

# Attendance and Punctuality policy

Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College



**Approved by:** Full Governing Body

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## **Introduction**

At Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College we believe every student should strive for excellent attendance and punctuality to make the most of the opportunities that we have to offer. We believe that excellent attendance is vitally important for successful learning. Excellent attendance and punctuality also develop key life skills which are essential for success in the world beyond our college. **It has been proven that attainment can be closely linked to attendance.**

We rely on our partnership with parents and carers to ensure all students make every reasonable attempt to be in college every day and on time. It is a parent / carers legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends college in a regular and committed manner. The Education Act 1996 states that parents and carers must ensure that their child receives a suitable education. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at college is a parent / carers legal responsibility and permitting absence from college without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. In support of this the following information outlines our commitments in ensuring that attendance at Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College continues to be our highest priority.

## **Aims of our attendance policy**

- To ensure excellent levels of student attendance and punctuality
- To continue to improve the attendance of all students with a focus on vulnerable students
- To establish an ethos of 'attendance matters' through proactive strategies to promote excellent attendance and punctuality
- To work closely with parents / carers to fulfil our obligations to our students by placing high priority on attendance and punctuality of all students
- To ensure procedures within the college identify and follow up all absences and patterns of absence at our earliest opportunity
- To have a clear and consistently applied escalation process whilst understanding every student is unique
- To continuously develop the colleges celebration of excellent attendance and punctuality

## **Definitions of types of absence & legal sanctions**

Every half-day absence from college must be classified by the college (not by the parents / carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Therefore information about the cause of any absence is always required from parents / carers.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from college for a very good reason e.g. illness or emergencies. The college understands that some hospital and or medical appointments will fall within the college day but we ask for support in trying to make non urgent appointments out of college time. Only the college can authorise an absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the college does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to The Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Examples include refusal to attend college, birthdays, shopping trips or looking after siblings.

## **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

The Government classes a student as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their education across the college year for any reason. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents / carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any student that is seen to have reached the status of 'Persistently Absent' or is at risk of moving towards it is given priority and parents / carers will be informed of this. We expect parental cooperation and support in improving student attendance. If we do not have full support and engagement, we will regard this as a safeguarding and welfare concern. Students are tracked and monitored carefully by our Attendance Officer and pastoral systems. Parents

/carers of students who are persistent absentees are likely to be subject to legal proceedings. We also reserve the right to make changes to a student's option choices and courses studied if they are persistently absent. This will always be in their best interest.

## **Procedures**

### ***If a student is absent parents / carers must;***

- Contact college via; Synergy, our mainline 01905 352615 option 1 or our Attendance Officer 01905 352615 extension 209 before 8:45 a.m. on the first day of absence and every day thereafter. Even if contact has been made with another member of staff within our SEN or Pastoral Team, parents must still use one of the above methods of communication.

### ***If a student is absent the College will;***

- Check our attendance line and Synergy and log the reason for absence
- Telephone or text parents / carers and other contacts if we have not had contact and a reason from the first day of absence
- Where appropriate carry out a home visit after three days if we are unable to establish contact and / or are concerned, this is to safeguard our student
- If a student is deemed to be absent for no real genuine reason we may come and collect the student and bring them to college ourselves (reference our home visit policy)
- We may request support from the police if we are unable to establish contact
- Not set work, if students are well enough to work at home they should be in college unless there are exceptional circumstances involved
- Always expect that students catch up on missed work and homework, unless there are exceptional circumstances
- Liaise with CCAS (Children Who Cannot Attend School Team) in supporting students who are medically unable to attend college in line with the College policy on students who are unable to attend school for medical reasons.

## **Alternative provision**

### ***Students with health needs who cannot attend school***

Any absence that is not agreed will be coded as unauthorised. Where there is no clear medical evidence that a support plan should continue past the agreed end date then the Headteacher will code all absence as unauthorised and will refer to the EIS, The Education Investigation Service. Students who cannot attend school for health reasons may require a range of support agencies. Blessed Edward Oldcorne will plan to use on-site provision and signpost the parent to external agencies to support the student. Any students attending MET will be coded as educated offsite during the time they attend MET and as other authorised circumstances when they are not timetabled to attend MET. Parents must notify College that their child is at home on days when students are not timetabled or required to be in MET. The Attendance Officer will check student's attendance at MET daily by liaising with MET.

### ***Students attending Aspire Academy***

Students attending Aspire Academy are dual registered. Blessed Edward Oldcorne receives daily registers from Aspire Academy and monitors them, acting accordingly.

