Attendance Policy

Person responsible	Jo Ronxin
Approved by directors	
First written	July 2022 / last amended July 2023

For review	Reviewed	Signature
July 2023	Completed	Jo Ronxin
July 2024		
July 2025		
July 2026		
July 2027		
July 2028		

All policies are renewed annually. If no change then just signed. If an amendment or full change is required, this is recorded.

Contents

Policy statement

Acorn Education Trust is committed to ensuring that students and parents/carers understand the absolute importance of full attendance at school. Absence has a detrimental effect on a student's academic progress; indeed, it is the greatest determinant of under-achievement at all phases. Poor attendance or sporadic absences may also be an indicator of underlying issues that need resolving either inside or outside of school. Absence from school may also mean that a young person is more vulnerable to safeguarding risks, such as sexual and criminal exploitation, including county lines activity. As such, all our schools invest time and money in working with families to make student attendance a top priority. As a Trust, we take our duty to safeguard children and our mission to challenge educational and social disadvantage seriously. Securing great attendance for all students is at the heart of our work. We work tirelessly to create a culture in our schools where students want to attend and we see great attendance as a benchmark of our climate.

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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, 2016
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

1.0 Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence;
- acting early to address patterns of absence;
- creating an environment in which students are enabled to become mature and industrious, accepting responsibility for their own actions and preparing for future success;
- forming an active partnership with parents/carers to support the learning of their children;
- ensuring regular contact with students in order to safeguard their well-being;
- providing every opportunity for our students to secure outstanding outcomes and reach their full potential.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2.0 Targets, attendance and punctuality

The target for all students is to achieve 100% attendance and 100% punctuality. The minimum expectation for all students is attendance over the academic year of 97%.

Attendance during one school year	Equivalent days missed	Equivalent sessions missed	Equivalent weeks missed	Equivalent lessons missed
95%	9 days	18 sessions	2 weeks	54 lessons
90%	19 days	38 sessions	4 weeks	114 lessons
85%	29 days	58 sessions	6 weeks	174 lessons
80%	38 days	72 sessions	8 weeks	228 lessons
75%	48 days	96 sessions	10 weeks	288 lessons
70%	57 days	114 sessions	11.5 weeks	342 lessons
65%	67 days	134 sessions	13.5 weeks	402 lessons

2.1 The impact of poor attendance on academic progress

If your child misses school on a regular basis, they are damaging their future life choices. Nationally, it has been proven that children with poor attendance in primary school miss out on making the expected progress in vital literacy and numeracy skills, and find it difficult to catch up. In secondary school, 19 days' absence correlates, on average, to a grade at GCSE in all subjects.

3.0 Roles and responsibilities

Outstanding achievement can only be achieved if it is recognised to be everyone's shared responsibility.

Acorn Education Trustees will:

- scrutinise attendance key performance indicators;
- hold the Executive to account for annually reviewing the attendance policy.

Acorn Education Trust Executives will:

- monitor attendance figures for all schools on a weekly basis;
- hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy;
- report to the Trust Board via the Safeguarding, Standards and Improvement committee on a termly basis;
- identify causes and patterns of absence and interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions.

Our schools will:

- accept that outstanding attendance is everyone's responsibility;
- formally recognise good attendance and punctuality (above 97%);
- challenge attendance that is less than good and set targets for students to improve;
- intervene when poor attendance/punctuality becomes a problem and before it becomes a habit;
- follow up on any non-attendance with no contact on the first day of absence with a phone call;
- deal sympathetically with any problem a student may have which is causing attendance/punctuality to decline and always stay in regular contact with parents/carers;
- act swiftly to reduce absence, in particular persistent absence, with a specific focus on immediate support for vulnerable learners;
- work actively with children and families in Nursery and Reception classes to emphasise the benefits of high attendance; to instil and reinforce good habits of attendance from the start of their educational journey;
- ensure every child of statutory school age has access to full time education;
- communicate a clear and transparent process around the management of attendance to parents and carers following the listed process: prevention and reward/recognition; support and challenge with punitive measures where necessary; and legal action and/or external agencies when other measures have no impact;
- not to grant extended leave during term time and will automatically refer to the local authority to fine;
- involve other external agencies if we believe there could be wider safeguarding issues surrounding the child;
- ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site, are implemented.

Parents/carers will:

- encourage their child to attend the school daily, be punctual and inform the school immediately if their child is absent;
- inform the school in advance of any hospital appointment unavoidably scheduled during school time via the 'Request for Medical Leave of Absence' form, which is available from the school office;
- inform the school of any problems which might affect their child's attendance;
- cooperate with the school if their child's attendance/punctuality is unsatisfactory;
- make requests for special leave of absence for their child during term time by completing in advance an 'Application for Leave in Exceptional Circumstances' form, which is available from the school office.

Students will:

- always attend the school unless prevented by a specified illness or unavoidable circumstances;
- always arrive to the school and lessons on time.

4.0 School Procedures and Recording Attendance

4.1 Attendance register

The Register is a legal document which must be completed fully and on time at AM and PM registration and then for every lesson throughout the day. We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

It will mark whether every pupil is:

- present;
- attending an approved off-site educational activity;
- absent;
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- the original entry;
- the amended entry;
- the reason for the amendment;
- the date on which the amendment was made;
- the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

See **appendix 1** for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:00pm and will be kept open until 1:10pm

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Parents must notify the school via ParentMail or by phoning 01225 754354 and leaving a voicemail.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code;
- after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

After 5 lates, an advisory letter is sent. Should lateness continue, a meeting will be held to discuss how the school can support children arriving on time.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school **does not attend, or stops attending**, the school will:

- follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by first day calling;
- ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary;
- identify whether the absence is approved or not;
- identify the correct attendance code to use.

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4.6 Reporting to parents

The school reports to parents on a child's attendance record annually in the written end-of-year report.

5.0 Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

Holidays would very rarely meet the definition of exceptional circumstances. Headteachers within Acorn Education Trust are expected to liaise with other schools within the Trust when families request time off in term time if there are siblings at more than one school.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail);
- religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart;
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision;
- other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the headteacher may grant term-time holiday.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

Our schools monitor attendance regularly. Where there are concerns about attendance, parents/carers will be informed by letter. Parents/carers may be invited to attend a school attendance meeting (SAM) where targets related to attendance will be set. If after these steps, attendance fails to improve, the school will refer the case to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year;
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission;
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6.0 Strategies for promoting attendance

West Ashton's strategies for rewarding and improving attendance include:

- rewarding good attendance over 97% weekly and termly
- rewarding exceptional attendance (100%) termly
- annual reward for 100% attendance over the year
- supporting parents/carers to remove barrier to attendance
- working with parents to support improving attendance

7.0 Attendance monitoring

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above 5 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

West Ashton School collects and stores attendance data. It may be used to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils;
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern;
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

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

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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
Code	**Definition**	**Scenario**
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
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

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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

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