

Ashton Community Science College

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Version Control

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Overview of Amendments to this Version:	Outlining the policies agreed principles. Further information on attendance whilst at alternative provision. Appendix A – DfE Attendance Codes.

AIM

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.

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, 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:

- 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 each year and from the start of a students time at Ashton Community Science College
- House Points, 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 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
- 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 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
- 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 will be placed in a breaktime detention. Persistent late arrival will trigger further interventions as detailed in this policy.

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 offer

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 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 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.
- Attendance will be a standing agenda item on half termly Pastoral Leaders and Year Team meetings.
- 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 1: attendance codes

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
J	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

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
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
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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
#	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
K	Present	The Nest
Q	Present	The Diggery
2	Present	Additional Intervention