



Bristol Free School
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Headteacher: Mrs S. King

24 October 2023

Dear Parent/Carers

Re: Student Attendance and Lateness 2023-2024

As we get ready to start a new term, I wanted to write to you to share the measures we will be putting in place to encourage students to maintain excellent attendance at Bristol Free School. The link between high attendance and strong academic progress is clear, with students who have attendance of 95% or more achieving at least one grade higher in their GCSEs than students with attendance below this figure. Although a figure of 90% attendance may seem high, this represents 18 days of school missed in one academic year and can have a profound impact on learning. To support your child with their attendance we will:

- Encourage all students to meet or exceed the school's target of **96%**;
- Recognise and reward pupils who consistently maintain excellent attendance or make improvements;
- Work with families and put positive support plans in place for students who are falling below the school's target;
- Make contact with parents and carers if your child's attendance becomes a concern;
- Refer parents to Bristol City Council if legal measures need to be taken.

Responding to Illness

We always encourage students to attend, regardless of minor illness and we will always send a student home who is not well enough to be in school. It is often the case that once a student has got in and settled in lessons, they are able to learn well and make it through the full school day. The NHS has produced this useful guide that can help you decide when your child is too ill for school.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

If your child is simply too unwell to attend school then please notify us by 8.30am, either by leaving a message on the school absence line (0117 9597200 then select Option 1) or by using Studybugs. **Please do not email teachers or main reception to report an absence.**

One of the main benefits of Studybugs is that it will automatically update the electronic register so that we will know almost immediately if you have contacted us to let us know that your child is away with an illness. This is a much quicker, easier and more efficient way for you to notify the school of absences. Register online via the Studybugs website: <https://studybugs.com/about/parents> or download the free Studybugs App. Then all you have to do is send us a free text when your child is ill.

Term Time Absence and Holiday Requests

Our policy states that absence during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. It is highly unlikely that holidays in term time will be authorised. To support and improve attendance, Bristol Free School will refer unauthorised absences to Bristol City Council to consider for fixed penalty notices or prosecution. **Penalty notices or prosecutions will result from unauthorised holidays and other unauthorised absences where 8 unauthorised sessions (1 day being two sessions) occur in a ten-week period.** Penalty notices are currently £60 per child, per parent. Prosecution carries a maximum penalty of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment. Parents who are prosecuted also receive a criminal record.



Medical Appointments

Where possible, please make medical/dental appointments outside of school time and during holidays. We do understand that these appointments can be hard to come by and sometimes it is unavoidable that they are scheduled during school time, particularly in the case of hospital appointments. In these instances, students should, wherever possible, come into school before and/or after their appointment in order to maximise their learning time in school. Please also send evidence of the appointment, such as a text reminder from the medical centre to admin@bristolfreeschool.org.uk.

Lateness

The vast majority of students at Bristol Free School have excellent punctuality and arrive well before 8.30am each morning. Any student who arrives after 8.30am will be marked late on the register and will receive a consequence in line with our Behaviour Policy.

Students who arrive after 9.30am will receive an unauthorised absence or 'U' code (unless we have been notified in advance that your child is arriving late due to an evidenced medical appointment, in which case an authorised medical absence will be recorded). Please be aware that 'U' codes are unauthorised absence and a penalty notice or prosecution may result.

Further information on attendance can be found on the school's website and in the Parent Handbook.

I hope the information above is clear and that your child makes a positive start to the new term!

Yours sincerely



Mr M MacBlain
Assistant Headteacher