Attendance Policy

The Abbey School, Reading

Reviewed by:	Deputy Head (SS) and Assistant Head (JS)	February 2024
Ratified by:	Whole School Leadership Committee and Governor Audit	February 2024
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Key Principles

For students to benefit fully from the educational opportunities provided by the School, high levels of attendance and punctuality are important. Ineffective registration or poorly executed follow-up procedures can increase the risks of poor attendance and time-keeping becoming habitual, which may negatively affect personal and social development among students.

Additionally, any child missing from school is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect or may indicate that a student is at risk of significant harm. Consequently, attendance and registration arrangements are vital and must be seen to be regarded as such by students, parents and staff. Improving attendance and punctuality is everyone's responsibility.

Overall there are five strands to effective attendance arrangements:

- High expectations of all students to attend punctually and regularly
- Monitoring attendance to spot issues of concern
- Listening and understanding where attendance issues arise
- Facilitating informal support
- Formalising support where necessary and ensuring appropriate intervention

Aims

This policy aims to provide a clear, consistent and cohesive framework that meets statutory requirements and promotes high levels of attendance and punctuality of students at the School, as well as outlining clear procedures for identifying and addressing situations where students fail to attend regularly or punctually.

It is intended to promote a shared awareness of statutory obligations and their importance among students, staff and parents. It is also designed to ensure that absences and instances of lateness are identified and recorded systematically and accurately and followed up quickly and appropriately.

This policy also has regard to the School's obligations concerning the admissions register when students leave outside of standard transition times. See Appendix 2.

Statutory Framework

The legal framework governing school attendance is summarised in Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, 2022, updated August 2023). The School also complies with guidance published by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) and the advice of local authorities.

Responsibilities

Parents
Parents with a child of compulsory school age have a legal duty to make sure that their child receives efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and to any special education needs they may have. This means their child must attend every day that school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or securing permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Parents are responsible for informing the school on any occasion/day when their child is unable to attend due to illness, a medical appointment or pre-agreed work experience, providing the reason for non-attendance.

At the Senior and Junior School, the procedure is as follows:

- Absence should be reported as early as possible in the morning and in any case before 8.15 am via My School Portal (MSP)
- Use the Absence Form under 'My Children'
- You will be asked to identify the days covered by the absence, and a brief description of the reason.

Parents should only request an advance leave of absence for their child in exceptional circumstances where clear educational benefit or compelling family reasons apply and where it is not feasible for the event to take place in holiday time.

Such requests must be made using MSP, following the procedure outlined above for daily absence. Please select the reason and provide a brief description. The request will be considered by the relevant member of the leadership team and approval granted by the approval of the Head of the Junior/Senior School. Where a student has missed five consecutive days due to illness, or where there is a recurrent pattern of absence due to ill-health, parents may be asked to provide suitable medical evidence. As far as possible, parents should book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day/term.

The School works closely with all families to help understand and overcome any barriers to attendance. Where there is persistent absence, for example an absence rate of over 10% for extended periods, the School will also work with local authorities to ensure support is joined up and cohesive.

Students
Students have a responsibility to attend school when they are fit and well and to arrive at School in time for registration (morning and afternoon) each day during term time.

If, for any reason, a student needs to leave the School site during the school day, they must receive permission from the appropriate member of staff who will liaise with home as necessary. Sixth Formers are permitted to be absent during the day in accordance with arrangements laid out by the Sixth Form team.

The School
The School holds a number of responsibilities regarding student attendance. It must:

- Develop and maintain a whole-school culture that promotes the benefits of high
- attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, students and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.

- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work together with other partners in the area, such as local

authorities, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Designated Senior Leaders for Attendance
The designated senior leaders for attendance are:

- Junior School - Sacha Heard, Assistant Head and Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Senior School - George Morton, Deputy Head and Designated Safeguarding Lead

They are supported by members of the administration and reception teams. They have overall responsibility for attendance across the school. Where individual records suggest attendance issues, they support the pastoral team to ensure an appropriate plan is devised in consultation with families to improve the situation.

Form teachers and tutors and pastoral teams
Form teachers and tutors see students daily and manage morning registration. They are the first port of call in the event of concerns about attendance. They should know all members of their forms well and provide a supportive environment with clear expectations. Where they identify any substantive concerns with attendance they should share them with Heads of Year so that the pastoral team can help put effective support in place. The pastoral team will ensure regular and supportive communication with home in the event of any attendance concerns.

