



# Attendance Policy

**Policy owner:** Head of Secondary

**Policy category:** Mandatory

| Version | Amendments      | Issue Date               | Author/Approver | Review periodicity required. |
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*“Poor school attendance impacts a child’s future, not just through their educational achievement but also socially and developmentally” - Cardiff University, November 2021*

## 1. Rationale

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Regular attendance at school, and arriving to school on time, are basic expectations of all students. Students perform academically, socially and have better overall wellbeing when they attend school consistently.

Since the pandemic there have been issues with school attendance globally. This is for a myriad of reasons linked to:

- Student mental wellbeing issues
- A more ‘relaxed’ approach about school attendance from parents
- A habit of working from home and therefore more autonomy
- However, regular or significant absence, or poor punctuality, can have an impact on the ability for a student to learn effectively and it detrimentally affects their wellbeing due to a multitude of factors. Poor attendance or poor punctuality can affect a student’s chances to progress to the next stage of their learning. Without intervention, poor attendance at school often leads of an entrenched view of a lack of importance of attendance at university and during employment.

Research suggests that if your child is at school for only 90 per cent of the school year then they will have missed 19 days - almost four whole weeks of school. In Primary, this can mean almost 120 guided learning hours. This is a big gap for any child to make up. In Secondary 120 guided learning hours is the same as studying one full-time IGCSE (normally taken over two years).

An attendance rate of **95%** is generally considered good; this allows for children to miss 9.5 days across the school year.

### **The law around school attendance in Slovakia – please see appendix 1.**

Although we are not bound by the same regulatory requirements at BISB, we wish to raise awareness of and address poor attendance across the whole school.

It is also worth noting that the International Baccalaureate Organisation stipulates that IB Diplomas are awarded only to students who have completed the required number of hours of taught courses.

We recognise that attendance is a complex issue with students having individual reasons for attending or not attending school regularly. We also realise that as a school, there are occasions where our own extra-curricular programmes can impinge on student attendance in lessons. We need to balance this alongside a students’ overall percentage attendance.

Where possible we want to support families to improve children’s attendance if it is a home/school issue.

### **Safeguarding linked to attendance**

Globally poor attendance has been linked to child safety and wellbeing. At BISB we are committed to safeguarding the welfare of our students and therefore will follow up with parents when attendance is not adequate. We understand that in rare cases students may not be able to attend school and through a meeting with parents we will ascertain how to approach this with the students’ best interests in mind.

## 2. How to promote regular attendance – parents, staff, students together

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In order to promote positive school attendance, parents, teachers and students must work together. It is only through this relationship triangle that we can promote good attendance as well as reward it. In school we have certificates of attendance that are distributed termly to those students who have 95% attendance in secondary.

## 3. Levels of absence and actions

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In order to celebrate excellent attendance and to address poor attendance we will use the table below outlining criteria for communication with students and parents. We will use these criteria for students in year 2 and above. This communication will be ½ termly in the case of emails home or termly in the case of the assembly rewards. However, should there be an acute issue with attendance, this will be addressed as soon as possible.

| <b>Percentage</b> | <b>Action</b>  | <b>Who is involved</b>  |
|-------------------|--|---|
| <b>95+</b>        | Rewarded in assembly (secondary only)  | <b>HOY / tutor / parents informed</b>   |
| <b>90% - 95%</b>  | Email home to inform parents and outline the consequences. Invite parents in to discuss any underlying issues with a view to resolving them.   | <b>HOY, parents, student / class teacher</b>  |
| <b>85% - 90%</b>  | Parents to meet with head of year/phase leader to discuss the causes and to set up next steps with a view to solving the issues and to share consequences (see below)  | <b>HOY, parents, student, phase leader</b>  |
| <b>Below 85%</b>  | persistent – for any reason (authorized or not). Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. A meeting with the head teacher, head of year and supporting people will need to happen and be documented. | <b>Deputy or Head of Secondary, HOY, parents, deputy head of primary, students.</b> |

### **Link to participation in trips/events if attendance is below 90%.**

If a student's attendance is below 90% this equates to 1 day every 2 weeks totalling 18 secondary school days per year or 108 teaching hours. This rate of attendance is already impacting a child's ability to perform academically. As such, we may restrict students going on extra-curricular school trips e.g. sports events, end of year trips, D of E. Curriculum-based trips would be acceptable.

