctuality and clearly communicate this to all Trust staff, pupils and parents who are all working to agreed routines and standards;
- To develop a culture for learning environment across the Trust where pupils are encouraged to attend regularly and to be punctual because pupils feel valued members of the Academy community and that they are safe and secure;
- To put in place an effective and efficient administration system for monitoring and intervening with issues relating to attendance and punctuality;
- To offer pupils and parents/carers good support, advice and guidance on the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

This policy provides the framework within which all staff, parents, pupils, carers and external agencies can contribute to the development and maintenance of a learning environment where high attendance and excellent punctuality is the "norm".

4. Definitions/Legislation

Absence = non-attendance at school

Authorised absence = absence that the school has authorised according to specific criteria

Unauthorised absence = absence that has not been authorised. This type of absence is very likely tto lead to further action by the school

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

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

5. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board (Academy Council)

The governing board is responsible for:
- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Headteacher*

The Headteacher is responsible for:
- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data on a termly basis and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Consulting with the Education Welfare Service over issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance*

All schools should have a designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance. In Primary Schools this is likely to be the Headteacher, but in all schools they must be a member of the school Senior Leadership Team. The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- To ensure that Academy expectations in regards to this policy on attendance and punctuality is communicated clearly to all stakeholders.
- To raise the profile and importance of attendance and punctuality, for example, through assemblies, newsletters and appropriate reward systems

Schools may choose to involve phase/year team leaders in sharing responsibility for attendance across their teams. This should be specified in the school-based guidance in Section 2.

3.4 The attendance officer (Included in role of Headteacher)*

The school attendance officer is responsible for:
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher/appropriate senior leader when to issue fixed-penalty notices

At St Peter's these roles are performed by the Co-Headteacher (GN) with support from the Senior Administrator (GM).

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers/form tutors will:
- Record attendance on a daily basis in line with school procedures detailed elsewhere in this policy
- Use the correct codes
- Submit attendance information promptly in line with school procedures
- Create a supportive and welcoming classroom environment which promotes good attendance, and supports pupils who may struggle with maintaining good attendance
- Work with pupils and families as appropriate to celebrate good attendance and improve poor attendance.
- To act as role models by being punctual to every lesson/registration.
- To encourage their pupils and tutees to take responsibility for their attendance and punctuality through monitoring and reinforcing the need for high levels of attendance and excellent punctuality.
- To assist in reintegrating any of their pupils after a period of prolonged absence.

3.6 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff will:

- ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the Academy's computerised registration systems for attendance and punctuality. For example, processing registers, preparing and distributing attendance data.
- Arrange paper-based recording as necessary in the event of IT failure
- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- To liaise with teachers/senior leaders and establish reasons for absence including telephone calls to parents/carers on the first day of absence, letters and arranging home visits.
- To assist in following up poor attendance and punctuality, for example, organising attendance panel meetings with parents/carers and external agencies, arranging home visits, ensuring that pupil contracts and targets are agreed and monitored.

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- To be fully supportive of the Academy with regard to attendance and punctuality as part of signing up to the Home-Academy Agreement.
- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- To support the Academy and their child(ren) by not requesting absence for holidays during term time and minimising where possible all other authorised absence, for example, dental appointments during the school day.
- To follow the Academy procedures for dealing with attendance through making contact with the Academy on the first day of absence and where this is not possible, ensuring that they send a signed letter to the Academy when their child returns.
- To read and follow the guide (Appendix 1 Academy Guidance on Attendance for Parents and Carers) for parents/carers which details all our expectations and procedures regarding attendance and punctuality.

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:
> Attend school every day on time
> Follow the Academy procedures for dealing with attendance and punctuality

6. Absence

Under Section 7 of the Education Act (1996), parents/carers have a legal duty to make sure that their child(ren) attends the Academy on a regular and full-time basis. Every half day absence has to be classified by the Academy as either authorised or unauthorised. The Academy must record the reason for any half day absence. Unauthorised absence such as truancy will lead to sanctions being taken against pupils or in exceptional cases, extended periods of unauthorised absence may lead to legal action being taken against parents.

Under normal circumstances, the only reason a pupil should miss any lessons is if they are too ill to attend. This is an example of an authorised absence, ie, pupils have missed a morning or afternoon session for a valid reason. Unauthorised absences are those, which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. This includes keeping students away from lessons unnecessarily, truancy and absences, which the Academy considers to have not been properly explained.

The Education (Pupil Regulations) 2006 and the DfES Circular 10/99 state that a leave of absence can only be granted at the discretion of the Local Board/Headteacher.

The Local Board/Principal should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the Local Board/Headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Local Board/Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Local Board/Headteacher's discretion. Only in exceptional cases shall more than ten days be granted in any one year.

