1. Rationale and Aim
It is vital to the academic progress of all students at Robert Bloomfield Academy (RBA) that they attend school regularly in order that they can participate in the educational opportunities available to them. Research shows that high absence rates go hand in hand with poor examination results. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process, since not only does a student miss out on valuable teaching but they are less prepared for lessons when they return. Poor attendance also places children at risk and in some cases it can result in students being drawn into anti-social behaviour. A student arriving late may disrupt his/her continuity of learning and also that of others. RBA believe that the life chances of all students can be improved by ensuring that all staff, students and parents/carers are aware of the importance of, and take responsibility for, regular attendance.

RBA will encourage and assist all students to achieve the highest levels of attendance and punctuality in order to maximise their achievement and attainment at school.

RBA aim to:
- Ensure students are supported in reaching their full potential in order that they can attain at the highest possible level.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with RBA including students, parents, staff and governors.
- Maintain a high attendance record and low unauthorised absence rate.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.
- Promote effective partnership with the Access and Inclusion Service and other agencies.
- Encourage students to catch up on any missed work in a positive and supportive environment.
- Encourage students to maintain high attendance levels by use of a reward system.
- Publish attendance figures to parents and governors.
- Analyse attendance rates (%) and at various times throughout the year, certain attendance rates will trigger standard letters that will be sent to the student’s parent(s)/carer(s).
- Analyse and report attendance on key sub groups (Gender, PP, SEN, LAC).

2. Policy
Working in Partnership with the Law
Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child’s regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at that school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

Since March 2001 there has been a further offence introduced where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend school regularly, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend. (Education Act 1996, section 444 (1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). It is clear from the law that parents risk prosecution if their child does not attend school regularly. It is important, therefore, for parents and the school to work closely together to overcome any problems which may affect a student’s attendance. The Department for Education (DfE) recommends that no term-time holidays are granted and therefore requests for term-time leave will not normally be approved. The Principal will only consider exceptional applications for leave of absence that are
submitted in advance and have strong compassionate grounds. If leave of absence is taken without the school’s prior approval, this will be viewed as an unauthorised absence.

The school will work closely with the Access and Inclusion Service where attendance or punctuality does not meet the school’s expectations. Our attached Local Authority School Attendance Officer visits RBA regularly to support regular attendance and to help remove any barriers that may be preventing a student from accessing the education to which he/she is entitled.

Absences authorised by the school
Although parents/carers will know about and agree to these absences from lessons, additional parental action is not required to authorise these absences. In the case of School Visits, parents will be asked to sign consent forms.
Examples:
- Attendance on a school trip or visit.
- Representing the School in a sporting fixture, musical, public speaking or drama event.

Authorised unforeseen absence
RBA should be notified on the day of the absence where possible (before 9am), and then a letter should be sent to the school explaining the absence.
Examples:
- Illness.
- Bereavement or other emergency family situation.
- Severe disruption to transport with no possible means of getting a student to school (e.g. very heavy snow).

Planned absences which may be authorised
These require the Leave of Absence Form to be completed and should be submitted to the school 6 weeks in advance of the absence.
Examples of planned absences that may be authorised:
- Medical appointments which cannot be arranged outside of school hours.
- Occasional care for a member of the family if a student has a known caring responsibility (this will be judged on a case by case basis).
- Religious holiday (guidelines are 3 days maximum).
- Visit to another school/Academy.
- Occasional extra-curricular activity which gives the student significant opportunity for personal achievement or improvement.
- Attendance at a family wedding or funeral.
- Elite level sporting participation.

Planned absences which are unlikely to be authorised
Examples:
- Holidays (unless holiday is requested under exceptional circumstances in which case the Leave of Absence Form, which can be obtained from the front office or school website, should be submitted as soon as possible)
- Leisure activities.
- Birthdays or similar celebrations.
- Babysitting younger siblings.
- Shopping.
- Persistent and regular lateness.
- Moving house.
Term-time holiday
Amendments to the 2006 regulations (The Education regulations 2013) remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Principals may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Principals should determine the number of Academy days a child can be away from Academy if the leave is granted. A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued where a student takes a holiday during term time and the absence has not been authorised by the Academy.

