

Student Report

October 2024

Attendance

2023/24

Ashton Community Science College's attendance data for the academic year 2023/24 shows positive trends across various cohorts when compared to the FFT national average. The school finished last academic year with an overall attendance rate of 90.8%, which is inline with the National Average, reflecting a +0.8% improvement from the previous academic year. Gender-wise, there continues to be a gap between boys and girls at Ashton with boys achieving an attendance rate of 91.4%, exceeding the national average, while girls' attendance is slightly lower at 90.0%, which is 0.4% below the national figure. Year 9 girls are considerably lower relative to other year groups. This is due to 4 students who have severe absenteeism (that below 50%).

For students receiving Free School Meals (FSM6), Ashton demonstrates a more challenging attendance rate of 86.6%, which is below the school's overall average but is significantly above national trends for disadvantaged pupils. In contrast, non-FSM6 students show stronger attendance at 93.3%, surpassing the national average for this group.

Across year groups, Ashton shows strong performance in KS4 most notably in Year 11 who ended with an attendance rate 3.1% above the national average for Year 11 cohorts. Similarly, Year 10 maintained an attendance rate of 90.3% which is 1.4% higher than the national figure for similar year groups. However, Year 8 students exhibit lower attendance compared to the national average, with a -3.7% difference and again this can be related to the small group of students with severe absence.

During the academic year, the number of term-time holidays taken by pupils has increased significantly, with a 80% rise over a 2 year period. This surge in holiday requests can be attributed to several factors. The main reason being with the rising cost of living, families are opting to take vacations during term time when prices are more affordable. This increase in term-time holidays has raised concerns about their overall academic performance.

In response, the school has taken a proactive approach by strictly adhering to the Local Authority's protocol. This includes submitting Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for unauthorised absences that exceed the allowable limits, as outlined in the attendance policy. The DfE have also removed the 'H' code from the register which previously stood for 'Family Holiday Agreed', which promotes headteachers in not authorising any holiday, but where they do support students and families in need, this is coded as an Authorised Absence using the various 'C' Codes now available. The school is also increasing communication with parents to emphasise the importance of regular attendance and the potential long-term academic

consequences of taking holidays during term time. Additionally, we are exploring ways to further support families in understanding the impact of lost learning and encouraging them to plan holidays during official school breaks.

Year on Year Comparison

	2022/23			2023/24			22/23 v 23/24
%	ACSC	National	% Diff	ACSC	National	% Diff	% Diff
All	90.0	90.7	-0.7	90.8	90.8	0.0	+0.8
Girls	88.7	90.3	-1.6	90.0	90.4	-0.4	+0.3
Boys	91.1	91.1	0.0	91.4	91.2	+0.2	+0.3
FSM6	85.1	85.3	-0.2	86.6	85.4	+1.2	+1.5
Non FSM6	93.1	92.6	+0.5	93.3	92.8	+0.5	+0.2
SEND Support	85.9	85.9	+0.1	87.1	85.5	+1.4	+1.2
SEND EHCP	85.0	82.9	+2.1	86.2	81.8	+4.6	+1.2
Non SEND	91.1	91.8	-0.6	92.0	92.1	+0.1	+0.9

It is incredibly pleasing to report that the school's attendance rates have improved across all groups from the previous academic year. Overall attendance increased by 0.8%, now standing at 90.8%. Notably, attendance for girls has improved by 0.3%, narrowing the gap with national figures to just -0.4%. Boys' attendance rose by 0.3%, now slightly above the national average by +0.2%.

Students eligible for FSM6 saw a significant improvement of +1.5%, now exceeding the national average by +1.2%. Similarly, students on SEND support saw a +1.2% increase, bringing them 1.4% above national figures. EHCP students achieved an impressive +1.2% improvement, now 4.6% above the national average. Even non-SEND students improved by +0.9%, now slightly above national averages by +0.1%. These increases reflect the positive impact of our focused attendance strategies and highlight the strong commitment of our school community to improving student outcomes.

Many of these increases can be attributed to the change in protocols and procedures we implemented through the staged approach as a school last academic year and which I have reported to you previously.

Persistent absenteeism

The DfE defines students who have an attendance rate of below 90% as PA. 90% attendance is the equivalent of taking one afternoon off a week, or missing over 4 weeks of school a year.

Persistent absenteeism remains an area of concern, particularly when compared to national averages. The data reveals that 28.4% of pupils at Ashton are classified as persistently absent, which is higher than desirable and around 1% higher than the national picture. This figure is significantly influenced by disadvantaged students, with FSM6 pupils showing higher absenteeism rates compared to their non-FSM6 peers. While the school's overall attendance rate remains competitive with the FFT national average, persistent absenteeism continues to disproportionately affect certain groups. The school has been implementing targeted interventions to address

this issue, including tailored support for students at risk of falling into the persistently absent category. However, reducing these rates further, particularly among vulnerable students, will be critical in ensuring sustained improvements in attendance and overall pupil wellbeing.

The school has adopted several key strategies to improve persistent absenteeism by fostering better collaboration with both students and families, as highlighted in the Lancashire Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Guidance & Strategy Toolkit. One essential approach is maintaining open communication between the school and families, ensuring that parents and students feel heard and understood. The document emphasises the importance of building positive relationships between home and school to address EBSA. The school is implementing a flexible, child-centred approach, offering individualised support based on the unique needs of each student and family. It is recognised that this approach takes time and resources to be able to implement and that it is aimed at specific students and in the general, can not be offered to all students and families.