### **Examination amendments or resitting a grade level if less than 85% attendance.**

It is critical if a student's attendance is below 85%. In these cases, it is very unlikely that secondary students are keeping up with academic studies. If a student is in their final examination year, it is unlikely their final result would reflect their capability.

There are some options for discussion with parents in cases like this:

- Regular counselling and/or mentor support
- Individual education plans
- An intensive programme of catch-up work with accountability targets

- Amending IGCSE or IB entries (e.g. a reduction in subjects or moving onto IB courses)
- Repeating an academic year

#### 4. Types of absences and rules for authorisation

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##### **All absences are requested using the firefly app.**

Should your child be absent in either a morning or an afternoon this will be counted as a half day absence rather than the full day's absence. If your child is going to miss school, it is vital that you notify the school via FireFly and give the reason.

Please note that whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

##### **Automatic authorised absence:**

- Bereavement
- Medical appointments (although an excess of medical appointments will be noted and may need further explanation)
- Representing the school as part of a team or going on a trip or outing is not registered as absence and is automatically documented at school.

##### **Requested absence:**

Parents must seek permission for absence under the following circumstances. Parents cannot simply inform of non-attendance. We are required to go through a documented process of communication that 'authorises' absence.

1. Attendance at high level training for music/sport: This will only be authorised if the student represents their country or the high level of musical or sporting talent necessitates lessons outside the locality. The school may impose a limit on occurrences or set certain expectations of the students involved so that schoolwork does not suffer. Please arrange a meeting at the start of term to discuss this further with the Head of Secondary should your child require this level of authorisation.

2. Educational leave: Up to 5 days per year for expat families to arrange new schools or for IB students to arrange university visits.

3. Family leave 3 days:

Parents are requested to not arrange family holidays, or other activities which take children away from school during term time. With 15 - 16 weeks of school holiday per year we believe that there is sufficient time for families to make their own holiday arrangements during the times when school is closed.

We approve 3 full family days per academic year for such unavoidable absences. The following exceptions to the 3 approved days are as follows:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as the student needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible

- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence
- Where a student's attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking time off

These absences will be checked by the Head of Secondary and the Head of Primary.

### **Unauthorised absence:**

Parents may inform the school that they choose to take their children out of school for other reasons, but will have to accept that this absence is unauthorised and will be recorded as such. In such cases the school will not provide catch up materials/input for lessons missed.

1. Holidays
2. Attendance at sports/riding/ music clubs (unless at a national or regional level – see above)
3. Driving lessons
4. Looking after siblings
5. Shopping, going to hairdresser, etc

## **5. Summary**

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The importance of consistent regular school attendance cannot be underestimated. It requires parents, the school and students working together in cases where attendance is an issue. Everything that is done to improve attendance is done with the best interests of the student in mind. It is only through the community surrounding the child, working together in the interests of the child, that we can ensure children are in school, learning and thriving.

## **Appendix 1:**

The following is for Slovak school who are obliged to report on attendance to the education authority. They use the following guidelines:

*➤ If a pupil misses more than 15 lessons without proper excuse in a given month, the headmaster shall, in accordance with Article 5(11) of Act No 596/2003, notify this fact to the municipal authority in the municipality in which the child's legal representative the child's parent is permanently resident and to the relevant Employment and Social Welfare Office. Notifications shall be made by the class teacher.*

*➤ If a pupil misses more than 60 (unexcused) lessons in the relevant school year, the municipality is obliged to notify the school principal initiate offence proceedings pursuant to Section 6 in accordance with Sections 37 and 37a of Act No. 596/2003 Coll.  
z. on state administration in education and school self-government and on amendment and supplementation of certain as amended.*

*If the school has complied with the above procedure and, despite the measures taken, the the pupil's attendance does not improve and if the pupil misses more than 100 lessons without proper excuse, the municipality, upon notification by the school principal, shall file a to prosecute the legal representatives for endangering the moral education of the pupil 300/2005 Coll. (Criminal Code).*