

# ASHTON COMMUNITY SCIENCE COLLEGE

## School Policy for ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

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.

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%

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 in Years 7 - 11 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 school 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

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- 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

### Leave of Absence

The Government has recently amended key legislation relating specifically to the authorisation of leave in term time. As of 1<sup>st</sup> 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:

- 98% or higher attendance during a term to be eligible for the whole school rewards trip
- Certificates in end of term assembly for 100% attendance and improved attendance for the term
- Certificates in end of term assemblies for excellent punctuality or improved punctuality for the term
- Prizes at celebration evening in July each year for 100% attendance
- Prizes at Y11 Certificate evening for 500% attendance (100% attendance every year since Y7)
- Merits, positive letters and postcards to motivate individual students
- School attendance league

### 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 and use of planners to ensure all students are aware of their current attendance
- Attendance mentoring through the 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
- Letters to parents highlighting current attendance and concerns
- Report cards to monitor punctuality to school and to lessons
- Work by the attendance and pastoral teams to identify patterns of absence and the causes of these.

- Weekly welfare meetings between Progress Leaders and Student Engagement Officer 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
- Completion of a CAF / 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 first lesson). Students arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (L). Students arriving late will be placed in a lunchtime detention with a Student Progress Leader. Persistent late arrival will trigger further interventions as detailed in this policy.

The registers will close at 9.10am (school reserves the right to amend this time e.g. if severe weather has affected the start of the school day). 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.

Afternoon registration opens at 1.40pm and all students are expected to be punctual to this, since they are not allowed off site at lunchtime. From time to time, the school operates a 3:2 day, which brings forward lunchtime by one hour. When this is the case, afternoon registration opens at 12.40pm. Parents and students are informed when changes to the school day are made and alternative arrangements are offered.

### **Persistent Absence**

Persistent absence is defined as students being absent for 10% or more of the school year, regardless of the reasons.

The Current threshold is less than 91% attendance at any time and all PA data returns are submitted to the Local Authority School Attendance Team on a termly basis. 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 in any one term or 14 sessions **across** 2 consecutive terms. 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 penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority. The parents/carers can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

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

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offence. A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

- Attendance updates broken down by year group and showing a three year trend will be presented termly to the Governors Personnel Committee.
- Attendance data will be 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 Progress Leader and the Assistant Head teacher with responsibility for data and interventions put in place.
- Attendance will be a standing agenda item on half termly Pastoral Leaders and Year Team meetings.

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

Admissions Policy

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Single Equalities Policy

Social Inclusion Policy

Special Educational Needs Policy