

Ashton Community Science College

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Version Control

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AIM

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance

Our core aim as a school is to raise standards of attainment through the provision of high-quality teaching and learning experiences. We believe that every young person is entitled to an education and every absence from school is a lost learning opportunity. There is a direct link between the attainment of students and their level of attendance at school. Therefore, the promotion of good attendance and punctuality underpins the work in school to ensure students have the best chance of achieving their full potential academically. In addition, good attendance helps students become emotionally resilient, confident young adults who have the chance to acquire the skills and attributes they will need as adults.

Principles

- For students to take full advantage of all the educational opportunities available to them they must maintain an excellent attendance record
- Parents and Carers have a legal obligation to ensure that their children attend school on a regular basis (Section 36 of 1944 Education Act)
- The school aims to encourage all students to have the highest attendance rate possible
- The school has in place a set of procedures that enable each student to strive towards achieving this highest possible individual attendance rate. These procedures encourage a strong partnership between parents, students and the school, one that is focused on ensuring that all students maintain an excellent attendance record throughout their education in school.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Roles and responsibilities

Role of the Parent

Within the home school agreement, it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the student attends school each day and arrives on time. Students should only be absent for genuine reasons such as sickness, medical appointments, exceptional circumstances (e.g. funerals) etc. Parents must notify the school immediately if a student is absent ideally through school synergy, but can also do so on our dedicated absent line.

Role of the School

Within the home school agreement, it is the responsibility of the school to work with parents in ensuring the maximum attendance possible. The school will work with parents by ensuring communication and detailed procedures which will identify problems early on. The school will support parents who may be experiencing difficulty in ensuring good attendance for the student. This support will be given in consultation with the Progress Leader, Attendance Officer, Attendance Support, Family Liaison Officer, Designated Safeguarding Lead and SLT.

At Ashton Community Science College, we define our key levels of attendance as:

| Attendance % | Description | Approx. days lost per year | Approx. weeks lost per year |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 99% - 100% | Excellent | 0-5 days | Less than 1 week |
| 96% - 98.9% | Good | 6-9 days | 1 – 2 weeks |
| 94% - 95.9% | Satisfactory | 10-13 days | Less than 2 weeks |
| 91% - 93.9% | Unsatisfactory | 14-17 days | 2 – 3 weeks |
| Below 90.9% | Persistent Absence | More than 18 days | More than 3 weeks |

The school attendance target for all students is at least 97%

Attendance including Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the student is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. Students are expected to attend school from 8.40 until 3pm every day, unless alternative provision has been put in place by school. If a student is absent,

every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only the Headteacher can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Examples of reasons for absence which the school will usually authorise include:

- A medical appointment which **cannot** be arranged outside school hours (proof of appointment may be required)
- Most illness, although on occasions a doctor's note may be required
- Meetings with external agencies where the student has no control over the time of the appointment
- Career related interviews/appointments, particularly in Y11
- Attendance at the funeral of a close friend or immediate family

Some examples of reasons for absence which the school will not authorise include:

- Parents/Carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Unexplained absence (no contact from parents to explain the absence)
- Truancy
- Late after the register has closed without reason
- Shopping/Babysitting younger siblings/ Birthdays or similar celebrations
- Closure of a sibling's school for teacher training or other purposes
- Persistent absenteeism without documentary medical proof.

DfE guidance regarding attendance codes can be found in **Appendix A**.

Informing the School of Absence

Parents/carers are to inform school on the first day of their child's absence no later than 9.00am. Parents/carers are then encouraged to contact school every day throughout their child's absence. Failure to inform the school will result in a member of the year team or attendance team endeavouring to contact parents/carers but a lack of response could ultimately lead to an unauthorised absence.

The schools preferred method of communicating absence is through school synergy, alternatively parents can phone on the school telephone number, selecting the option to report a student absence.

Leave Of Absence

As of 1st September 2013 Headteachers, cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances to warrant the granting of leave.

