

The Abbey School Policy for: Attendance

Approved by Governors: September 2020

Subject Coordinator: Leadership Team
Review: September 2021

1. Introduction

The staff of The Abbey School are committed, in partnership with the parents, students, governors, and the Local Authority, to building a school which serves our community commendably and of which the community is proud. We believe that all students benefit from full school attendance and there is a clearly demonstrable link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/ carers to ensure that the young people in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

2. Expectations

We expect that all students will:

- Attend all school sessions
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their form teacher or other member of staff any problems which deter them from attending school.

We expect that parents and carers will:

- Encourage full school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the student in their care arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day, for most this will be via Local Authority transport.
- Ensure that they contact the school early on the first day of absence or, if known, in advance, whenever the student is unable to attend school and give a reasonable explanation.
- Notify the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.
- Provide the school with contact details for at least 2 emergency contacts and notify the school immediately of any changes to contact details.
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child.
- Notify the school immediately when medications are changed as this could impact on attendance and attention in lessons

We expect that school staff will:

- Encourage full attendance
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for students
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Provide a sympathetic response to a student's or a parent's concerns
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality for all students, through registration twice daily
- Monitor every student's attendance and punctuality

- Endeavour to make contact on the first day of absence, if no email, note or telephone call is received by the school office from the parent/carer by 9.30 am that day. If the family is not available on the telephone a message will be left, where possible. Parentmail may also be used. The office will keep a record of contact made and responses.
- If there is no response from either of the 2 emergency contacts nominated by the parent/carer and this is considered a cause for concern, the school may decide to notify the police in the interests of safeguarding the student concerned.
- Continue to try to contact the parents/ carers if there is no response. If by the end of the second day there has still been no contact made, (third day if waiting for a response to a letter), the school will send a letter of concern to the parents/ carers or invite them into school to discuss their concerns. The school will tell parents that if absence persists that a referral will be made to the Inclusion Service (IS) via the Inclusion Officer (IO). A referral may also be made to the Surrey Children's Single Point of Access (SPA) if the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) thinks this is appropriate.
- Follow up on all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.
- Recognise and reward good, improved and 100% attendance with assemblies, certificates and rewards.
- Regularly inform parents of the % attendance of all students
- Make initial enquiries of parents / carers of students who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the LA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance. School will send formal letters when applicable.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Inclusion Officer. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by the IO may result in further actions e.g. Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order.
- Meet, where possible, the requirements of the UN convention – The Rights of the Child, by ensuring that students are consulted in all decisions that relate to them.

3. Students leaving during the school day

- Students are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time and whether the student is being collected or will make their own way to their destination.
- Where a student is being collected from the school, parents are requested to report to the school office before the student is allowed to leave the site.
- If a student leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the police and register the student as a missing person.

4. Medical needs

- The school recognises that students with medical conditions (both physical and mental health) need to be properly supported in school so that they can play a full and active role in school life, remain healthy and achieve their academic potential.
- Parents of children with medical conditions may be concerned that their child's health will deteriorate when they attend school. It is therefore important that parents feel confident that

the school will provide effective support for their child's medical condition and that the student feels safe.

- Long term absence due to health problems affects children's educational attainment, impacts on their ability to integrate with their peers and affects their general well-being and emotional health. It is crucial that the school properly support children with medical conditions so that they fully engage with learning and do not fall behind when they are unable to attend.
- Short term and frequent absences, including those for appointments connected with a student's medical condition need to be effectively managed and appropriate support put in place.

Punctuality/ lateness

- Punctuality to school is crucial and registration at the beginning of the day with a student's tutor is important. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other students in the class. It is paramount therefore that all students arrive at school on time.
- Registration takes place at 9.05 and students who arrive after the register have been taken will be recorded as late for school – coded 'L' on the registration certificate.
- Registers close at 9.35 (1/2 hour after registers open) and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence 'U' on the registration certificate and can be subject to referral to the IO and possible prosecution by the Local Authority.
- Persistent lateness before close of register by a student will be dealt with by the Headteacher, Assistant Head, SENCo or Form Tutor.
- Students are not penalised if their lateness is due to the late running of school transport (unless they are personally responsible for the delay i.e. by not being ready on time).

5. Changing schools

- It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform The Abbey School as soon as possible. A student will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:
 - The date the student will be leaving the school and starting the next
 - The address of the new school and Local Authority details.
 - A new home address if appropriate.
- The student's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the local authority Tracking Officer and IS.

6. Leave of absence (Holidays)

- The school holiday dates and INSET dates are published in advance every year and parents/carers are strongly advised to book their family holidays during the school holidays.
- Leave of absence in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- Where absence in term time is unavoidable, a Leave of Absence application form must be requested from the school office and submitted for consideration by the headteacher on behalf of the school governors, no less than 2 weeks prior to the requested date. If leave is taken in term time without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and liable to a penalty notice.
- The government have changed the regulations which permitted headteachers to grant Leave of Absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstance" of up to ten school days leave per year or to grant extended leave of more than ten days in "exceptional circumstances". The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment)

Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 state that headteachers may not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless there are “exceptional circumstances”. The headteacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. The amendment has not defined “exceptional circumstances” and therefore headteacher/ governing body will be responsible for deciding what they consider to be “exceptional circumstances”.

7. Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence

- In line with the guidance from the DfE, Leave of Absence during GCSE, Entry Level Course moderation and Assessments, mocks and other external exam periods will not be authorised by the school and a Penalty Notice may be issued.
- The Headteacher can now request that the Local Authority consider issuing a Penalty Notice to parents when students are taken out of school for 5 or more day’s Leave of Absence without school authorisation.

8. Penalty Notices

- In addition to Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised absence, Penalty Notices may also be issued at the discretion of the Inclusion Manager if a parent/carer fails to ensure regular school attendance.

Penalty Notice fines are as follows:

- £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 per parent, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
- If a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

9. Failure to ensure regular school attendance

- The Inclusion Service may also issue a Penalty Notice to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child’s regular school attendance and are not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school and Inclusion Officers. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.
- The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where the student is classified as persistently absent and there are no fewer than 10 unauthorised sessions during the preceding half-term. The parents’ failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Inclusion Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies including Behaviour for Learning, Anti – Bullying Policy, Supporting Students with Medical Needs Policy and the Health and Safety Policy.

Addendum to Attendance Policy (COVID-19)

From Autumn 2020 the Department for Education have stated that school attendance is compulsory for all unless:

- Your child is unwell
- Your child cannot attend due to a Covid-19 reason

Reasons your child cannot attend school due to Covid-19:

- **Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Pupils who have symptoms should self-isolate and book a test. If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school.

If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone.

If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test. If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school. If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms.

- **Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Pupils may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19). The NHS test and trace guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 14 days if they have had recent close contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in our school community, the local health protection team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with the person that has tested positive when they were infectious.

- **Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine**

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine.

- **Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only**

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

If in future, rates of the disease rise in local areas, children still on the shielding list (or family members still on the shielding list) from that area, and that area only, may be contacted by the government and advised to stay at home and shield during the period where rates remain high. Families will receive a letter if they are required to shield again that parents will be able to share with the school.

We will contact parents of pupils who are shielding when measures in the local area are lifted and shielding is paused again, to set out our expectation that they can return to school

- **Local lockdown**

If rates of the disease rise locally, schools may need to prevent some pupils from attending. School will follow PHE or DHSC guidance on what measures are necessary in the event of local lockdown.