



Ashton House Preparatory School

# Attendance Policy

Policy Title:	Attendance Policy
Version:	Aug 24
Policy Summary:	<p>Ashton House School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child the best educational experience possible.</p> <p>Ashton House School is committed to ensuring that there are procedures in place to maximise the attendance of every child.</p>
Policy Owner:	Head Teacher
Relevant to:	All parents and guardians
Date introduced:	October 2023
Next review date:	October 2025
Related School Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding Policy</li> </ul>
Date(s) modified/reviewed:	GMS Aug 24

The name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school is:

Headmaster: Mr Graeme M Smith Email: [gsmith@ashtonhouse.com](mailto:gsmith@ashtonhouse.com)

The name and contact details of the school staff member parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is Mrs L Quinn email: [school@ashtonhouse.com](mailto:school@ashtonhouse.com)

The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact for more individual support with attendance

Deputy Head: Miss Rosie Saxe email: [RSaxe@ashtonhouse.com](mailto:RSaxe@ashtonhouse.com)

### **The School Pupil Attendance Policy**

Ashton House School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The DfE has produced guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities: [Working together to improve school attendance.](#)

Our Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of that guidance.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

It has been developed in consultation with the Local Authority, with reference to DfE statutory guidance. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are

aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the Headmaster, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance at Ashton House School**

We believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life. We recognise the connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school is the Headmaster.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Celebrate excellent attendance achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance
- Students will receive termly certificates home for 100% attendance, Headmaster's attendance certificate for 100% at the end of the academic year.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance

### **Understanding Types of Absence**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable cause.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, however is not exhaustive:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g., because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, is counted as an absence for the session
- shopping trips
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headmaster - may result in school applying to the local authority to issue a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the local authority
- day trips
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this.

### **Absence Procedures**

Parents are to contact the school by phone or email

We thoroughly monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given. If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 8.30 am. You may send an email, or phone. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 8.30 am

- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you, however it is your responsibility to contact us
- If we are unable to contact parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send emails and a home visit may be made in the interests of safeguarding
- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be “missing from education.”

**If absence continues**, we will:

- Write to you if your child’s attendance is below 90%, or where punctuality is a concern
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with the Head Teacher
- Create a personalised action/support plan to address any barriers to attendance
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services if appropriate
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to further absence. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed, miss vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

The times of the start of the school day for all pupils at Ashton House School are: 8.25 - 8.40 a.m. with registration at 8.45 am

### **How we manage lateness:**

- The school day starts at 8.40am when the school gates close.
- Registers are taken at 8.45 am and your child will receive a late mark ‘L’ if they are not in by 8.45am
- Children arriving after the school gates close at 8.40am are required to come into school via the school office. They must be signed in by a parent/carer and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded.
- At 8.50am the registers will be closed and the first lesson starts

In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site - ‘U’, but this will not count as a present mark, and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence

- The school may contact parents/carers regarding lateness

- You can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

### **Understanding barriers to attendance**

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents, and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) or the relevant Local Authority team/s.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners where appropriate.

### **Local Authority attendance support services**

Local Authority Attendance Specialists work strategically by offering support to schools, families, and other professionals to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority.

If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice, prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of an Education Supervision Order, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

### **School Attendance and the Law**

By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

Unauthorised absence may result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school". The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headmasters may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they no longer have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year. It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headmaster, irrespective of the child's overall attendance.

Only the Headmaster or designate may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by the school. A Penalty Notice may be issued where there have been at least 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence for the purpose of a holiday, however, due to the importance of pupils settling into school at the commencement of the school year, Penalty Notices may also be issued if there have been at least 6 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence during the first two calendar weeks of September due to a term-time holiday.

At Ashton House School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as: ... being of unique and significant emotional, educational, or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the Headmaster). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- at any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class at the start of the academic year as quickly as possible.
- during assessment and test periods in the school's calendar affecting your child.
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.

### **Deletion from Roll**

A 'Pupils moving from school' form can be obtained from the school office. This provides school with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and appropriately safeguard all our pupils, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency. Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are now legally required to notify their Local Authority of every new entry to the admission register within five days of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, every deletion from the school register must also be



notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

### **Absence data**

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve. Persistently absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking as increased absence affects attainment. We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time, every day. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance at our school as possible.