An 'application for a leave of absence form' should be requested from school as early as possible. Leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional. In considering the request we will also look at various factors such as:

- the timing of the request e.g. when a student is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible. Students should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods

- e.g. GCSE or any other public examinations.
- the student's current attendance rate
- other periods of leave which the student has had, either during the current or previous academic year

Rewards

Ashton Community Science College endeavours to ensure all students recognise the value of good attendance and punctuality. This will be promoted through the school through curriculum time, form time, tutorials and assemblies. Posters in all classrooms will reinforce this message as will larger displays around the school. In addition, we actively seek to reward and encourage high levels of attendance and also recognise where efforts have been made to improve attendance and punctuality.

Examples of rewards for attendance and punctuality include:

- Personalised messages through synergy to parents for improvement in attendance/punctuality.
- Whole school attendance incentives eg No days off in November to provide family rewards
- Termly form time pizza party reward for best attending form in each year group
- Personalised rewards for individuals to support improvement in punctuality/attendance
- Prizes at celebration evening in July each year for 100% attendance each year and from the start of a students time at Ashton Community Science College

Attendance And Punctuality Intervention Strategies

Ashton Community Science College takes a proactive approach in monitoring students' attendance and punctuality and we work closely in partnership with parents and other appropriate agencies to improve levels of attendance and punctuality where concerns exist. Some of the strategies used include:

- Attendance tracking to ensure all students are aware of their current attendance
- Attendance mentoring through the year teams, pastoral team, form tutors or other appropriate staff
- First day contact system by telephone and use of text messaging service
- Priority contact for students identified as vulnerable
- Home visits and welfare checks for absences of 3 days plus
- Letters to parents highlighting current attendance and concerns
- Messages/phone calls/meetings with parents addressing punctuality issues
- Work by the attendance and pastoral teams to identify patterns of absence and the causes of these.
- Weekly welfare meetings between Year Teams and the Attendance Lead to identify concerns and put strategies in place
- Attendance meetings, panel meetings and home visits
- Curriculum modification over a specified period of time or alternative provision for individuals as appropriate to their needs and circumstances.
- Reintegration support packages
- Use of EBSA toolkit where appropriate
- Completion of an EHA / referral to other agencies for family support where appropriate

Punctuality

Arriving on time for school is important as lateness can severely affect achievement through missing lessons. In addition, it is important students develop good habits for being punctual in preparation for adult life.

Registration begins at 8.40am (during form time). Students arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (L). Students arriving late (before registration has closed at 9.10am) will be placed in a breaktime detention. Persistent late arrival before the registration has closed will result in further sanctions (3 lates in a week – 1 hour detention. 7 lates or more in a half term, an additional 1 hour detention)

Students arriving after the close of register without a reason which may be authorised will be recorded as late after registration (U). This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session. Students arriving after 9:10 without valid reason will be placed in a break and lunch time detention. Parents and students are informed when changes to the school day are made and alternative arrangements are offered.

Promoting Good Attendance / Punctuality

A regular cycle of activities will take place to promote good attendance/punctuality e.g. assemblies, targeted assemblies, one to one discussions, mentoring with pupils and meetings with parents. A penalty notice can be issued and where pupils are regularly late to school, both parents are liable to a fine.

Persistent Absence

Persistent absence is defined as students being absent for 10% or more of the school year, regardless of the reasons (Section 5: DFE guidance "Working together to improve school attendance" 2022).

The current threshold is less than 91% attendance at any time and all attendance data is shared live with the DFE. The parents of students whose absence crosses this threshold will be informed by letter. In addition, where there are concerns that absence will trigger the following half term's threshold or beyond, parents will be invited into a panel meeting and an intervention plan may be drawn up.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are fines of £120 which are issued by the Local authority, under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act of 2003, when a pupil has 10 or more sessions (equivalent to five days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 week period. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or school years. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

Penalties can be used where the student's absence has not been authorised by the school, including truancy and persistent late arrival after the registers have closed. Penalties will always be issued when holidays are taken during term time; Penalty notices are issued to each parent/carer for each child.