Appointments during school hours
We do ask parents/carers to avoid taking students out of school for medical appointments, however, when this is unavoidable, the student must sign out (or in if arriving late after an appointment) at the Front Office. They must provide written evidence of the appointment. If a series of regular appointments are necessary (e.g. for dental work) then we ask parents/carers to try to make these during school holidays or after normal school hours.

Persistent absence
Persistent Absence (PA) is a term used by the Department for Education (DfE) to denote absence of more than 10% for an individual student, whether authorised or unauthorised. There are clear links between poor attendance and poor attainment. Any child whose attendance falls to unacceptable levels will be invited to attend an attendance panel in school or will be referred to the Access and Inclusion Service.

Medical evidence
Parents/Carers may be asked to provide medical evidence to explain why their child is/has been absent.

Missing Children Procedure (September 18)
A Missing Child School Referral Form should be used when a child ‘disappears’ e.g. when parents move without providing a forwarding address; when it is suspected that the family has gone on an extended holiday without school agreement; when a child does not return two weeks after the expected return date of a family holiday. If the school has child protection concerns, Social Services should be contacted and if the school suspects that a crime may have been committed the Police will be contacted. A CME tracking sheet and referral should be completed and sent to Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education Officer – Access and Inclusion Service in such situations. He/she will take referrals from a variety of outside agencies for any student who has been out of school for more than four weeks. Such children are recorded on the DfE S2S (school to school) website and may be removed from school role in accordance with the guidance in the Central Bedfordshire Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance for local authorities September 2018.

Contents of Admission Register
The admission register must contain the personal details of every student in the Academy, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the Academy, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school last attended.

Expected First Day of Attendance
RBA will enter students onto the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the Academy has agreed, or been notified, that the student will attend the Academy. For most students the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year. If a student fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the Academy must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly. RBA will notify the local authority within five days of adding a student’s name to the admission register and must provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the student.
Students Moving to a New Address and/or School
Where the parent of a student notifies the Academy that the student will live at another address, RBA must record in the admission register: (a) the full name of the parent with whom the student will live, (b) the new address, and (c) the date from when it is expected the student will live at this address. Where a parent notifies RBA that the student is registered at another school or will be attending a different school, RBA will record in the admission register: (a) the name of the other school, and (b) the date of when the student first attended, or is due to start attending, the new school.

Deletions from the Admission Register
A student will lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended.

3. Procedure
a) Rights and responsibilities
Improving attendance at Robert Bloomfield Academy is the responsibility of everyone in the Academy community: students, parents and all staff.

Academy staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Staff should convey high expectations to students regarding attendance and punctuality; Form tutors, in conjunction with Heads of Learning, should investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff should respond to absenteeism firmly and consistently. Staff should use the standard template letters and refer to the attendance timetable in the staff handbook.

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents are required to notify the school of the reason, by telephone, and by 9am on the first day of absence and follow this up with a letter of explanation on the child’s return. A student’s absence from school will remain unauthorised until a satisfactory note of explanation is received from a parent. If no note is received a letter will be sent to the parent/carer to explain the absence.

When registers are completed a list of non-attendees will be printed off and used in case of an emergency evacuation or Lockdown. Parents/carers of students on the list who have not rung in to explain their absence will be contacted by the front office by 9.45am. Contact will be made via telephone, text and email. If contact cannot be made with parents, we may contact the police if we have concerns about a child’s failure to turn up at school and have been unable to get in touch with the parent/carer or other named contacts on their list.

Students are expected to attend school and lessons regularly and punctually. At the end of each term students with full attendance will receive a certificate in the Awards Assembly. This will run concurrently throughout the year. In addition, the class with the highest attendance rate in each year group, each term, will a non-uniform day. A lottery system will also operate termly, here all students who have achieved over 96% attendance in the term will be put in to a lottery system to produce an individual winner who will receive a prize (Amazon/iTunes voucher).

b) Registration
Students are allowed to attend breakfast or early morning clubs from 8am. Students will be allowed to go onto the playground at 8:30am, no student is to arrive later than 8.50am. Registers will be called promptly at 8.55am and 3.10pm. Attendance should be recorded on SIMS as (/ or \), absence is recorded as an (N). Notified absences can be pre-coded using the correct abbreviation (see Appendix 3).

