

H7. Attendance Policy 2024-25

This policy and guideline is for parents of BIST children and for BIST staff. It outlines the processes that must be followed with regards to attendance/absence at school and punctuality. High levels of attendance and punctuality are important in a child's education for a number of reasons. The most obvious of these is so that a student does not miss the learning opportunities offered at school. Evidence from the UK and other international schools clearly states that low levels of attendance (below 90%) have a detrimental effect on overall progress and crucially on examination success. Universities and schools that a student may move on to on leaving BIST routinely ask about attendance and punctuality. BIST asks this of the schools that our students come from as part of the admissions process. Poor attendance is often a reason for admissions rejections at school and university level. Attendance and punctuality are also good habits that students should develop and carry on into their life after education.

It is very important to state, however, that we do protect our community from infectious diseases. Even with all the best practice demonstrated in schools such as BIST to reduce transmission, schools are a place where children do inevitably 'share' diseases. We do, therefore, ask for parents to minimise risk by keeping children at home when they do have infectious diseases that are likely to spread through our community. Advice can be found on the UK Health Security Agency [website](#) on managing infectious diseases and this useful [poster](#) from Northern Ireland's Public Health Agency. Parents can also contact school for advice on infectious diseases. We would encourage all parents with a child who is unwell to keep school informed of any symptoms and diagnoses as soon as possible so that we can track infections and keep other parents informed of any risks.

Reported levels of attendance

Attendance is reported on each half term throughout the academic year. Attendance at the following percentages can be classified as::

- 97.5% or better - Excellent
- 95% to 97.4% - Good
- 90% to 94.9% - Improvement needed
- 80% to 89.9% - Unsatisfactory
- Below 80% - Poor

Nb: 97.5% equates to 1 day absence every 8 weeks, 95% equates to 1 day absence every 4 weeks, 90% equates to 1 day absence every 2 weeks, 80% equates to 1 day absence every 1 week.

Levels of punctuality

Punctuality is not reported on in school reports as we know that punctuality is mostly out of the control of the student. Please note that as the majority of BIST students are brought to school by parents, carers or drivers, we understand that lateness to school is not usually the fault of the student. However, punctuality is important and a habit that students do need to adopt for future life. If there are sustained problems with a child's punctuality, parents will be contacted.

Action on levels of attendance and punctuality that fall below satisfactory

If a student's levels fall below Satisfactory i.e. 90%, the school may request a meeting to discuss the issue with parents.

Long term versus sporadic absence

It is understandable that children may suffer a serious illness that means otherwise good or excellent attendance is marred by a single block of illness-related absence. Such absences are viewed differently to sporadic absence.

Coding of absence

The school's official records code absence as authorised or unauthorised. The table below outlines the different absences in each category. (Note: Students on school trips are counted as present).

Authorised Absences	Unauthorised Absences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Illness for 1 or 2 days that are explained in writing (letter or email) by parents.• Illness of 3 or more days that are explained by a doctor's note or letter.• Medical appointments when school is notified.• Close family member weddings, christenings (or the equivalent) and funerals if school is notified.• Bereavement leave for close family members.• Compassionate leave due to family circumstances.• Religious observance for recognised events.• Participation in approved sporting or similar events if school is notified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Illness for 1 or 2 days that are not explained in writing (letter or email) by parents.• Illness of 3 or more days that are not explained by a doctor's note or letter.• Medical appointments when school is not notified.• Family holidays and other 'family reasons' not specified in the Authorised Absences list..• Any absences when the school has not been notified in writing (letter or email).

Procedures for parents informing school of absences

School should be informed beforehand of any absence for which pre-notification is possible. This includes family holidays even though they remain coded as unauthorised absences. An email outlining the circumstances and dates should be sent to the student's class teacher or mentor. Class teachers and mentors will inform the school administration.

If a student is unable to attend school and it has not been possible to inform school beforehand, parents should telephone school or email the class teacher/mentor as soon as possible.

If school is not pre-informed of an absence, the school office will telephone parents of students who are absent on the first day of such absence.

Procedures for lateness

Students arriving at school before 8.42am should report straight to their class or mentor group and the classteacher/mentor will change their absent mark to a late mark.

Students arriving at school after 8.42am should go first to the office to collect a *Tardy Slip*. The online school register is closed at 8.45am, so the office must be informed to change the coding of absence to that of late.

Adopted: September 2018

Reviewed: June 2024