### ***Students attending another school via a managed move***

Students attending another school as a managed move will have a fixed period of usually 10 weeks to attend. During this time, they will be dual registered. The host school will remain in regular contact with Blessed Edward Oldcorne regarding the student's attendance. Blessed Edward Oldcorne will follow up poor attendance in the usual manner set out in our managed move policy. It is important to be aware that poor attendance and / or punctuality could result in the managed move failing.

## **Child Missing in Education Procedure**

The college monitors attendance daily. If after three consecutive days of absence parents / carers have not contacted the college a home visit will take place. If a student is considered vulnerable this home visit may take place sooner. We will always try to contact parents / carers by exploring all avenues available to us. Through professional curiosity we contact siblings' schools, neighbours and visit workplaces for example. This may be out of usual school hours. If we have increasing concerns, we will contact 101.

If the child does not attend college for the seven days after the home visit and parents /carers are not communicating with the college then a report will be made to the Local Authority Child Missing Education Team via [cme@worschildrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:cme@worschildrenfirst.org.uk) 01905 843204

## **Specific Safeguarding Issues Children Missing Education (CME) (safeguard response to children who go missing from education)**

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a good education which will help them shape their own futures. Children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) later on in life. Certain groups of children are more likely to be affected by the factors listed above and include:

- Pupils at risk of harm/neglect
- Children who have been the subject of a Child Protection Plan
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Gypsy, Roma and travelling families
- Children who have experienced domestic violence or other adverse family circumstances
- Children with special educational needs
- Children who have had attendance difficulties or cease to attend school
- Families of armed forces
- Missing children/runaways
- Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System
- Parents Responsibilities

We recognise that a child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. We will follow the West Midlands Safeguarding Procedures as required by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) and take account of guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE). These procedures can be viewed at <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/>. Staff are made aware of these procedures at induction and through our Safeguard response to children who go missing from education document. If parents wish to view this it is in our Safeguarding policy appendix 3.

We will make every attempt to obtain more than one emergency contact number for each child registered at the school to ensure we are able to make contact with a responsible adult when a child missing education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern. Parents and carers should always ensure that we have up to date contact numbers. Ideally, we should have up to five individuals we can contact in the event of an unexplained absence or emergency. It is a parental responsibility to provide this information.

We will ensure that we inform the local authority when removing a child from the school role at standard and non-standard transition points in line with the DfE guidance on Children Missing Education.

We will ensure that we follow these procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future. **We will ensure that we report children missing education to the CME team with regular updates.**

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the college a home visit will take place. If the child does not attend college for the seven days after the home visit and parents /carers are not communicating with the college then a report will be made to the Local Authority Child Missing Education Team. Parents and carers should always ensure that we have up to date contact numbers. Ideally, we should have up to five individuals we can contact in the event of an unexplained absence or emergency. It is a parental responsibility to provide this information.

### **Failure to ensure regular attendance**

Every Student is expected to attend college 100% of the time unless the absence is authorised by the Headteacher, Attendance team or pastoral team. As a school we aim to meet with parents and carers when a student's attendance falls below our expectations for no reason deemed valid and genuine. When necessary we may; set targets to help improve attendance, liaise with other agencies or request medical evidence for some future absences. We will unauthorise absences if we feel they are not deemed genuine. We request that parents/carers provide as much information as possible as a decision to authorise or not authorise the absence is made by the Head teacher. We may contact you for more information to support the absence. You may be required to provide evidence to support the absence from your GP or other medical professional. Medical evidence can take the form of – prescriptions, appointment card or letter from the GP/medical professional. The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Worcestershire County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from college and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount. The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must consider a prosecution against the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular college attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996. Penalty notices are issued per parent/carer per child, so a family of 2 parents and 2 children will receive 4 penalty notices.

### **Punctuality**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day, they miss spending valuable time with their Form Tutor and will fail to get vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also cause disruption. Students deliberately missing form time or assembly time will be sanctioned.

### **How we manage lateness:**

- The college day starts at 8:50 a.m. and we expect students to be in their form room or in Assembly prior to this at 8.45am
- All entrances to college close at 8:50 a.m. except the main front gate where students will be recorded on the late document and receive a sanction that day
- If a student arrives after the register has closed at 9.30am they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents / carers could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if a punctuality problem persists
- If a student has a persistent late record parents / carers will be asked to meet with our Attendance Officer
- Students who arrive late without good reason deemed by us will receive a break or lunchtime detention that day. Failure to attend this will result in an SLT after college detention for 1 hour
- It is important to note that a proportion of our students travel by college bus services and we recognise they are sometimes unavoidably late. We would not detain a student for this lateness

### **Rewards**

We have several attendance rewards in order to promote the importance of attendance and punctuality and our ethos that 'college attendance matters.' Below are some examples;

