



# Abbey College Ramsey

## Attendance and Truancy Policy

**Policy Developed by:** Kate Wibberley

**Reviewing committee:** Learner Progress and Engagement Committee

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## Statement of intent

Abbey College believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling good attendance.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which states that:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- b) to any special educational needs he/she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”.

and in accordance with:

Section 23 Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 and

Section 444 Education Act 1996

## 1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2021 or latest version) 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'

1.2. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy (Adopted Cambridgeshire County Council)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Emotionally Based School Refusal Policy
- Behaviour and Inclusion Policy
- Home Visits Guidance and Procedure policy

## 2. Definitions

2.1. The school defines "absence" as either:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

2.2. The school defines an "authorised absence" as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency.

2.3. The school defines an "unauthorised absence" as:

- Parents keeping children away from school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.

2.4. The school defines "Persistent Absenteeism (PA)" as:

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the academic year for any reason.

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling for a sustained period during the academic year - 8 sessions (4 full school days) in any 8 week period or any 6 consecutive sessions (3 full school days)

### **3. Roles and responsibilities**

3.1. The Governing Body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of the attendance policy and procedures of the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing in Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

3.2. The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of the attendance policy and procedures of the school and distributing these to parents.

3.3. Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for:

- Following the attendance policy, and for ensuring pupils do so too. They will also be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.

3.4. Designated members of staff will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of each afternoon session.

3.5. The school will ensure that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

3.6. The school will inform the LA (Local Authority) of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Are being educated from home.
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.

- Are in custody for a period of more than four months
  - Have been permanently excluded (Managed moved in Cambridgeshire)
- 3.7. Parents will be expected to take responsibility for the attendance of their children during term-time.
- 3.8. Parents will be expected to promote good attendance and ensure their children attend school every day.
- 3.9. Pupils are responsible for their own attendance at school and any agreed activities throughout the school year.
- 3.10. All pupils are responsible for their punctuality to lessons.

#### **4. Training of staff**

- 4.1. We recognise that early intervention can prevent continued poor attendance. As such, members of staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their inductions and annual refresher training.
- 4.2. Teachers and support staff will receive training on this policy as part of their new starter induction.
- 4.3. Teachers and support staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.
- 4.4. Teachers and support staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

#### **5. Pupil expectations**

- 5.1. Pupils will be expected to attend school every day and may be asked to sign an agreement at the beginning of each school year.
- 5.2. The school expects all pupils to attend lessons punctually.
- 5.3. Pupils will be expected to report any absence immediately to the relevant member of staff.

#### **6. Absence procedures**

- 6.1. Parents are required to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of any absence.
- 6.2. A telephone call/ text will be made to the parent of any child who has not reported their absence on the first day that they do not attend school.
- 6.3. The school will always follow up any absences in order to:
- Ascertain the reason for the absence.

- Ensure that proper safeguarding action is being taken.
  - Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
  - Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.
  - Fulfil Safe and Well visits when necessary
- 6.4. In the case of persistent absence, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the Attendance Officer (Education Welfare Officer).
- 6.5. The school will inform the LA, on a termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without permission.
- 6.6. When a pupils attendance has fallen below 90% or they have missed 8 or more sessions in any 8 week period or who have missed 6 consecutive sessions or more without permission a formal meeting will be arranged and the local authority notified
- 6.7. Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from the school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admission register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the child after making reasonable enquiries.

## **7. Contact information**

- 7.1. Parents must provide accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- 7.2. Parents are responsible for updating the school if the details change.
- 7.3. Parents must provide the school with more than one emergency contact number.

## **8. Attendance register**

- 8.1. The designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:
- Present.
  - Absent.
  - Attending an approved educational visit.
  - Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- 8.2. The school will use the national attendance codes to enable the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:
- / = Present in the morning
  - \ = Present in the afternoon
  - L = Late arrival before the register has closed
  - C = Authorised absence
  - E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
  - H = Authorised holiday
  - I = Illness

- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site educational activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- S = Study leave
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- W = Work experience
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- J = At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register
- # = Planned whole or partial school closure

8.3. When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, for example, induction days.

8.4. All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment, and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

8.5. Every entry into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

## **9. Attendance Officer**

9.1. If they are persistently absent, pupils will be referred to the local Attendance Officer who will attempt to resolve the situation through a parent agreement.

9.2. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the local Attendance Officer has the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices.

## **10. Lateness**

10.1. Punctuality is of the utmost importance, and lateness will not be tolerated.

10.2. The school day starts at 8:40 am; pupils should be in school at this time.

10.3. Registers are marked by 8:50 am; pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.

10.4. The register closes at 9:10am; pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.



- 10.5. Attendance after the register closes will receive a mark to show that they are on site, but will count as an absent mark.

