



## Birchfield Independent Girls School

### **POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE**

Good attendance and punctuality are essential if students are to gain maximum benefit from the full curriculum that Birchfield Independent Girls School has to offer. Our aim will always be for our pupils to obtain 100% attendance where possible.

Every member of the school community carries a responsibility in improving the attendance rates of students. Every aspect of the provision on offer must be of high quality and appropriate to the needs of the student. Therefore, Birchfield Independent Girls School strives to achieve a high percentage attendance rate by provision of:

- High quality lessons with appropriate resources and technology
- A positive, inclusive culture
- Systems to deal with bullying and prejudice
- Celebration of the successes of all members of the school community
- A curriculum that is differentiated and meets the needs of individual students
- An excellent range of extra-curricular activities
- A caring environment that is sensitive to the needs of the individual
- Opportunities for students to take responsibility and feel ownership of the school
- Good communication channels with parents
- A student mentor to guide students through difficult times
- Excellent relationships with other agencies
- A member of staff with responsibility to monitor attendance and follow up issues
- A well-kept and maintained building and environment
- Facilities for students at break and lunchtime

#### **Methods to Encourage Attendance**

We consistently reinforce the fact that regular attendance improves academic success. Our active system of rewards ensures that students are encouraged to attend, as well as enjoy the praise that accompanies good attendance. Each month, the class with the best attendance is displayed on the 'Best Class Attendance Board'. Individual attendance trophies and certificates and money vouchers are awarded to students at the Annual Awards Day, who possess 100 percent attendance at the end of the academic year. This information is also published on the school newsletter/bulletin, every term.

We recognise that, alone, very few of these initiatives would raise attendance significantly and believe that we all must ensure that the standard of education are consistently high at Birchfield Independent Girls School.

We intend to take every measure possible to maintain and improve upon our present high level of student attendance. We follow the codes produced by the Education Authority for the completion of registers and their advice on any updated matters of law.

## **Curriculum as a Means to Raising Attendance**

Our curriculum is varied and differentiated at Key-stage 4 and designed to meet the needs of all our students. We also encourage work experience placements, allocating each student suitable work establishments.

We believe that through proactive intervention, students can be encouraged to attend school and work through their problems, rather than truant and involve themselves in further problems from temptations outside of the school environment.

## **Informing Parents**

Excellent communications with parents also assist good attendance of students. We follow up all absences on the same day – where parents have not contacted school. The administration investigates any unannounced absences by contacting the parents/guardians of the pupils and anomalies are also seen to.

Please also see the school *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* on how the school manages children missing education.

## **Holidays - Attendance Guidance, Family Breaks and Extended Trips Overseas during Term Time**

Parents must make sure their child gets a full-time education that meets their needs; therefore we do not encourage them to take their children out of school on holidays during term-time. According to set regulations by the Government, all head teachers are to prohibit pupils' term-time leave from school, except where an application has been made in advance and that the circumstances or reasons for leave are acceptable. Exceptional significant family events or circumstances will need to be considered individually. Leave for religious observance i.e. Hajj would be considered.

Parents and pupils are encouraged to use their school breaks for any such commitments.

Parents of pupils taking leave of their child without permission and exceptional circumstances risk losing their child's place in the school, resulting in a re-application made to the school. The school also follows the 'Fast Track to Attendance' procedure with the Birmingham City Council to address unauthorised absences.

*The Request for Leave Of Absence during Term Time and for Overseas Leave for Exceptional Circumstances* form must be filled in before taking extended leave and the headteacher is to be given two weeks to consider the application and respond. Should a parent take leave without the authorisation of the head teacher, this will be classed as an authorised attendance on part of the pupil and will be reported to the Fast Track to Attendance penalty notice department.

## **Parent Contact with School**

Parents/guardians are obliged to fill in a request for leave using the relevant form provided by the school (see Appendix), when they are intending to take pupils out in term-time. They must do this before making any booking and allow two weeks for the head teacher to look into and respond to the application.

Should a school not agree to grant leave and parents take their child on holiday regardless, then this will be counted as unauthorised absence (truancy). The school may consider issuing a Penalty Fine of £60 for this period of unauthorised absence.

Parents are asked to contact the school when their child is unable to attend the school for whatever reason. The students' planners will be used for these messages from parents when the child returns. Only the school can approve absences, not the parents. The Head teacher works closely with tutors with attendance concerns to be addressed.

### **Unauthorised Absence (truancy)**

The law states that parent/carer(s) must ensure that their child regularly attends the school where they are registered. Should your child fail to attend school regularly legal action may be taken against you.

**Under the terms of the education related provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, parent/carer(s) may be issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 if:**

- You fail to ensure that your child attends school, or other education provision regularly
- You allow your child to take leave of absence in term time without a school's authorisation
- Your fail to return your child to school on an agreed date after a leave of absence
- Your child is found out of school, without permission, on two Truancy Sweeps, within the same school year
- Your child persistently arrives late for school after the register is closed

If the fine is not paid by the end of a 42 day period parents will be taken to court under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

The school works closely with the Pupil Tracking Team at Birmingham City Council for Children missing education

### **Lateness**

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure their children arrive at school on time. Lateness can disrupt the learning of others and can result in a pupil feeling greater stress and achieving poorer outcomes.

