



Abbey College, Ramsey

Attendance Policy

October 2024

**Policy Developed by
Reviewing Committee**

Revised on

Approved on

Frequency of review

Date of next review

K Wibberley
Education Committee

October 2024

3rd December 2024

Every 2 years

Autumn 2026

Principles

As a school, we realise that for a pupil to reach their full educational potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. An ethos of high levels of attendance and punctuality is recognised and valued across our whole school community. We aim to work with parents/carers to ensure that all pupils registered at school attend every day and on time, unless the absence is unavoidable. We expect that all pupils will achieve at least 97% attendance but recognise that there may be exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence, or absences relating to persistent health issues. Our policy applies to all pupils of statutory school age, across the Key Stages to promote good attendance habits school wide.

The following guidance has been taken into consideration when developing this policy: [Working Together to Improve School Attendance. August 2024.](#)

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Support pupils and their parents/carers to have the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer.
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities.

School education lays the vital foundations of a pupil's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Absence from school can place pupils at risk and in some cases result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. As a school we will encourage parents/carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

The school has a safeguarding duty of care to all its pupils. We take the role of ensuring a pupil's good attendance as part of our safeguarding duties.

Expectations:

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school prepared for the school day, punctually and in time for registration. Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Inform school in advance of any medical appointments during school time. Parents may on occasion be asked to provide supporting information from the hospital, doctor or dentist, such as appointment details card/letter/text message in relation to the time requested. Where possible, medical appointments should be arranged outside of school hours.
- Ensure that they contact the school before 8.30am if their child is unable to attend school, citing the reason.
- Inform the school as soon as possible about a pupil's reluctance to come to school so that any problem can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Follow application procedures regarding a request for leave of absence during term time, which should only be taken if absolutely necessary. Leave is not automatically authorised unless considered an exceptional circumstance. Any leave taken during term time, that has been unauthorised, could be subject to a penalty notice/fine.
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details, and ensure school has more than one name, address and telephone number as an emergency contact.
- Engage with early interventions designed to support the family and their child's attendance at school.

- Discuss attendance where necessary face to face or on the telephone – conversations are preferable to messages or emails.
- Monitor their child's attendance at school using the Edulink system.

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that pupils of statutory school age (until the last Friday in June when the pupil is in Year 11) attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting an absence from school without good reason is an offence.

We expect that school will:

- Provide a safe learning environment.
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor individual pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- Contact parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers. Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, information from a GP or other relevant body may be requested to assist school in offering appropriate support.
- Promote and celebrate good attendance and punctuality, for example through assemblies, social media, displays and parent/carer communications.
- Meet regularly with the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Local Authority Attendance Service.
- Provide bespoke support to pupils at risk of persistent absence. This will include reintegration plans for excluded students and both short and long-term absentees as appropriate.
- Work alongside other services and teams to support pupils' attendance. E.g. other schools in a multi academy trust, the Local Authority, Early Help, Social Care, Youth Offending Service, Senior Transition Advisers, Virtual School and the local community (including volunteers).
- Share attendance data with parents/carers and make it clear what good attendance and success looks like for their child.
- Communicate clearly and consistently with parents/carers and pupils regarding attendance.
- Follow the Local Authority Medical Needs Policy for pupils who are failing to access education in school due to medical and behavioural needs. This goes hand in hand with Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.
- Consider an Individual Healthcare Plan for pupils with medical needs.
- Work alongside the school's Education Inclusion Officer (EIO) to identify and support pupils with medical needs preventing them from attending school.
- Work with pregnant pupils to ensure reasonable and sufficient leave is taken, which will be treated as leave of absence for exceptional circumstances.

The Attendance Champion for our school is Mrs Kate Wibberley, Deputy Headteacher and can be contacted on KWibberley@abbey.college

All members of the school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness; with the Headteacher having overall responsibility for the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil. Where there are concerns, parents will always be informed by letter and/or telephone conversation and given an opportunity to come into school to meet with designated staff.

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day.
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss with their form tutor any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that governors will:

- Monitor attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis.
- Hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

We expect that the Local Authority will:

- Provide support, information and guidance to school by having regular meetings to discuss attendance.
- Act as a partner with school to support in some cases of persistent absence.
- Work with schools in the enforcement of penalty notices, fines and prosecutions in cases that require legal involvement.
- Identify suitable provision and reasonable adjustments for pupils unable to access education due to prolonged ill health.

School Attendance Strategy

The school's Attendance Team includes a School Attendance Officer, Raising Standard Leads, a Welfare Department and a Senior Attendance Champion.