The DFE have recently introduced national changes to penalty notices which came into effect from 19th August 2024.

Please see **Appendix B** for more details of the staged approach and rates of fines at each stage.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice.

Legal Sanctions

In rare occasions, intervention by the school working with parents may fail to bring about an improvement in attendance or punctuality. The Local Authority may decide to prosecute parents. Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child, if he/she is a registered student at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence. A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

Alternative Provision

As a result of specific medical needs or as a strategy to improve a pupil's behaviour, it may be necessary to direct a pupil to Alternative Provision. During this time, attendance is monitored in exactly the same way as if the pupils was accessing their education at Ashton Community Science College. Failure to attend Alternative Provision would lead to the same attendance procedures such as Fixed Penalty Notices and possible court action.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Attendance updates broken down by year group and analysed by gender, SEN status, ethnicity, pupil premium etc. to identify and respond to trends.
- Attendance data will be discussed alongside academic tracking data in meetings between Year Teams, Middle Leaders and Senior Leaders.
- Current attendance and persistent absenteeism trends will be shared with the Governing Body every term.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

Admissions Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Single Equalities Policy

Social Inclusion Policy

Special Educational Needs Policy

Appendix A: Attendance codes

Appendix A

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|------|-------------------------------|---|
| / | Present (am) | Pupil is present at morning registration |
| \ | Present (pm) | Pupil is present at afternoon registration |
| L | Late arrival | Pupil arrives late before register has closed |
| B | Off-site educational activity | Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school |
| D | Dual registered | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered |
| J1 | Interview | Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment |
| P | Sporting activity | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school |
| V | Educational trip or visit | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school |
| W | Work experience | Pupil is on a work experience placement |
| K | Other educational provision | Attending educational provision arranged by local authority |

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Authorised absence | | |
| C | Authorised leave of absence | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| C2 | Reduced timetable | Leave of absence for a pupil subject to a part-time timetable over a short defined time. |
| E | Excluded | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made |
| I | Illness | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness |
| M | Medical/dental appointment | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment |
| R | Religious observance | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance |
| S | Study leave | Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations |
| T | Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence | Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school |
| Unauthorised absence | | |
| G | Unauthorised holiday | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school |
| N | Reason not provided | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| O | Unauthorised absence | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence |
| U | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed |

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|----------|---|--|
| X | Not required to be in school | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend |
| Y | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| Z | Pupil not on admission register | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school |
| Q | Unable to attend due to access arrangements | Unable to attend because of lack of Local authority access arrangements |
| # | Planned school closure | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day |

In addition to the DfE codes, the school adopts the following codes to use in lessons to signify where a student is in school, but is present in a session other than their lesson.

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|----------|------------|-------------------------|
| A | Present | The ARC |
| 8 | Present | The Nest |
| 9 | Present | The Diggery |
| 2 | Present | Additional Intervention |

Important Update – Changes to Education-related Penalty Notices

Information for Parents

You may be aware that the Department for Education has recently announced national changes to penalty notices issued for unauthorised absence in term time. These changes will come into effect on 19 August 2024.

The changes to be aware of are:

- Penalty notices issued for offences that take place after 19 August 2024 will be charged at a new rate of £160 per parent per child. This can be paid at £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate.
- The threshold at which a penalty notice **must** be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period¹. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or school years.
- A maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered (such as prosecution or one of the other attendance legal interventions).
- Only penalty notices issued for absences taking place after 19 August 2024 will count towards the above thresholds.

Absences can have a lasting effect on learning

Missing a week of school means your child will miss around 25 hours of learning

This creates gaps in their knowledge and could mean they will not meet their full potential

¹ A school week is any week in which a school meets at least once.