

Blackpool Skills Academy

Attendance Policy

Philosophy

Blackpool Skills Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient vocational experience to all students. We believe that if students are to benefit from industry vocational experience, punctuality and good attendance is crucial. As a Centre of learning, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all students. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as soon as possible.

It is the policy of our organisation to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful vocational career. Blackpool Skills Academy will actively promote and encourage 100 percent attendance for all our students.

Blackpool Skills Academy will give a high priority to conveying to students and parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish home -Centre links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems that affect a student's attendance we will investigate, identify, and strive in partnership with parents and students to resolve these problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly, focussed, approach aimed at always returning the student to full attendance.

PRINCIPLES

Blackpool Skills Academy will:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures, registration regulations and education law.
- Complete electronic or paper registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session and inform the students school and or parent if home schooled.
- Complete electronic registers at the beginning of each lesson.
- Stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence.
- Display attendance rates around the Academy and reward good and improved attendance of all students.
- Set targets for attendance.
- Promote the role of the tutor/practitioner in monitoring and rewarding good attendance for students in their tutor group.
- Promote positive staff attitudes to students returning after absence.
- Consult with all members of the organisation and the students school Pupil Welfare Officer (PWO) service in developing and maintaining the centres attendance policy.
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by Senior Leaders.
- Include attendance and related issues in the newsletters sent to parents, students and schools.
- Work towards ensuring that all students feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that if a student is absent, she/he will be missed.
- Have in place procedures that will allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of others.

PROCEDURES

- If no contact is received from the school or parents/carers of an absent student on the first morning of absence, we will contact the parent by telephone and email.
- Weekly attendance meetings will take place between the centre staff and where necessary a school representative to discuss deteriorating attendances or attendances of concern.
- With prolonged absence a safeguarding visit may be necessary and will be undertaken by the a representative of the centre, representative of the students school and/or Police. The aim is to identify and resolve any difficulties that are preventing the student from attending the centre and to safeguard the student. The parents/carers will be made aware of their legal responsibility regarding attendance.
- The centre will in, conjunction with the student's school, initiate an attendance plan for students' whose attendance falls below 95 per cent or they have a pattern of broken weeks. Attendance targets will be set which will be monitored by Tutors with the support of the student's school

Pastoral Team, Attendance Officer and PWO. The parents/carers will be asked for their support in fulfilling the legal requirements regarding centre attendance.

- In the event of a student returning after a long-term absence an individual reintegration meeting will be initiated by the Centre Manager in conjunction with the Tutors and the student's school PWO.
- To address attendance concerns the centre team will adopt strategies that include:
 - o Individual reintegration meeting to agree an effective 'Student Support Plan' for students returning from long term absence.
 - o Initial daily contact with parents to 'iron out' any problems occurring.
 - o Positive rewards integrating into existing rewards scheme.
 - o Establishing a good relationship with parent/student to provide the support needed for 'better' attendance or reintegration programmes.
- Reward good and improved attendance through:
 - o Attendance rewards
 - o Ambition points
 - o Reward lunches
 - o Attendance assemblies

Attendance Interventions

Blackpool Skills Academy, in conjunction with the student's school PWO service, will identify students whose attendance is lower than 95 per cent or missing 10 or more sessions. Appropriate interventions will be considered, and the student's school will lead the possible interventions, such as Fast Track to Positive Outcomes, Penalty Notice Initiative or PWO casework. Where improvement in attendance is not secured court proceedings can be used to prosecute parents and if proven a range of sentences including fines of up to £2500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment. Other disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community sentences can be imposed depending upon the circumstances. Costs may also be imposed. A range of supportive early interventions led by the student's school PWO and supported by Blackpool Skills Academy will seek to improve attendance and avoid the need for prosecution.

Unauthorised leave during term time

In addition to this and in support of the philosophy of this policy, leave during term time will not be routinely authorised. In accordance with Government guidelines Head Teachers and Principals cannot authorise any leave in term time unless in exceptional circumstances and Blackpool Skills Academy will seek full clarification from the student's school. All requests for leave in term time must be submitted to the student's school in writing. The student's school can request the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to parents/carers following leave in term time.

Penalty Notices

These will be considered for:

- persistent* unauthorised late arrival over the school week (* persistent lateness refers to students who arrive after the school/centre register has closed more than 3 times per half term)
- persistent unauthorised absence from school and the centre (please see Appendix 1)

Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence, including holidays.

- Penalty Notices can be applied for when a student has 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a term or 14 sessions (7 days) over two successive terms. Penalty Notices can be applied for when absences cross two academic years (as per the trigger across two consecutive terms)
- Parents may now be issued with up to 3 Penalty Notices in a year
- Penalty notices can be issued when students are in a public place without justification during the first five days of any period of exclusion
- Holidays will be unauthorised for all children. Fixed penalty notices will be utilised for requests of 5 days or more, even if attendance is 100%. Within our organisation we expect parents to utilise clear school closure times for holidays. In very exceptional circumstances, holidays may be authorised by the Headteacher of the student's school and not by Blackpool Skills Academy.

Penalty Notice amendment – covid related.