## **11. Truancy**

- 11.1. Truancy means any absence of part, or of all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.
- 11.2. All staff will be concerned about the regular attendance of pupils, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning.
- 11.3. All pupils are expected to be in their classes by 8:40am and 2:10pm, where the teacher will record the attendance electronically.
- 11.4. Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must sign out at reception and sign back in again on their return.
- 11.5. Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting.
- 11.6. If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher (or delegated staff member) or Attendance Officer will be notified and they will contact the child's parents, in order to assess the reasons behind the child not attending school.
- 11.7. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:
- In the first instance, the school Behaviour and Inclusion Policy will be used to sanction the student
  - If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice.
  - A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term time and persistent late arrival at school.

## **12. Missing children**

- 12.1. Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the Attendance Officer
- 12.2. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing during the school day:
- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the SSO team via the sims alert button or radio.
  - The Welfare team will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
  - The following areas will be systematically searched:
    - All classrooms

- All toilets
  - Changing rooms
  - The local immediate area outside the school grounds
  - Any outbuildings
  - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a radio with them so they can be contacted.
  - If the pupil has not been found after 15 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
  - The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contacts provided.
  - If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the list has been exhausted, then the police will be contacted.
  - The SSO team (or Welfare Team) will complete a Safeguarding referral via 'MyConcern', describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- 12.3. If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a CiC (Child in Care), or has SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- 12.4. When the pupil has been located, a designated member of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- 12.5. The Headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure the pupil understands they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary.
- 12.6. Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.
- 12.7. The Headteacher will carry out a full investigation, and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred.
- 12.8. Appropriate disciplinary procedures are followed in accordance with the Behaviour and Inclusion Policy.
- 12.9. Prolonged periods of unauthorised absence without contact will be handled in accordance with clauses [6.7](#)- [6.9](#) of this policy.
- 12.10. A written report will be produced and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome.

### **13. Term-time leave**

- 13.1. Our aim is to prepare pupils for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed.
- 13.2. Leave during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, for example bereavement or serious illness.

- 13.3. Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.
- 13.4. Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:
- During Year 7 when a pupil is settling into the school, unless exceptional circumstances apply, e.g. the death of a family member
  - Immediately before and during assessment periods
  - When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
  - Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason
- 13.5. If term time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions such as a penalty notice.

## **14. Religious Observances**

- 14.1. The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days required for religious festivals.
- 14.2. Parents must inform the school at least 7 days in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.
- 14.3. The day(s) of absence must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.

## **15. Appointments**

- 15.1. As far as possible, parents should attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- 15.2. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to the school.
- 15.3. If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, the pupil must be signed out by a parent.
- 15.4. Pupils must attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

## **16. Young carers**

- 16.1. The school understands the difficulties young carers face, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as throughout their time at the school.
- 16.2. The school takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each situation will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

## **17. Exceptional Circumstances**

- 17.1. When absence is due to exceptional circumstances, the 'Y' code will be used on the attendance register.
- 17.2. Exceptional circumstances include when a pupil is unable to attend because:
- Transport provided by the school or LA is not available and the pupil's home is not within walking distance.
  - There has been widespread disruption to travel services which has prevented the pupil from attending.
  - The pupil is in custody and will be detained for less than four months.
- 17.3. The use of the 'Y' code is collected in the school census for statistical purposes.