Procedures for dealing with lateness and truancy should be set out in the Academy's Attendance Policy and Procedures document

7. Procedures for Registration

Each Academy should set out its policy and procedures for registration and ensure that all staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware of the procedures. These should include how to report sickness absence or apply for leave of absence, when a pupil will be marked as 'late' and the consequences of this. See section 2.

8. First Day Contact and dealing with absence

The school will make every attempt to contact any parent/carer on the first day of absence and establish the reason for absence. A telephone call can substitute for a note but the authenticity of the caller must be established. Where contact has not been possible, this must be followed up and confirmation of reasons for the absence should be obtained from parents. Information regarding pupil absence must be recorded against the relevant pupil's record, including any attempts to contact the parent/carer.

A list of all outstanding absences will be regularly reviewed and reasons for absence pursued.

9. Attendance Support

Attendance and punctuality should be regularly monitored by senior leaders and the local Board.

Where students are likely to have a period of long absence, for example from a period of illness, then arrangements should be made for appropriate work to be sent home and marked when returned. Class teachers should also ensure contact is maintained e.g. through newsletters.

Where there is a significant pattern of absence, the Lead for Attendance should:
• 	Involve the Education Welfare Officer (if in place) in developing strategies for intervention.
• 	Convene regular meetings to discuss any students causing concern regarding attendance and punctuality.
• 	If attendance falls below 85%, work with the EWO/attendance team in convening a "Persistent Absence, (PA)" attendance panel meeting, involving parents, in establishing targets for attendance and punctuality along with strategies for support in successfully reintegrating students back into the Academy.
• 	Students with attendance between 85% and 90% should also be tracked and the appropriate intervention taken, for example, a meeting with parents. Patterns should also be analysed to detect any condoned absence or suspected periods of truancy.
• 	For attendance between 90% - 95%, staff should play an active role in advocating the importance of full attendance to both pupils and parents.
• 	If the attendance is longer than a period of ten continuous days and is treated as unauthorised absence then key agencies should be informed.
• 	All steps should be taken to ascertain the student's whereabouts and documentation should be kept on this process.
• 	The LA must be further informed if the student's absence is continuous for a further 10 days if whereabouts are unknown and all contact has failed.
In a small minority of cases, referrals may have to be made to the LA, for example, where parents are unwilling and failing to comply with the agreed action plans as a result of a panel meeting. This may lead to the issue of a fixed penalty notice and possible court action being taken if the LA involvement does not lead to the student returning to the Academy.

At the start of the academic year, it will take much of the first term to establish an accurate picture of absence. Academies should take account of the previous year's attendance to help target pupils at the start of the year.

10. Recommended procedures

Warning Letters and Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)

The Trust believes that when avenues of supportive intervention such as telephone calls, meetings with parents and any home visits have been used and there has been no improvement in attendance then we will use the legal avenues that are open to us. The Trust encourages Academies to use the following:-

Pupils who have less than 90% attendance with any period of unauthorised absence within a 6 week period should receive a warning letter (Letter 1) from the Academy. This letter will state the

student's overall attendance percentage. If there is no improvement in attendance, or if attendance is below 85%, a formal concern (Letter 2) will be issued. If attendance does not improve, normally within the subsequent 2 week period, you will be invited in for a School Attendance Meeting to discuss concerns and set targets.

As stated earlier, the Academy does not support any holidays requested during term time. If a request is made for a leave of absence and this is not approved and the student does not attend during the stated period then a fixed penalty notice could be issued upon the student's return.

Students who arrive at the Academy after the specified registration period (see section 2) will be registered as "late after the registers have closed" and this is recorded as a U, which is an unauthorised absence for the AM session. Where more than 5 U codes occur in any one half-term a meeting will be arranged with the parent/carers. This will be preceded by a warning letter to the parent/carer after the 3rd U is recorded in the Academy register informing of the consequences of reaching a 5th U in the register.

If a student has had a period of absence for longer than five days then the class teacher/form tutor will instigate a reintegration programme. This will involve the class teacher/tutor supporting their pupil in reintegrating back into Academy life. It may also involve support meetings initiated by a first meeting that explains the programme to students, discusses any school-related issues and sets agreed targets. This is then developed through further support meetings over a period of two weeks after the date of return. The completed form will then be placed in the student's file. The form is in Appendix 3.

Consideration may also be given to a reduced timetable if appropriate to ensure a smooth reintegration.

11.   Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Regular monitoring of attendance data is an essential element of effective attendance procedures: roles and responsibilities are detailed above.

The Trust will monitor attendance on a termly basis in each academy, and Hub Directors of Learning will provide challenge and support to schools.

Comparisons will be made across the Trust and where appropriate actions to improve attendance and/or punctuality will feature in Academy Improvement Plans.

12.   Our Ethos and Values

As identified at the opening of this policy, our structure and approach here is underpinned by our Christian ethos and values, focused on an ethos that is both distinctive and inclusive.

In our adoption and subsequent adaptation of this policy we have asked ourselves two clear questions: "Is this policy and practice underpinned by our vision and values?" and "What is the impact of our vision and values on those subject to the policy?". This is a key focus of our ongoing development of policy and practice.