Whilst Mrs Kate Wibberley is our Senior Attendance Champion, for day-to-day aspects of attendance, please contact our Attendance Officer, Ms Tina Davis, TDavis@abbey.college

We are responsible for all pupils' attendance at school, and we partner with other agencies to help us do this. For pupils who might need extra support to maintain their attendance e.g. Young Carers, we signpost families to appropriate places to reduce the impact that their needs and personal circumstances have on their attendance at school. Safeguarding and attendance are closely linked, and we work together with Social Care to identify where pupils need extra support. We will work with families in many different ways to overcome barriers to attendance. All staff have direct access to our trained Safeguarding Team, and this is important for this work.

School is responsible for monitoring whole school attendance data and using this to inform how we support pupils. We share this data with school staff to ensure continuity of support and use the pastoral system such as Raising standard Leads and Form Tutors to engage pupils in attendance intervention. We are required to report our attendance to the Department for Education (DfE) so that we can compare our performance with that of other schools, both locally and nationally. Attendance data is analysed regularly, and pupils whose attendance is falling or deemed to be a concern will be noted. This will be communicated with parents and carers. Support will then be put in place. Pupils whose attendance falls to 90% or under are deemed to be 'persistently absent' and can be referred to the Local Authority for enforcement action. Pupils whose attendance is 50% or under are 'severely persistently absent' and parents/carers will be expected to engage in substantial support.

We have a whole-school ethos of promoting and celebrating attendance. This means that we train every staff member in attendance procedures so that everyone understands the processes for attendance and the pastoral structures in school. We train, remind and support all staff to follow this policy, and constantly refer to it. Good attendance is celebrated with pupils and families and reported

to parents/carers as part of the in year assessment reports. You can also see your pupil's attendance on the online platform that you use as a school e.g. Edulink

Our whole-school strategy for attendance involves deciding how to allocate resources (both financial and staffing) to manage attendance. Our support and early interventions for attendance are regularly monitored to ensure they are having an impact and are worth the resources allocated to them.

Supporting Attendance

As a school, we aim to work collaboratively with parents/carers to improve school attendance. This means that we will **listen, empathise and support with attendance. However, if this is unsuccessful, legal sanctions will be considered where appropriate.**



When required, support strategies with a monitoring period will be put in place to help improve the attendance or lateness of a pupil. Should a pupil's attendance or lateness continue to be a concern despite the support strategies in place, with no improvement to the expected level set by school, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team for statutory aged pupils. This could result in a Penalty Notice/fine, or prosecution being issued by Cambridgeshire County Council, as per section 444 Education Act 1996. This may result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

Attendance is monitored daily by the **School Attendance Officer** who will:

- Scrutinise the registers daily, monitoring authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons provided for pupil absence and lateness.
- Monitor the MIS system to ensure accuracy of record keeping by all staff completing registers.
- Inform Raising Standards Leads, Form Tutors, SEND department and Welfare Team when attendance concerns occur.
- Contact parents by telephone, email, or letter to establish a reason for a pupil's absence if the reason is unknown.
- Raise concerns with parents/carers once attendance has fallen below an acceptable level.
- Offer support or signpost to other areas of support within the community.
- Step One Tutor conversation with student advising of our concerns regarding the level of their attendance/lateness, and offering support.
- Step Two Telephone call/email advising parent/carers of our concerns regarding the level of their child's attendance/lateness and offering support.
- Step Three Meeting with student (Student Support Plan)
Letter to offer support and further explain the effect the absence/lateness is having on the pupil
- Step Four Send an invitation to attend a meeting to enter into an Attendance Contract. This is a supportive meeting, entered into voluntarily to discuss the needs of a pupil and family and identify ways that barriers to attendance can be removed.
- Step Five. Should the Attendance Contract fail to improve attendance, or should there be no engagement with interventions and support despite every attempt by the school to

support the family, a request for the issue of a penalty notice/fine or prosecution could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team for pupils of statutory school age.

- At Step 4 or 5, school might consider using a Notice To Improve letter, a strategy used in partnership with the Local Authority to set targets for improved attendance. This is a final attempt to improve attendance when parents/carers are failing to engage with support being offered by school, before referring parents for legal sanctions.
- Following use of one of the two pathways above, if attendance does not improve, school will refer to the Local Authority for legal sanctions.
- Liaise with other external organisations in relation to a pupil's attendance/lateness.
- Inform a pupil's Youth Offending Team worker/the SAFE Team if appropriate, that the pupil's attendance is a concern.
- Monitor pupil attendance within specific and identified groups.
- Monitor and respond to pupil absences for those with additional medical needs.
- Monitor pupils and follow procedures for pupils who are 'Pupils Missing in Education'.
- Follow reporting procedures for parents who have requested to home educate their child.
- Follow statutory procedures when deleting a pupil from roll.
- Monitor absences for illness and requests for leave to attend medical appointments.
- Report pupils to the Local Authority when they have 10 consecutive 'O' coded (unauthorised absence) sessions in school.
- Report pupils with unauthorised term-term leave absences (10 consecutive sessions of 'G' codes) to the Local Authority for issuing of a legal sanction to parents/carers.
- Raise pupils with 15 consecutive days of 'I' (illness) codes during the fortnightly inclusion meeting with the school's Education Inclusion officer (EIO).