All staff
Depending on their role staff may have different perspectives on attendance and punctuality – for example, be well-placed to notice habitual late attendance due to their place of work. All staff are encouraged to be curious and supportive of student welfare and to raise any queries with the appropriate member of the pastoral team.

Using Data to Support Attendance

The School recognises that worrying attendance trends require swift identification and intervention to prevent them becoming habitual. An effective strategy for reviewing attendance data is therefore essential. As part of its strategies, the school will:

- Monitor and analyse attendance data on a regular basis
- Analyse trends of half-termly, termly and annual data (including of individual students, cohorts and of poor attendance on specific days)
- Devise appropriate strategies in response to this data, at individual and cohort level as appropriate

Managing Long-Term Conditions

In exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. This may include a period of authorised absence or remote learning and a period of part-time or reduced timetable study. Such arrangements will only be made for the shortest time possible and will be regularly reviewed. They will never be used as part of a strategy to help manage behavioural needs.

Addressing Persistent or Severe Absence

The School will seek to reduce severe or persistent absence, in accordance with Working Together to Improve School Attendance. The school's strategy when doing so is founded

4

upon the understanding that the child's welfare is paramount, and that respectful and positive relationships between home and school will be the foundation of good attendance; and that the School will be seeking to understand and remove barriers to attendance, together with the parents. Wider support from local authority and other partners will be sought where lower level supports are not proving effective at improving concerning attendance, with enforcement measures as a last resort. The School notes that:

- Where students miss more than 10% of school across a sustained period, the DfE advises that we work with local authorities to put in additional targeted support.
- Particular focus must be given to students missing 40% or more of school or who have ten consecutive days of unexplained/unauthorised absence.
- The School will always contact the relevant local authority children's services where a child is absent without an authorised reason for ten days or more, whenever a child's levels of unauthorised attendance exceeds 5% or whenever any absence appears to the School to raise a safeguarding concern.

In seeking to address concerning absence, the School will make informal contact seeking to understand in-school barriers and to support student and parents in overcoming these or other barriers. These may include welfare or mental health support, mentoring, creating and emphasising positive reasons to attend school; plans for successfully making it to school; voluntary engagement with local authority services.

The School will be particularly mindful and sensitive when supporting students whose attendance is impaired by long-term medical conditions (physical or mental health), disabilities or special educational needs.

In rare cases the School may identify the need, in partnership with the local authority, to formalise attendance support via parenting contracts, parenting orders, education supervision orders, attendance prosecution or fixed penalty notices. In all such cases the School will work collaboratively and with due regard to the Working together to improve school attendance guidance.

Appendix 1: Day-to-Day Attendance Processes

The School has a legal responsibility for taking and maintaining an accurate School Register (SR) of all students twice each day throughout term time: once at the beginning of the morning session and once in the second (afternoon) session.

Junior School

Registration is taken by Junior School teachers.

Morning registration: students should arrive to register by 8.40 am, with the register being taken at 8.50 am (and 9.00 am for Nursery children). The register formally opens on iSAMS at 8.20 am and closes at 9.15 am.

Afternoon registration: students should be registered at 1.10 pm at the start of period 7. The afternoon register closes at 1.20 pm. The register formally opens on iSAMS at 12.55 pm and closes at 1.30 pm.

Students who have music lessons during registration are noted on the school's MIS and the Reception team checks the accuracy of this. Students who arrive late must register by signing in at Reception.

Senior School

Morning registration is taken by form tutors. A second registration is taken at the start of the afternoon session during period 7 by subject teachers. Students may only be registered present when seen in person and not when reported present by others.

Morning registration: students should arrive to registration by 8.30 am and the register should be taken at 8.35 am. The register formally closes at 8.45 am.

Afternoon registration: students should be registered in afternoon classes between 1 pm and 1.10 pm. Sixth formers with study periods must register with the Sixth Form team. The register formally closes at 1.15 pm.

Students who have music lessons during registration must register via the music department. Students who arrive late must register by signing the late book at Reception.

The attendance registers are checked daily. Where a student is absent and no satisfactory reason may be established the procedures outlined in the Missing Student Policy will be followed.

Where the reason for absence is not sufficiently clear, it may be recorded as unexplained. Any such records will be followed up and replaced with the appropriate code within 5 working days.