History of most recent policy changes and review period

Date	Page	Change(s) made	Origin of Change (e.g. TU request, change in legislation)
May 2023	All	Revision and transfer to new policy model	Trust
July 2023	7	Additional Academy information added.	Trust request
Sept 2023	4 and 5	Contextual Academy information added.	Review for Academy Council.

Policy Owner	**Education Directorate**		
Date Adopted			
Latest Review Date	**June 2023**		
Next Review Date			
Level	**Level 2**		
DBAT Policy levels:			
LEVEL 1	DBAT policy for adoption (no changes can be made by the Academy Council; the Academy Council must adopt the policy)		
LEVEL 2	DBAT policy for adoption and local approval, with areas for the Academy to update regarding local practice (the main body of the policy cannot be changed)		
LEVEL 3	DBAT model policy that the Academy can adopt if it wishes		
LEVEL 4	Local policy to be approved by the Academy Council		

Section2: School Based Procedures for attendance

Name of Academy:

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr Gordon Nunn and can be contacted via 012449 653537 gordonnunn.stpeters@dbat.org.uk

The attendance officer is Mr Gordon Nunn and can be contacted via 012449 653537 gordonnunn.stpeters@dbat.org.uk

The link governor for attendance is Carolyn Stell

Normal start of school day timings:
- Gate open by 8:40am and classroom doors open at 8:45am
- Gate closed at 8:58am. Children arriving after this time to be taken to main reception to sign in
- Registers completed by 9am. Children arriving after 9am will be recorded as 'L' (Late)
- Children arriving after 9:30am are registered as 'Late after the registers have closed' and this is recorded as 'U', which is an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

Absence from school

There are only two categories of absence from school:

Authorised – approved

Unauthorised – not approved

Only the Headteacher can approve an absence from school. That is the law.

Absence will be recorded using the code recommended by the Department for Education Guidance on School Attendance (Appendix 1)

Requests for absence in term time must be submitted in writing in advance to the Head of School who will treat every request on an individual basis and respond accordingly. The rules about what type of absence is acceptable is set out below

Authorised (approved) absence – types of authorised absence that may be approved:-

- Leave of absence - for bereavement, funeral, wedding

- Medical absence for appointments – at Hospital or Orthodontic appointments. (Non- urgent routine check-up appointments should be made for after school hours or during the school holidays.) Students are expected to be absent for the minimal amount of time and not absent for the whole day. Proof of unavoidable medical appointments in school time should be provided for the school.

- Illness - Students are likely to experience bouts of illness from time to time. Some students will be managing chronic or more serious medical conditions that impact on their attendance. We will support students in these circumstances to ensure they do not miss out on their education.

When a student is identified as having frequent absence for reasons of minor illness, a meeting will be arranged to discuss this with the Head of School.

- Religious observance (e.g. Eid. Normally this will only be one day of authorised absence)

- If a student is excluded from school for a behaviour related incident, this is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised (not approved) absence – types of absence that will not be approved

- Absence due to birthday, shopping for uniform, looking after family members.

- Holiday in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed to by the Headteacher – in line with changes to the law implemented in 2013.

Late arrival to school after the register has closed is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised absence can lead to parents /carers being fined by the Local Authority

All absence – authorised and unauthorised – will be analysed and subject to challenge to ensure that any concern regarding frequency, pattern or validity is acted upon swiftly to ensure safeguarding responsibilities are met

Parents/Carers are expected to contact the school on the first day of absence and each day thereafter informing the school of the reason for absence and the expected date of return to school.

School-specific procedures

Where the school has a concern around attendance, including late arrival, normally a warning letter will be sent to parents. If attendance or punctuality does not improve, a meeting with parents will be arranged. This may involve the family link worker, the school attendance officer, or the headteacher.

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
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
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

Appendix 2 Example Application for Leave of Absence

PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

Taking your child out of school during term time is likely to harm your child's academic progress.

Absences may only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher in EXCEPTIONAL circumstances only. There are very few of these.

Circumstances which are notified to the school or Local Authority **after** a decision has been made by the Headteacher will not be considered. Therefore please be certain to provide details of the exceptional circumstances relating to your application below and attach any supporting evidence.

Please read the attached Local Authority leaflet which explains Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised Leave of Absence during term time.

We advise that you do not book holidays in term time, even if you consider the circumstances to be exceptional, until you have ascertained whether it has been appropriate to give consent in your case.

Name of Child(ren)	
Class	
Date of First Day of Absence	
Date of Return	
Number of Days Requested	

Exceptional Circumstances (reason) for Leave of Absence during term time:

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Signed:_____   Date:_____

Authorised/Not Authorised …………………………………………………… Headteacher

Headteacher comments: …………………………………………………………………………………...….

Appendix 3 Sample Warning Letters

To be provided in the Policy Connect Section