- Parents/carers please be advised that any requests for leave that include additional absence due to parental choice to isolate prior to the leave will be unauthorised. Such absences will be included within the period of unauthorised leave should a Penalty Notice be requested.
- Other such like absences that are not within the current government guidelines will also be unauthorised.
- If parents/carers feel that there are exceptional circumstances for the absence it will need to be discussed with their child's school attendance lead prior to the absence.

Non routine admissions

Blackpool Skills Academy welcomes non routine admissions and will support the student's integration by:

- Initiating an integration plan and/or referral to support staff as necessary.
- Monitor attendance to ensure the student has settled into the Centre.
- Maintain regular liaison with the student's parents/carers
- Refer to the Centre Manager and the student's school PWO if problems with integration or attendance issues persist.

Punctuality

As both attendance and punctuality are linked to student progress students are expected to arrive at the Centre on time every day, they are required to attend this provision. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class if they are late.

Students who arrive after the register closes but within 10 minutes of doing so will be marked "Late" those that arrive more than 10 minutes after registration will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised, and occasions of lateness should be rare. A student who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved immediately, it can be referred to the student's school Pupil Welfare Service.

Performance

Blackpool Skills Academy aims for the highest standards for attendance and punctuality to enable our students to reach their full potential. When evaluating success, the organisation will consider whether:

- Attendance has improved and whether attendance levels are in line or better than the national average.
- Punctuality has improved.
- Integration plans have been successful.
- The organisation has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the Centre, the student's school, and the local community.
- Students are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within Blackpool Skills Academy.
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in the Centre and linked to industry expectations as part of the students next steps, embedding the need for good punctuality and regular attendance in the workplace and the consequences when not adhered to.

Practice

Blackpool Skills Academy will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately.
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- Regularly analysing attendance data.
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance.
- Liaising closely with each school's PWO.

To ensure the success of this policy every member of Blackpool Skills Academy staff will make attendance and punctuality a priority and convey to the students the importance of their education.

This policy will be reviewed every two years. The next review is due in: September 2025.

APPENDIX 1

PENALTY NOTICES Tackling Poor School Attendance

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment)

Regulations 2013

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 and the Education Act 1996

Information for Parents and Carers

Introduction

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

What is a Penalty Notice?

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. Depending on the circumstances, such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in Court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days. Full payment of the penalty means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted.

What is the cost?

Penalty Notices are issued at £120 however, if paid within 21 days of being issued the cost is £60.

How are they issued?

Penalty Notices will always be issued by post to your home and are issued to each parent individually in respect of each child.

When are they issued?

Blackpool Council considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs, such as:

- unauthorised absence

- truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps).
- parentally condoned absence without good reason.
- persistent late arrival at school.
- unauthorised holidays in term time
- delayed return from an extended holiday without prior school permission; relating to the whereabouts of excluded students (see rationale below)

Rationale – Penalty Notices for whereabouts of excluded pupils

Parents are expected to make arrangements for the supervision of children who have been excluded from either the school or Blackpool Skills Academy on any day which is one of the first five school days to which any exclusion relates. Where the LA is notified that a parent is believed to be failing in their statutory duty to ensure such children are not in a public place, an investigation will be undertaken to establish the basic facts of the case in each instance to determine whether an offence is likely to have been committed.

It is expected that in the first instance parents would be reminded of their duty under this legislation and warned as to future behaviour, but subsequently a Penalty Notice could be issued where the criteria set out in the relevant code of conduct have been met. However, where a child is reported on more than one occasion during any single episode of exclusion, the LA will only consider a Penalty Notice for any one offence.

Where there is evidence of repeat episodes which suggest parenting is a significant contributory factor to the pupil's continuing behaviour concerns, schools will be expected to have considered/offered a parenting contract for behaviour before the LA will consider more than three requests for Penalty Notices in any one academic year.

In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of five school days lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or 7 school days lost to unauthorised absence over two consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is considered. The Authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement action. However, school attendance is of such importance to all of us that the Authority will use these powers if it is felt that it can secure a child's schooling.

Is a warning given?

In cases of unauthorised absence and persistent lateness, parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Notice being issued. This will tell you the extent of your child's absences and give you 15 school days in which to bring about an improvement. In that time, your child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

In cases of an unauthorised holiday, warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that in some cases, Penalty Notices may be issued without a warning.

Is there an appeal process?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a Penalty Notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning, you can make representations should you wish.

How do I pay?

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalments is not an option with Penalty Notices. No reminders will be sent.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty, but my child is still missing school?

Not for the period stated in the Penalty Notice since payment of the penalty discharges your liability for that period. However, it could be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Notice, depending on the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school.

What happens if I do not pay?

You have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty in full, after which the Authority is required in most instances to commence proceedings in the local Magistrates' Court for the original offence of failing to ensure your child attends school regularly. If proven, this can attract a range of sentences including fines up to £2,500 and/or up to three months imprisonment. Other disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences can be imposed depending upon the circumstances. Costs may also be imposed.

Can I get help if my child is not attending school regularly?

Yes, Lancashire Children's Services, Blackpool Children's Services and/or your child's school will give you advice and support if you need help to secure an improvement in your child's attendance. It is very important that you speak with the school or your Local Authority at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's school attendance.