- All staff reward good attendance and punctuality daily through praise and encouragement
- Weekly assemblies promote attendance both individual and groups
- Students with 100% attendance for each week will be entered into the attendance prize draw box for a prize

periodically

- Attendance officer to send texts/certificates to students who have improved their attendance weekly
- Half termly - Attendance officer to send letters/certificates home for students with 100% attendance
- Termly – students with 100% attendance are awarded using the colleges reward system
- Yearly – students with 100% attendance are often invited on a reward trip assuming their conduct is good too
- Students who have previously had poor attendance/punctuality and make significant improvements following intervention will be acknowledged accordingly

### **Holidays in term time**

**Holidays in term time are actively discouraged by the College and Worcestershire Children First.**

Taking holidays in term time will affect a student's education as much as any other absence. We expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children away in college time. Remember that any savings that may be made by taking a holiday in college time are offset by the cost to a student's education and may result in a fine of up to £120 pounds being issued.

**There is no automatic entitlement to any time off in term time. An application for leave of absence must be submitted at least 6 weeks prior to the requested date. Application for leave of absence is unlikely to be granted if the students attendance is below 95%.**

The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence or holiday in term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where an absence is authorised by the Headteacher he/ she will determine the number of days a student can be absent. Please note;

- Where an absence is approved it will be registered as authorised
- Where an absence is declined it will be registered as unauthorised (if taken)
- Each request for absence will be judged on a case by case basis
- Any leave of absence must be requested and agreed by the Headteacher 6 weeks in advance of the absence and before tickets are booked or travel arrangements are made

In deciding whether to grant the request for leave of absence the following will be considered;

- Overall pattern of attendance
- Our examination and assessment calendar
- Length, destination and purpose of the leave and whether it is likely to be a rare event in the life of the student
- Family circumstances

Should the college decide to grant leave of absence but, the student **does not return to college at the time he / she was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and, no information is available to the college to justify the continuing absence or make known the whereabouts of the student, **this further absence will be reported to Worcester Childrens First and deemed a safeguarding concern.**

A students name can be removed from roll permanently if the student has been granted a leave of absence and after the absence;

- He / she has not returned by the agreed date
- He / she has continued to be absent for a further twenty college days **with no agreed return date or communication**
- The Headteacher is not satisfied that this is because he / she is ill or the absence is unavoidable
- Before a student is removed from the college roll their case will first be referred to the Education Investigation Service

**If a student is not present at the beginning of a college term we cannot guarantee that a place will remain available for them in college.**

Where necessary, and in line with WCC guidelines, should the College decide **not to grant leave of absence** and parents still take their student out of college, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** which may be subject to a Holiday Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per student. If not paid within 21 days, this fine increases to £120 per parent per student. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings. This fine will be issued to both student's parents e.g. Student A is taken from college without authorisation from the Headteacher. This equates to Parent 1 being fined £60 and Parent 2 being fined £60. Should there be two students involved, Parent 1 is fined £120 and Parent 2 is fined £120 and so on if more students are taken out of college without authorisation.

### **Leavers**

If your child is leaving our college (other than at the end of Year 11) parents and carers are asked to give the college comprehensive information about their plans. This includes a date of a move and new address and telephone numbers. As a college we also need to be informed of your child's new school and a start date that has been agreed. This should be submitted to the Headteacher in writing.

When a student leaves our college and we do not have information about where they have gone this child is considered to be a 'Child Missing from Education' and the local authority have a legal duty to follow this up and investigate. Please see the 'Child Missing from Education' section earlier in this policy. This includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies to try and locate the child. By liaising with us these investigations can be avoided.

### **Elective Home Education**

When parents contact the college about elective home education they will be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher. At this meeting the Headteacher will reassure parents that the college is a safe place and look for alternative ways to address the issues being raised without resorting to the student being taken off roll. At no stage of this conversation is home education ever discussed as a solution to the child's issues and the college does not engage in discussions with parents where home education is recommended. If parents still wish to pursue EHE then they will be advised to contact the EHE team on 01905 846060 or [electiveHomeEducation@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:electiveHomeEducation@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk) who will give the parents further information on the expectations of parents. Parents will be informed that this will enable them to make a fully informed decision.

### **Conclusion**

This policy highlights the importance of attendance and punctuality for all our students at Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College. Our college is committed to working towards our attendance targets and milestones in striving towards the goal of 100% attendance for all. We consistently use a whole college approach to support and encourage parents/carers and students to attend college every day. We operate an open-door policy and will always address individual needs to the best of our ability. In return we expect the support of both parents/carers and students in achieving the best possible levels of attendance.

Please note that this policy links to the following other relevant policies, procedures and documents.

- Child Protection
- Children with health needs who cannot attend school
- SEN

- Supporting students with medical conditions
- Alternative provision
- Covid-19 risk assessment
- Home visit policy