## **18. Rewarding Good Attendance**

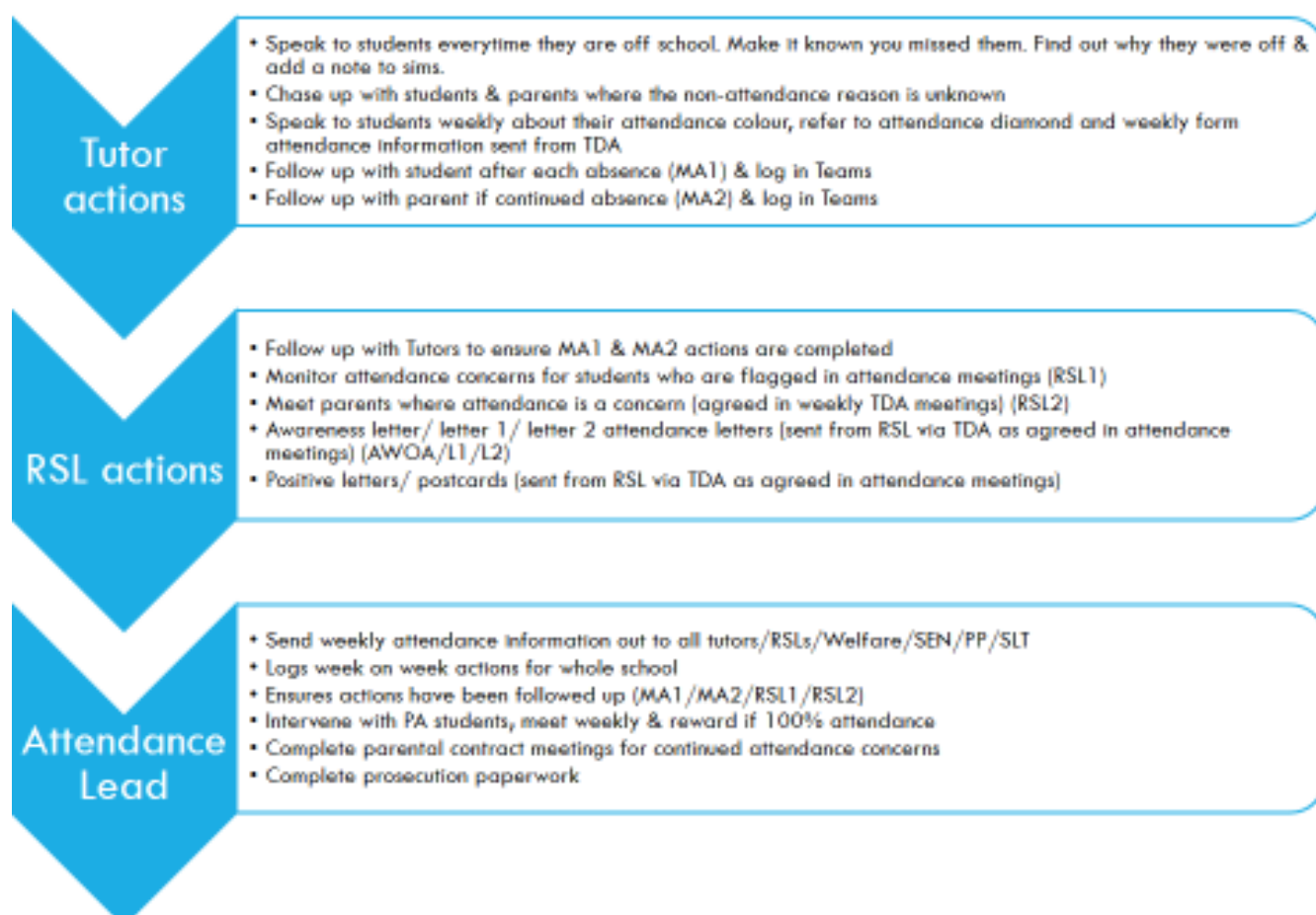
- 18.1. The school acknowledges outstanding attendance in the following ways:
- Trip to a theme park
  - Certificates
  - Letters of congratulations home
  - Vouchers
- 18.2. Good attendance and punctuality will be rewarded in the following ways:
- Postcards home
  - Rewards raffle
  - Spirit stamps/points
- 18.3. School trips and events are a privilege. Where attendance drops below 95 percent, these privileges may be taken away.
- 18.4. Attendance at the Year 11 prom requires 90 percent attendance in year 11.

## **19. Monitoring and review**

- 19.1. The school monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year through audits.
- 19.2. The school's attendance target is 97 percent each year.
- 19.3. Details of our absence levels can be found on our website.
- 19.4. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and the Attendance Officer.
- 19.5. Any changes made to the policy will be communicated to all members of staff.
- 19.6. The next scheduled review date for this policy is March 2024.

# Attendance Monitoring Procedures

## Escalation procedures from January 2022



## What sanctions can be put in place for non-attendance?

Parents can be issued a **Fixed Penalty Notice** by the Local Authority for their child's non-attendance. The penalty is £60 and this rises to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

There is no right of appeal against a Fixed Penalty Notice. If this is not paid, the Local Authority can proceed to prosecution or withdraw the notice. The Local Authority can also prosecute parents for non-attendance without issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice. Only the Local Authority can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs. Local authorities must conduct its investigations in line with the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\)](#).

If a registered pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the parent could be guilty of an offence under [section 444 Education Act 1996](#). In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school "*regularly*" means attendance in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not "*sufficiently frequent attendance*". This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so and failure to do this may lead to the commission of an offence.

There are 2 offences:

1. [Section 444\(1\) Education Act 1996](#) – If the child is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1,000.
2. [Section 444\(1A\) Education Act 1996](#) – an aggravated offence. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act then the parent is guilty of an offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2,500 and a prison sentence of up to 3 months.

Parents can also be prosecuted by Local Authorities under [section 103 Education and Inspections Act 2006](#), where a pupil of compulsory school age who remains on the Admissions Register is found in a public place during school hours, after being excluded from school. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1,000.