Registration

- The school gates are open from 8am.
- After 8.40am, entry to the school is via the school reception.
- Registers are open at 8.50 am and close at 9.20 am. Pupils who arrive at school after the register has been taken, but before it is closed, will be recorded as 'L' - late on the register.
- Pupils who arrive at school after registers close at 9.20 am, without an unavoidable reason, will have their lateness recorded as 'U' - unauthorised late which then impacts on their overall attendance level.
- Pupils must sign in and out with school reception if they arrive or leave school outside of the normal times.
- Form tutors will praise students for arriving on time, take prompt action where students are late or absent without explanation, record lateness and refer concerns to the Raising Standards Lead.

It is a legal requirement that a register of attendance is taken during the morning and afternoon at school. Any unexplained absence must be coded as unauthorised until a reason is given by parents/carers. This must be no later than 5 days after the session. Only the Headteacher may authorise or unauthorise an absence. The register can only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are made, the register will show the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment. Registers are kept for six years as a record.

Every lesson is registered through the school internal system. Teachers are expected to ensure that the register is taken as promptly as possible. The reason for this is to track punctuality and in school truancy. Teachers will praise students for their punctuality to lessons and alert the SSO Team if there are concerns over student absence.

Lateness

When pupils arrive late at school, they disrupt routines, affect other pupils' learning, miss the teacher's instructions to the lesson and may also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late. They may also miss important intervention programmes and the opportunity to practice key learning skills. Where pupils show a persistent pattern of lateness, Parents/carers will receive contact from the school advising them of the concern and offering support to resolve the issue. Should the lateness continue, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss their child's lateness.

Lateness to school and lessons is monitored. The behaviour policy reflects the sanctions in place for students if late to school and/or lessons.

If there is no improvement, despite the school's attempts to address unauthorised absences, a referral could be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team for pupils who are of statutory school age.

Reporting a Pupil Absence

Parents/carers must contact school on the first and every subsequent day of absence by 8.30am.

For any pupil not present at the close of registration, and the reason is still unknown, a member of staff will attempt to make contact with the parent/carers once the registers have closed at 9.20am.

The member of staff will use the school system to contact the priority contact. Messages will be sent requesting parents to contact school regarding their pupil's absence. Outcomes of any phone conversations will be logged on the pupil's electronic school record. Staff will complete the registers in accordance with the correct use of registration codes (see appendix 1).

Any unexplained absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence if there is no response from a parent/carer to an enquiry regarding their pupil's absence from school.

At times we may decide it is necessary to conduct a door knock to establish the safety and wellbeing of a pupil who is absent without explanation from a parent/carer.

For absences relating to a medical appointment, supporting information may be requested to authorise this absence. This can be a text message which clearly identifies who the appointment is for, or an appointment card. A period of absence will only be authorised in relation to the length of the appointment.

Illness

Pupils who are unable to attend school due to diarrhoea or sickness can return as soon as they are well enough to do so.

Pupils with mild coughs, colds, sore throats, sneezes and runny noses who are otherwise well can continue to attend school. However, if they develop a high temperature they should stay at home until their temperature has reduced and they are well enough to return to school. A guide to whether

your child is able to attend school with minor illnesses is here: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk). The information is backed up by the Department for Education (DfE). We expect pupils to attempt to come to school unless they are too unwell to complete basic tasks. We will contact you if they need to return home.

Medical Needs and SEND

When pupils are prevented from accessing school due to physical or mental ill health, school will try to identify the barriers these pupils face and use our tiered approach to supporting medical needs. This starts with the universal offer of support for all pupils and leads to higher tiers of need where increasingly specialist support is required. We will consider reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements. We will liaise with appropriate services to ascertain support in the rare instances that a pupil is unable to access any education inside the school setting. We will work with our school's allocated Education Inclusion Officer where necessary to identify available options for education. Where a pupil's health needs mean they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, we may seek medical information to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision. This may take a variety of forms, which we will discuss with parents/carers on an individual basis.

Where pupils have an EHCP, we will liaise closely with the pupil's SEN Caseworker to work towards the best attendance outcomes for the pupil.

We are able to make adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments must be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with, the pupil and their parents/carers.