To support students and families effectively, the school is also focusing on early identification of attendance issues, particularly by recognising the factors contributing to non-attendance and creating targeted intervention plans. This involves using tools like the ATTEND framework to gather information from students, parents, and staff, allowing for better-informed action plans. Regular communication and review processes with families are built into these plans to ensure that progress is monitored closely, with adjustments made when necessary.

[Adaptions to 2024/25](#)

For the 2024/25 academic year, the school is introducing several new initiatives aimed at improving student attendance, along with the adaptations already planned. Sarah Connon, has returned to her substantive post full time as Assistant Headteacher and will lead on attendance throughout the school. Sarah has already QA the attendance processes in house and has fostered a strong focus on punctuality during this first half term, with the aim to reduce the number of absences across the school due to students attending after the register has closed. Discussions are taking place currently regarding the restructuring of the form time curriculum to allow tutors to intervene more effectively in attendance-related issues, and regular informal CPD will be offered to staff, highlighting the critical link between positive student-teacher relationships and good attendance.

To further support these efforts, the On Call system will be transferred to the Behaviour Team, freeing up Heads of Year for an extra hour daily to concentrate on attendance within their year groups. Tracey Peacock will join the team full-time on November 1st, replacing Tony Hesketh, allowing for greater flexibility in working with families facing entrenched attendance challenges. Holly Richards will provide clerical assistance to streamline formal communications and evidence portfolios for the Attendance Team.

Additionally, the school will introduce several further initiatives to reward not just students but also families who demonstrate strong commitment to attendance. These include regular attendance competitions across the school, fostering a spirit of healthy competition between year groups. The launch of a new initiative, "No Day

Off November," will focus on encouraging 100% attendance throughout the month, with special rewards for students and families who achieve this goal. By involving families in these rewards and competitions, we aim to create a supportive culture that emphasises the importance of attendance and its positive impact on student achievement.

These combined efforts will strengthen the school's overall approach to attendance, driving further improvements and fostering a more engaged and present student body.

Further guidance from the DfE and from LCC has meant adoptions to our current processes are needed and these are being implemented in a way we believe we can meet the needs of our students. Some of the guidance is statutory and others are highlighting good working practices.

September 2024/25

The school has started off positively and some of the changes made for the start of the academic year are already standing us in good shape. In comparison to the FFT national average, the school's attendance data for the first month of the 2024/25 academic year demonstrates encouraging results. Overall, the school's attendance is 0.5% above the national average of 93.3%. This positive trend is seen across most year groups, however, there are a few areas for concern, such as Year 9, where the attendance rate is 91.3%, which is 1.2% below the national average of 92.6%. Nevertheless, the overall trajectory for the school is positive, with attendance improvements observed across various student demographics. These promising results reflect the effectiveness of the school's strategies in prioritising and improving attendance, setting a strong foundation for further gains throughout the academic year.

Suspensions and Exclusions

Suspensions and Exclusions over time

Year	Suspensions/FTE				Perm Ex		
	% of School Roll	NA *LA Secondary Schools	% school with 2 or more suspensions	NA *LA Secondary Schools	Student Count of Perm Ex	% of School Roll	National Average
2023/24	7.36%	N/A	2.69%	N/A	7	0.82%	N/A
2022/23	7.91%	18.90%	3.33%	N/A	8	0.92%	0.22%
2021/22	8.05%	13.96%	4.14%	N/A	6	0.69%	0.16%
2020/21	4.88%	8.48%	0.85%	2.20%	5	0.61%	0.10%

*= Includes all secondary schools

N/A = data not available

The above table indicates a positive trend in school suspensions and repeat offenses since the Final Covid Year in 2020/21. Over the years, the percentage of students suspended at least once has consistently decreased. In the 2023/24 academic year, only 7.36% of students were suspended, marking an improvement from the previous

2 years. The NA over this time has increased significantly and is expected to rise again in the 2023/24.

Furthermore, the data reveals a notable decline in repeat suspensions. The percentage of students with two or more suspensions has steadily fallen from 4.14% in 2021/22 to 2.69% in 2023/24. This suggests that interventions and support measures implemented are effectively addressing the underlying causes of behavioural issues and preventing students from experiencing multiple suspensions.

The main reasons for suspensions were Persistent Disruptive Behaviour (55%), Physical Assault towards a Pupil (20%) and Verbal Abuse and Threatening Behaviour towards and Adult (19%).

A greater consistent approach to the positive behaviour curriculum – The Ashton Way – and the teaching of how we do things here at Ashton continues to have a positive impact on students. A more consistent application of the behaviour system from all members of staff, as well as an integrated staged approach and the introduction of Directors of Learning are supporting students in reducing negative behaviours whilst upholding the school's ethos and maintaining high standards.

However, while these advancements are promising, there remains room for improvement. The school must continue to evaluate and refine its strategies to ensure that all students feel supported and engaged. Ongoing efforts to address the remaining behavioural challenges continue to be a focus in maintaining this positive trajectory, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive academically and personally within the school community.

September 2024/25

In September of this academic year, there was a significant reduction in suspensions compared to the same period in the previous year. In 2023/24, 14 pupils were excluded, resulting in a total of 44 days of suspensions. However, in September 2024/25, the number of pupils suspended dropped to 9, representing a 35.7% reduction. The total number of suspension days also decreased, falling to 18.5 days, which is a 58% reduction. These improvements indicate a positive trend in managing behaviour and reducing suspensions. It is regrettable to note that a decision has been made to permanently exclude one student so far, this academic year following persistent disruptive behaviour that continued on following considerable support offered to the student and their family. The Discipline Committee will meet to consider the Headteachers decision.