



GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST



THE BRAMBLE ACADEMY

Attendance policy

Approved by: Panayiota Theodosiou **Date:** September 2023

Last reviewed on: September 2023

Next review due by: August 2024

Introduction

The Bramble Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils. We believe it is extremely important for pupils to attend regularly and on time. This will give them the best opportunity to progress and succeed at school.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent / carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason may result in prosecution.

At The Bramble Academy we:

- provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the Academy feel secure and valued.
- expect students to arrive on time every day.
- will support parents in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.
- believe leave of absence should not be taken during term-time. We will not authorise requests for leave of absence during term-time, except in exceptional/ unavoidable circumstances.

How to notify the Academy of an absence

If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or unavoidable circumstances, please contact the academy on each day of absence by:

- calling the school on 01623 635928
- emailing the school office on office@brambleacademy.org
- reporting through the school's Class Dojo account

Please inform us of any planned absence in advance, this includes unavoidable medical appointments during the school day.

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the academy in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. This can be done using the 'Application for exceptional absence in term time (Holiday form)' available from the school office.

1. Aim

Ensuring all pupils have high attendance is a key priority of the academy. Pupils are entitled to a full-time education and we know that pupils with high attendance do better at school than those with high absence rates. We also know that absence can be a sign of other risks in a young person's life.

The aim of this document is to set out how we create and maintain a positive culture that supports and values good attendance. It includes how we:

- › Promote good attendance and punctuality
- › Follow up absences
- › Communicate and work with families to reduce absence
- › Monitor absences and analyse patterns of absence
- › Work with local partners to support high attendance and reduce absence

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of GAT's Attendance Policy. The Trust policy details the relevant legislation and guidance documents. In particular, this policy carefully follows DfE guidance in this area.

Our work on attendance is linked closely to our approaches to safeguarding and behaviour.

3. How we promote a culture of high expectations in attendance and punctuality

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. At The Bramble Academy we work with parents and pupils to understand the potential barriers and provide the additional support that some pupils might need. Our Pupil Engagement Lead meets regularly with pupils and parents to build partnerships with families, listening to them and providing support for pupils that have had absences to enable them to successfully reintegrate into school.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Write or phone you if there are concerns with regards to attendance. (Early communication is always best).
- Include within the pupil's annual reports to parents an attendance breakdown for the year.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying and rewarding class achievements.
- Award a class attendance trophy in assembly on a weekly basis.

If children have been absent from school, we will work to ensure gaps in learning are closed as soon as possible.

4. Our expectations of attendance and punctuality

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:30am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:40am and will be kept open until 8:50am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:55pm and will be kept open until 1:05pm.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at a school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, this means their child must attend every day the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the academy.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- › Make sure their child attends every day on time
- › Contact the academy on 01623 635928 or emailing the school office on office@brambleacademy.org report their child's absence before 8:40am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- › Provide the academy 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

Pupils are expected to:

- › Attend school every day on time

Class teachers are responsible for:

recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the office by 8:40am and 12:55pm.

The academy admin and office staff will:

- › Take calls from parents/ carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the academy system
- › Transfer calls from parents to the attendance lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

The attendance officer is responsible for:

- › Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- › Providing regular attendance reports to staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the principal
- › Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Andrew English and can be contacted via 01623 635928 or emailing the school office on office@brambleacademy.org .

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- › Leading attendance across the academy
- › Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- › Having an oversight of data analysis
- › Evaluating and monitoring processes
- › 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
- › Working with local partners to implement bespoke strategies to improve attendance for those children with persistent absence or severe absence

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Panayiota Theodosiou and can be contacted via 01623 635928 or emailing the school office on office@brambleacademy.org .

The principal is responsible for:

- › Implementation of this policy at the academy
- › Monitoring academy-level absence data and reporting it to the trust
- › Monitoring the impact of processes and attendance strategies
- › Monitoring the impact of work with local partners to improve attendance in identified cases
- › Working with local partners when formal procedures such as parental contracts, supervision orders and penalty notices are required

5. Recording attendance

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

It will mark whether every pupil is:

- › Present
- › Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- › Absent
- › Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will use the DfE codes to detail the attendance and absences.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by **8:40am** or as soon as practically possible by [emailing or calling the academy staff]

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the academy may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the academy in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Please inform us of any planned absence in advance, this includes unavoidable medical appointments during the school day.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. This can be done using the 'Application for exceptional absence in term time (Holiday form)' available from the school office.

Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the academy can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- › Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- › After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they miss out on learning opportunities and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Children who arrive late to school miss out on the Principal's morning greeting and may find it more difficult to start the day positively. Late arriving pupils disrupt lessons: it can also create anxiety for the child which in turn may create further absence. The school will contact parents/carers of pupils for whom lateness and punctuality is identified as an issue to work with them to help address the issue.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend does not, or stops attending without reason, the academy will:

- › Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the academy cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the academy may conduct a home visit.
- › Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- › Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- › Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the academy will consider involving an education welfare officer or similar.

Reporting to parents/ carers

The academy will regularly monitor attendance and inform parents about their child's attendance should this be under 96%. A meeting with parents/carers may also be set up in order to improve attendance and identify any barriers to good attendance.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The principal will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as: as but not limited to:

- Death or serious illness of a parent or sibling.
- Return of a parent from active service (forces).
- Approved public performances.

The academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. Evidence may be required to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the academy will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the academy, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Family holidays should not be taken in term time as they damage progress and continuity of learning. We will not authorise any holidays, unless in very exceptional circumstances.

Legal sanctions

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or not appropriate (such as an unauthorised holiday in term time), the local authority can take forward legal intervention to formalise support and / or enforce attendance. This includes fines or a penalty notice. The arrangements for these procedures are found <https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/127161/code-of-conduct-for-penalty-notices.pdf> The Local Authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher or Principal, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice

7. How we monitor attendance

The Bramble Academy will

- Share attendance data daily with the DfE, LA and Trust.
- Engage with termly Target Support Meetings with the LA School Attendance Support Team.
- Engage with locality based Attendance Networks (facilitated by LA).
- Work with Social Care, Police and Health as Attendance Partners.
- Deliver Home Visits and Parent Contract meetings as necessary.

- Lead and participate with EHA and TAF with an Attendance Improvement lens.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and implement effective strategies.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance.
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.
- Where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as home visits, an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.
- Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school compares attendance data to the national average, and shares this with the governing body.

Monitoring attendance

The academy will:

- › Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the academy and at an individual pupil level
- › Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term by the trust and DfE and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The academy will compare attendance data to the trust and national average.

Analysing attendance

The academy will:

- › Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- › Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The academy will:

- › Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other academy leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

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.

The academy will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the academy (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, at risk of or persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance such as Early Help,

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the trust or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Principal. At every review, the policy will be approved by the academy's Education Director.