Appendix 2: Admission and Attendance registers

The School maintains an accurate Admission Register (the School Roll) and Attendance Register. All students are placed on the Admission Register, both of compulsory and non-compulsory school age, and have their attendance recorded in the Attendance Register.

The School notifies the local authority within five days of adding any student's name to the Admissions Register at the start of the year other than in Nursery, Reception, Upper III and Lower VI and within five days of adding any student (excluding Nursery) to the register after the start of the academic year.

The following information about students is included in the Admissions Register:

- full name;
- sex;
- the full name and address of each of the pupil's parents;
- which of the pupil's parents the pupil normally lives with and at least one telephone number by which each parent who the pupil normally lives with can be contacted in an emergency; ideally more than one number is recorded
- day, month and year of birth;
- day, month and year of admission or re-admission to the school;
- name and address of the school last attended, if any.

Where a student departs at a non-standard transition point, the School notifies both the local authority and the family's local authority depending on their place of residence before the date of deletion from the Admissions Register. This does not apply to standard transition points at the end of Lower III, Upper V or Upper VI.

A statutory age student should not be taken off the roll at a non-standard transition point until their new school name and start date have been confirmed, and new home address and start date if they have moved home addresses. In cases of students moving abroad, the new school name and start date will suffice.

Appendix 3: attendance register codes

Attendance and Absence Codes
National codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics through the School Census system. The data helps schools, local authorities and the government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reason for, absence and the delivery of education.

Present
Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm
Students must not be recorded as present if they are not in school during registration. If a student were to leave the school premises after registration, they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

Code L: Late arrival before the register is closed
The School should actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late
arrival. A student arriving after the register has closed should be recorded as absent using code U, or another absence code that is more appropriate.

Authorised Absence from School
Authorised absence means that one of a specific set of circumstances applies, as set out below:

Code C: Leave of absence granted by the school
Only exceptional circumstances warrant granting a leave of absence. Leaves of absence may also apply where a student is participating in a performance or is on a temporary reduced timetable of study.

Code H: Leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday granted by the school
Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable. Absences will only be approved where the circumstances are exceptional.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made
If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst
they are suspended from school or excluded from school, but their name is still entered
in the admission register.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
Parents should notify the school on the first day the student is unable to attend due to illness. Schools must record absences as authorised where pupils cannot attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related).

Code M: Medical or dental appointment
Where possible appointments should be made out of school hours. Where this is not possible, students should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance
The School will record absence as authorised when it falls on a day that is
exclusively set apart for religious observance by the parents' religious body (not the
parents).

Code S: Study leave
Study leave applies to students facing public examination. The school remains open during study leave for students to attend meetings with teachers and conduct revision.

Code T: Traveller absence
A number of different groups are covered by the generic term traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. This code is not to be used for general absences by those groups. It must only be used when the pupil's parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes and the school has granted a leave of absence following a request from the parent. This code should not be used to record any other types of absence by these groups.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a student's absence is not one of the types of absence listed as authorised or where the reason for a pupil's absence has not been provided and cannot be established.

Code G: Holiday not granted by the school or in excess of the period determined by the school
Where the School has not granted a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away longer that the period of leave granted.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided
The School will follow up all unexplained and unexpected absence in a timely manner. Code N should not remain on the register indefinitely. If a reason for absence cannot be established within 5 working days, the code should be changed to O.

Code O: Absent without authorisation
Where no reason for absence is established or the School is not satisfied that the reason given is an authorised absence.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed
Where a student has arrived late after the register has closed and the school is not satisfied that the reason for lateness is an authorised absence.

Attending an approved educational activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is attending another school at which they are registered or taking part in off-site activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or unregistered alternative provision.

Code D: Dual registered at another school
The law allows for a pupil to be registered at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the student was not expected to attend the school in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis.

Code B: Off-site educational Activity
Attending an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the School and supervised by someone authorised by the School.

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education, or transfer to another school.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity
Taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the School.

Code V: Educational visit or trip
Attendance at an organised visit or trip, including residential trips organised by the School, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the School.

Code W: Work experience
Work experience for students in the final 2 years of compulsory school age.

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
Where a student is unable to attend school because:
- the school site or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause at a time when pupils are due to attend; or
- a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

Administrative codes
Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school
Where a pupil not of compulsory school age is attending school part-time.

Code Z: Prospective pupil not on admission register
To enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure
Whole school closures that are known and planned in advance.