General Non-Attendance

This is different to being absent due to illness or other authorised circumstances, or for unauthorised term-time leave. General non-attendance is when a pupil is absent from school, without it being exceptional circumstances and without it being authorised by school. If your child has irregular school attendance, the school will work with you to identify the barriers to attendance and will try to find ways to remove those barriers. This support has already been discussed in this policy. If your child continues to be absent without authorisation from the school, then you may be referred to the Local Authority for legal sanctions to be considered. The threshold for this would be 10 sessions (an AM or PM mark in the register is one session) over a period of 10 or more school weeks. Before school refer to the Local Authority for non-attendance, we will work with you and offer support. We may offer you an Attendance Contract Meeting which is a supportive pathway where we discuss the barriers to attendance and try to break them down. An alternative action might be considered if you do not engage in support from school - we may set targets for your child's attendance jointly with the Local Authority, with the aim that it improves. This called a Notice to Improve and is a last attempt at improving attendance before legal sanctions are sought.

Definitions of Leave

We expect attendance at school to be 100% unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

Authorised leave

An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason such as:

- Illness or a medical appointment. There is an expectation that the pupil will be in school for registration or return to school after the appointment, depending on where the appointment falls within the school day and the health of the pupil.
- Religious Observance - only day(s) exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong to.
- The leave of absence has been authorised due to a short and exceptional, unavoidable circumstance.

Unauthorised leave:

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without the permission of the school, even with the support of the parent/carer, such as:

- Shopping, hair appointments, visiting family, taking part in a protest or birthdays.
- There has been no reason provided by the parent/carer to support an absence.
- Failure to follow school procedures or inform the school when taking a pupil out of school during term time.
- A leave of absence that has not been authorised due to not being considered an exceptional circumstance.

Coding is always at the Headteacher's discretion.

Term-Time Leave

Parents do not have the right or entitlement to take their pupil out of school for a term-time holiday. Recent government guidelines have removed the discretion for headteachers agreeing to term-time leave. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted before the leave is taken. Parents must complete a Term-Time Leave Request Form and provide any supporting evidence, if applicable, with their request. This also applies to parents requesting to take their pupil out of school during the school day.

If the school suspect term-time leave has been taken but the parents/carers have not requested the Term-Time Leave in advance, we will write to the parents/carers giving them an opportunity to clarify the reason for absence and provide supporting evidence. Failure to respond to or provide supporting evidence will result in a referral to the Local Authority for unauthorised leave from school.

Exceptional circumstances (*definition of exceptional: rare, unavoidable, short*) will be considered on an individual basis. Examples of requests for leave of absence that **do not** meet the criteria of an exceptional circumstance and **will not** be authorised and could be subject to a Penalty Notice fine/prosecution for pupils of statutory school age are:

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad.
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term.

- Trip of a lifetime.
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates.
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad.
- Relatives coming to visit.
- Extension of leave if a pupil has not returned to school after an agreed absence if it does not meet grounds for an exceptional circumstance.
- Leave taken due to potential travel disruption.
- Leave taken to try and relieve travel distress for family members with additional needs.

Absence Due to Sporting Activities

Attendance at sporting events as a spectator or supporter will not be authorised. Training camps should be organised for during the school holidays. Absence to attend competitions will be assessed on an individual basis and information from the sport's national governing body will be requested to assist with the school's decision-making process.

It all adds up – absence and learning hours lost

Attendance of student	Actual attendance over a school year	Equivalent whole days absent	Equivalent learning hours lost	
100%	190	0	0	Excellent
99%	188	2	10	Good
98%	186	4	20	
97%	184	6	30	
96%	182.5	7.5	37.5	
95%	180.5	9.5	47.5	
94%	177	13	65	Cause for concern
92%	175	15	75	
90%	171	19	95	Risk of penalty notice and/or legal proceedings
89%	169	21	105	

Penalty Notices

If a pupil takes unauthorised term-time leave for 10 consecutive sessions or more (generally 5 days) they will be subject to a Penalty Notice. The fine for a penalty notice is £80 per pupil, per parent/carer, increasing to £160 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their pupil and this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent.

For second offences of unauthorised term-time leave (10 consecutive sessions or more) within a three-year rolling period, the fine is a flat £160 per parent, per pupil. For the third offence in a three-

year rolling period, the referral will be automatically considered for prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Children Missing in Education

If a pupil fails to attend school for 10 consecutive days, without explanation, and the school does not know where the pupil is, the school will refer the pupil to the Local Authority as a Child Missing in Education. After a further 10 days of absence with no explanation, your child is at risk of losing their school place with us. During this 20-day period, school will continue to try and contact you, and will liaise with any other services that your child is open to. The Local Authority will conduct investigations into the location and educational provision of the child.

Appendix
Attendance codes

Attendance Codes – September 2024

Attending the school	
/\	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered at another school
Absent – Leave of absence	
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
Absent – other authorised reasons	
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes	
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
Absent – unauthorised absence	
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Arrived in school after registration closed
Administrative Codes	
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure