

## The importance of being in school every day

Students must be in the building every day to maximise their potential. Results from our most successful academies demonstrate that students with below 93% attendance gained a P8 score of 0.81 comparative with students who had 97%+ attendance gaining a P8 score of 1.67. Students with attendance below 90% also attained one grade lower at 52.6 compared with students who had 97%+ at 64.6. These figures evidence the importance of attendance and how it significantly affects their final GCSE results.

97% attendance is the Academy's expectation but we are striving for 100% every day. Students under 90% are classed as persistent absentees by the Government and, if all attempts to improve attendance has failed, the case may be sent to the Local Education Authority. They will then investigate the case and potentially prosecute parents for non-attendance at school; this can involve large fines. It is ultimately the parents' responsibility to ensure their child attends school, but we can support those families as much as possible within the academy.

## Challenging attendance

Students should only be staying off school if they are infectious or physically unable to get out of bed. Otherwise, they should come into school and try their best. Often if they have a headache or stomach ache, it is because they are dehydrated. Allow students, in certain circumstances, to carry a water bottle if necessary. If they are still unwell, a member of SLT or mountain rescue will assess and ring for them to be picked up if needed. Parents can bring in medication/painkillers for students to be given in school; they must complete a medication form if this is brought into school.

It is important that we explain to parents that as adults we wouldn't be able to stay off work with a headache and that we are trying to teach students resilience as they progress into the adult life.

If any parent reports the student is doing work at home whilst off or on holiday, please explain that whilst this is good they are revising, it does not replace being in school. Being out of lesson may mean that they miss a key piece of information given by a teacher. They have some of the best teachers in the country and they need to be utilising their knowledge. There are many children that want a place at this academy; it is only fair that the students that have a place are taking full opportunity of the place they have.

If a parent rings and says their child won't be in today, tomorrow or the rest of the week, the parent must ring daily to provide an update as its part of our attendance policy for safeguarding reasons.

Being ill shouldn't be taken as a reason for absence. We ask for specific symptoms, so that we can check for patterns of recurring illness. If parents challenge why we are asking for symptoms, the answer we always use is we need to check symptoms to cross check against other students. For example, 50% of students absent with vomiting would raise an alarm, and we also need to be aware of things like chickenpox /measles in case of pregnant staff or students with low immunity.

## Reasons for illness

Below are common reasons why families may refuse to send their child in. If they give any of these reasons to you on the phone as to why they may have more time off school in the future, here are some explanations you can offer to rationalise why they should be in school:

- **Asthma:** This is an illness they will have to manage for the rest of their life. If the student is struggling with asthma you can suggest a visit to their GP or Asthma nurse around how to manage it, so they can still be in school. It might be that they may not take part in excessive amounts of exercise during PE, or they may walk a little slower up the stairs. At times, they may be allowed a lift pass when their asthma is particularly bad.
- **Hayfever:** this is also an illness they will have to manage for the rest of their life. If the student is struggling, again, suggest a visit to their GP as they may need stronger medication than just off the shelf.
- **Headache or feeling sick:** This is not a reason to stay off school. It is likely that they are dehydrated, so suggest the child drinks plenty of water and has eaten something. They must be in school as they are not actually ill.
- **Temperature or fever:** This is also not a reason to be off school. Encourage the family to ask the child take paracetamol to reduce the temperature. We can ask if their temperature has been taken using a thermometer, and to ring the doctors if they think it is excessively high.
- **Cold:** Again, this is not a reason to stay off school. Students should be encouraged to take paracetamol.



- Expeditions: This absolutely not an excuse to be off school. If parents say their child is recovering as they are tired, or aching, they are not ill. They must be in school or it will be logged as an unauthorised absence. They need to be in school and then encourage students to get an early night when they go home as sleep is our most effective recovery process.
- Covid: this is no longer an authorised reason for absence.

### Students requesting a leave of absence

We always inform parents that we do not authorise any holiday requests and they will be liable to a fine of £60 per child. If they take one day off they will affect their child's learning; even if they complete work whilst absent they will miss key information given by a teacher in class.

Parent should complete a LOA request.

### Contacting families

At times, you may need to call or meet families about students' attendance. Before you call the family, ensure you have the student's attendance data up in front of you. To view a student's absence on Bromcom you must: find the student's details; select the Links icon on the right hand side and click on attendance. Please use the WTD attendance codes so you can identify why the student has been off. Please look for patterns of absence, for example, if they are absent every Monday, is there a lesson student doesn't like on a Monday? Or, is it something a student does on a Sunday or a Monday morning that prohibits them from getting into school? You may also want to liaise with SLT about any particular child that you are calling about, so they can fill you in any additional information about that family and child. This may be that the family are already on a formal monitoring period, or that they have been fined historically if siblings have not attended school.

Below are a few phrases that you may want to use when speaking to families about the importance of attendance.

- Hello, is that XXX's mum?
- How are you today? There's nothing to worry about, XXX is fine. I'm just calling as I have noticed that their attendance has dropped a little recently and I just wanted to catch up about how we can work together to get this back up to what it was in C1.
- XXX's attendance is currently at .....% which is below the academy average as we are striving for 97% attendance, but, realistically, we should all be aiming for 100% attendance.
- We know there is a direct correlation between attendance and attainment, so students that are in the building every day are statistically much more likely to get the top grades in their results.
- Did you know that the students with 97%+ attendance achieve on average 2 grades better across all subjects compared to students with attendance below 95%? That's quite a difference isn't it!
- We don't want XXX to fall short because they weren't in the building every day to maximise their potential.
- They are currently doing really well in their subjects, but we want to ensure this is maintained. This won't necessarily be the case if they are taking more time off school which is not what we want.
- What do you think the reason is as to why they are staying off school?
- I can see that XXX has had five Mondays off in the last eight weeks; why do you think this is? What can I do to support XXX so they can get in on a Monday? Is it a particular lesson or student that is bothering them?
- What do you do think we can do to work together to improve this situation as I know that you really want XXX to do well?
- If XXX continues to fall below 93% attendance they are at significant risk of underperforming in their GCSEs; below 90% attendance they are at severe risk of underperforming and below 97% at risk of underperforming (depending on their attendance figure to date).
- You don't want to put your child in a position where they are missing extensive amounts of learning time. If you take holidays during term time, you are putting your child at risk of severe of underperformance in their Cycle assessments. You also don't want to increase XXX's level of anxiety; if students are out of lessons for a considerable length of time, it becomes more challenging to then step through the door as the anticipation of the returning to school grows each day they are not in. We don't want that to be the case for XXX, as their wellbeing and mental health is everyone's main priority, so what can we do together to mitigate this?
- If XXX's attendance is 96%, they have missed 5.5 school days. If they attend every day between now and the summer holidays, their attendance will reach 97%.



- If their attendance is 95%, they have missed 7 school days. If they attend every day between now and the summer holidays, their attendance will reach 96.2%.
- What can we do, to work together, to ensure that we can boost XXX's attendance? Is there any further support you need from school?
- Thank you so much for all your support, I know that if we work together, we can definitely see an improvement in their attendance which will support your child to get the best set of results they can.
- If you would like, I am happy for us to have a follow up conversation next week in order to keep on top of this situation, and to ensure that, as always, we are supporting one another to get XXX into school.
- I hope you have a lovely evening, thanks again.

## Attendance Monitoring

From week 4 of Cycle 1, every Monday at 1pm, an attendance report is to be run which identifies, for every student in the academy, current levels of attendance. The following actions are then to be completed:

Category	Level	Action	% Attendance	Weeks per year	Days per year	% Chance of attaining 5 Grade 5-9
<b>100% attendance</b>	Level 1	Celebrated publicly during appreciations each half term Recognition expedition	100	0 days	0 days missed	94.8
<b>Excellent attendance</b>	Level 2	Celebrated publicly during appreciations each half term Recognition expedition	98-99.99	3 days	3 days missed	
<b>Risk of underachieving</b>	Level 3	Text home informing family that student attendance has fallen to 97	97-97.99	1 week	5 days missed	74.3
	Level 4	Attendance officer phone home Advisor contact during Dream Team feedback No Dream Team sticker	95-96.99	1.5 weeks	7.5 days missed	
<b>Serious risk of underachieving</b>	Level 5	Meeting with HOY during Dream Team feedback No Dream Team sticker Letter sent home	93-94.99	2.5 weeks	12.5 days missed	60.4
<b>Severe risk of underachieving</b>	Level 6	SLT meets parent. Serious risk letter sent home	90-92.99	3 weeks	15 days missed	34.7
<b>Extreme risk of underachieving</b>	Level 7	SLT attendance meeting. Attendance plan put in place and reviewed 6 weekly	89.99 and below	3.5+ weeks	17.5+ days missed	26.7

## Completing home visits

SLT are most likely to complete home visits, however, the advisor maybe the person the child has the strongest relationship with therefore the most appropriate person to get the child into school. We do not tell parents a home visit will be conducted; if the child is too ill to be at school we would anticipate they will be at home unless they were being cared for by another adult. This in itself could raise safeguarding concerns that you may need to add to CPOMS after the visit has been completed if something did not feel right. Sophie is the DSL, and will advise you on whether the home visit is similar to those that have happen historically with that child. If you have any concerns, no matter how minor, please always log them. The only exception to this is if somebody was off on long term sick following an operation a home visit may not always be appropriate. Please liaise with the Sophie and the mountain rescue team if you are unsure.

Before knocking on the door, we need to be clear and confident about reasons why we are going. Allow SLT to take a lead with the introductions unless you feel confident to address the family.

In most cases, introduce yourself and say you are just coming to see how XXX is, although they may not be well enough to come in for the full day, you wondered if they would be able to, or if it was appropriate, for them to do any work even though not well enough for a full day at school. Ask if there is there any extra support they might need on return to school for example, carrying a water bottle, or a buddy to help with books? Are they worried or concerned about any lessons that we can put a solution in place for by the time they arrive back at school?

It may be helpful to say it is our practice to visit when a child has been absent for three days or more to see if there is anything we can do to support their return to school.

If someone opens the door, always try to get into the property unless it is a child who said they were at home alone. At that time, remain at the property but outside and contact safeguarding at school for advice. You may be instructed to contact the parent; depending on the age of the child, or the nature of the illness, it may not be appropriate for them to be home alone.

We must never leave the property without seeing the child, as, again, this is a safeguarding concern.

During a home visit, it is also useful to take a note of who else was present, their relationships with others in the house and the surroundings.