Registers will close at 9.15 am and 3.20pm. Students arriving at school after the register has been taken but before the register period has closed are marked with the late symbol (L). If a student arrives after the registration period
has closed without a legitimate reason the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Please note a U code is recorded as an unauthorised absence. If the registration period has finished the late student must sign in at Reception, the Receptionist will subsequently complete the register with the appropriate code. Students who are late because of a school bus must not be coded as late.

Parents will be informed if the student is persistently late (using late letter template), in order to avoid formal action.

c) Recording absences
Office staff will record absences, either as authorised or unauthorised, using the agreed symbols (in accordance with the Registration Procedures – App3), once the reason for the absence has been established during the first day of absence phone call.

If staff have reason to doubt the explanation offered about an absence or whether it is from the parents, they should consult the Assistant Principal and then Vice Principal. Advice will be sought from the Access and Inclusion Service.

d) Following up absences
Where no reason for absence has been received a standard letter will be sent to Parents requesting reason for absence. If no response is received from this, the Head of Year should be notified and they should make contact with the Parent(s)/carer(s) in order to decide whether to authorise the absence. Unauthorised absences could be referred to the Access and Inclusion Service or a Penalty notice could be issued.

Action on irregular attendance will initially involve the Form tutor contacting the parent to discuss the matter and an initial attendance letter being sent (using letter of concern template – Appendix 1). If the attendance does not improve the Head of Year will send a follow-up letter will be sent (using Medical 1 template letter – Appendix 2) or invite the students in to school for a meeting. The aim of the meeting will be to identify and resolve any difficulties which are preventing the student from attending school. The parents will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance.

If the student’s difficulties are not resolved and the attendance does not improve, a pre-referral meeting will be called or parents/carers will be invited to an Attendance Panel - if necessary a penalty notice may be issued or a formal referral will be made to the Access and Inclusion Service and formal intervention planned.

Absences will not be authorised after the Medical 1 letter has been sent, unless medical evidence is provided. Absences that remain unauthorised once a Medical 1 letter has been sent may warrant a pre-referral meeting with School and the Access and Inclusion Service. It is in the interest of parents to get a medical certificate from their doctor in order for school to authorise the absences and avoid this action.

In the event of a student returning after a long-term absence, then an individual re-integration programme will need to be implemented.

If a student is likely to be absent long term due to illness or incapacity, please notify the appropriate Head of Year who will consider whether the criteria/referral for home tuition is met. An application could then be sent to Medical Needs provision.

e) Tracking attendance
Students whose attendance falls below 95% will be monitored by their form tutor in conjunction with the relevant Head of Year and Pastoral support worker.
Students whose attendance falls below 92% will be monitored by the Head of Year, Assistant Principal and the Access and Inclusion Attendance Officer. Discussions may also take place with the parents/carers. Unauthorised absences may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued and/or a referral to the Access and Inclusion Service.

Students whose attendance falls below 90% attendance will be monitored by the Assistant Principal and Access and Inclusion Officer. Attendance panels will be held at strategic points throughout the year to focus specifically on PA.

f) Lesson Monitor
In addition to the am and pm registers all subject registers are taken electronically. This allows a member of staff to detect whether or not a student is missing from their lesson who should be expected to be there. The attendance officer is alerted re any missing student and if they are not located parents will be contacted.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation
Attendance rates are available on the Ofsted School Data Dashboard. Academies also publish their figures on their website. Consultation will take place between the Assistant Principal, and the Access and Inclusion Attendance Officer to develop and maintain the Attendance Policy. Attendance procedures will be evaluated by senior managers, governors and the Access and Inclusion Attendance Officer.

5. Implementation and Review
This policy will be made known to all staff, parents/carers and governors, and published on the RBA website. Copies are also available upon request from the Front Office. This policy will be reviewed yearly or as required.