90 percent attendance means that the child is absent from lessons for the equivalent of one half day every week. Over five years this is the equivalent of about one half of a school year. Research shows a close link between attendance at school and a child's achievement. Being late adds up to a loss of learning and all time out of school affects learning and achievement for both pupils. Parents also must bring their children to school on time to avoid lateness. If a pupil arrives after registration has closed the absence will be recorded as unauthorised for that session.

<b>Minutes late per day</b>	<b>Equivalent of missing</b>
5 Minutes	3.4 school days a year
10 Minutes	6.9 school days a year
15 Minutes	10.3 school days a year
20 Minutes	13.8 school days a year
30 Minutes	20.7 school days a year

If a pupil arrives after registration has closed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised for that session. If this persists legal action, in the form of a Penalty Notice or Prosecution under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 may follow.

### **Attendance Procedures**

Please contact the school by phone, text or email for any absences and reason for the absence. If the reason is acceptable, it will be authorised by the head teacher. Please take notice of the following in regards to pupil absent from school due to illness:

Day 1	Contact School - Admin
Day 2	Contact School - Admin
Day 3	A medical note be provided, otherwise the head teacher will not be able to authorise the absence.

Parents will be called for a meeting with the attendance officer if the attendance is not authorised. Persistent unauthorised absence will be dealt with through the Birmingham City Council Fast-Track to Attendance procedure. Should parents fail to follow the school's attendance policy, their child may risk losing their place at the school.

**The school reserves the right to take students off its admission register should parents fail to cooperate with the school's attendance policy.**



## **Request for Leave of Absence during Term Time and for Overseas Leave for Exceptional Circumstances**

Birchfield Independent Girls School complies with the terms of the 1998 Data Protection Act, and any subsequent relevant legislation, to ensure personal data is treated in confidence, in a manner that is fair and lawful.

### **Notice to Parents/Carers**

Dear Parents/Carers,

The Department for Education amended the regulations and guidance in relation to absences in term time. There is no automatic right to take your child out of school during term-time, however the school does allow 10 days absence on Exceptional Circumstances as extended leave.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, government legislation no longer allows head teachers to authorise requests for leave for pupils to be taken out of school unless there are considered to be *exceptional circumstances*. In determining whether or not an absence in such circumstances can be authorised, it is for the head teacher to determine the number of days a child can be away from school *if* the leave is granted. If you consider that your request falls into this category you will need to complete the attached form. A response will be sent to you within 14 days, this may also include request for further information to verify 'exceptional circumstance' before the application to be considered in full. If the absence is not considered to be an

exceptional circumstance, and you nevertheless take your child out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in line with Department for Education Guidance.

**In the case of an unauthorised absence the school will follow the ‘Spotlight on Attendance’ procedures as outlined by the Local Authority which may lead to court actions.**

**All requests must be completed on the attached form - letters will not be accepted. This should be returned to the school a minimum of 10 days before the start of the absence.**

You will no doubt be aware that time away from school will have a direct and negative impact on your child’s educational progress. The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. You may consider some absences to be educational but your child will still miss out on the teaching that their classmates will receive. Pupils returning from an absence are also unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed. Teachers then have to give more time to help individual pupils catch up on missed work. This poses a potential risk of the under achievement of other pupils in the class. This is something we *all* have a responsibility to avoid.

I hope you will support our efforts to raise attendance and attainment at our school.

Thank you,

Mrs R.Mogra  
Head Teacher



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**Request for Leave of Absence during Term Time and  
for Overseas Leave for Exceptional Circumstances**

Pupils’ Name.....

Year Group.....

First Day of Absence.....

Last day of absence.....

Total school days missed.....

Exceptional Circumstances are as follows:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Evidence of Exceptional Circumstances: YES / NO

I confirm that the child(ren) will be staying at the following address during the absence period: (Please give the full address of the residence of the child and parent/guardian during the period of absence)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Your daughter’s place at the school will only be reserved if the full fees for the term have been paid for before going on leave. It is understood that if she does not return by the agreed date, there will no longer be a place for her at the school.

I understand that if the absence request is unauthorised, the school will follow the procedures of the Birmingham City Council ‘Spotlight on Attendance’ from which there will be a fine issued. In addition, there may no longer be a place for your daughter at the school.

Name of parent / guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full term fees paid: Yes / No      Finance Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Finance signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorised by Headteacher: Yes / No

**Headteacher signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE ALLOW TWO WEEKS FOR THE SCHOOL TO RESPOND TO THIS REQUEST.**

**This document was produced January 2022 and is due to be reviewed January 2023.**

Signed (Chair)..... Date.....

Print Name..... Date of next review.....

Headteacher.....