6. Author and Date
Steve Fox, Vice Principal

June 2019

Approved by
Dear Parents/Guardians of

A recent register check has drawn our attention to __________’s attendance. As a school we regard regular attendance as a priority, and communication between parents and school as very important. Any student’s attendance that falls below 90% is classified as a persistent absentee by the new measures the Government have introduced and therefore falls under the scrutiny of the local Education Welfare Officer.

In addition to this we would also like to draw your attention to the guidance on Penalty Notices set by the Local Authority. Please be assured this is a sanction that the school very rarely uses as we wish to work collaboratively with our parents.

In Central Bedfordshire schools and academies may ask the local authority to issue a Penalty Notice.

A Penalty Notice may be issued when:
1) a student is taken out of school during term time for a holiday which has not been authorised by the school;
2) a child’s school attendance has been poor and his/her school believe that the issuing of a Penalty Notice may lead to an improvement in the child’s attendance (for example, when a child is persistently late for school and his/her parents fail to address the situation).

When a Penalty Notice is issued it is issued on a per child/per parent basis. This means that if a mother and father have two children and take both children out of school they may be issued with a total of 4 Penalty Notices – one to each parent for each child.

We note that __________’s percentage attendance so far this year amounts to only ??%, the target attendance for the whole school is 96%. We understand that there may be circumstances surrounding some of the absences included in the figure stated.

We will be monitoring __________’s attendance rate for the next 2 weeks. Should his attendance levels not improve we will be contacting you for a pre referral meeting in order that the Education Welfare service can become involved.

Yours sincerely

Mr. S Robson
Director of Conduct and Personalised Learning
Appendix 2

Dear ______,

We have contacted you before to express our concern at ______‘s low rate of school attendance. ______‘s attendance rate has improved this year compared to last year, but it still does not meet our expectations.

The Education Welfare Officer has noted that attendance has not improved and we have therefore arranged a date of ______________, for a Pre Referral meeting to take place in order to discuss our concerns. Please could you bring to the meeting a letter from your doctor explaining ______‘s last period of absence.

Please would you contact me at the school as soon as possible in order to confirm your attendance at this meeting or arrange a mutually convenient time for the meeting to take place.

Please note failure to attend or ignore this request to meet will leave the school with no alternative but to refer the matter direct to the Education Welfare Service, which could infer legal action.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. S Robson
Director of Conduct and Personalised Learning
Appendix A

ABSENCE CODES USED CODE DESCRIPTION
/ Present (Morning and Afternoon) In school, in front of teacher (Present)
B Educated off-site Approved Education Activity
C Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code)
D Dual Registration (student attending another establishment, agreed)
E Excluded
F Extended family holiday (agreed)
G Family Holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)
H Family Holiday (agreed)
I Illness (not Medical or Dental Appointments)
J Interview (e.g. University, Job)
L Late (before registers close) Present
M Medical/Dental Appointments
N No reason yet provided for absence
O Unauthorised Absence (not covered by any other code)
P Approved Sporting Activity Approved Education Activity (Present)
R Religious Observance
S Study Leave
T Traveller Absence
U Late (after registers close)
V Educational Visit or Trip Approved Education Activity (Present)
W Work Experience or Shadowing Approved Education Activity (Present)
X Non-compulsory School Age absence or DCFS code
Y Enforced closure of school (e.g. snow) Not counted in possible attendances
A and Z Not given (spare codes)
# School closed to students (e.g. INSET Day) Not counted in possible attendances

CODE EXPLANATIONS
L = LATE
S = STUDY LEAVE/HOME STUDY (AUTHORISED)
P = OFF-SITE GAMES, SCHOOL MATCH ETC (AUTHORISED)
R = RELIGIOUS REASONS (AUTHORISED)
I = ILLNESS (AUTHORISED)
Y = EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCE, EG CLOSURE DUE TO WEATHER
C = OTHER AUTHORISED REASONS
O = UNAUTHORISED
M = MEDICAL/DENTAL (AUTHORISED)
V = SCHOOL VISIT/TRIP (AUTHORISED) / = PRESENT N – NO REASON YET PROVIDED FOR ABSENCE
W = WORK SHADOWING (AUTHORISED)