

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

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| **Last updated** | **September 2024** | **Glendene Griffith** |
| **Next update** | **September 2025** |  |

**Legislation and guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

* Part 6 of The Education Act 1996 Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
* Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
* The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
* Working together to improve school attendance – August 2024

**1. Statement and vision**

Alternative Centre of Education (ACE) recognises the clear link between the attendance and attainment of students. The aim of this policy is therefore to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance for individuals, groups and the pupil body as a whole. We consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at school and make schools a place pupils want to be, set high expectations for every pupil, communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. We understand that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils can learn and thrive.

In order to achieve this, all members of the school community have an important contribution to make. We will:

* Promote a whole school culture which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance
* Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents and teachers.
* Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school, listen and understand barriers to attendance
* Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole school attendance levels
* Have effective day to day processes in place to follow up absences
* Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils that may require additional support with their attendance
* Be mindful of students absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational need and provide additional support
* Work collaboratively with schools and local authorities and other partners where a pupil’s absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe
* Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels.
* Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This includes in displays and assemblies.
* Recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

ACE is a setting that caters for a variety of special educational needs such as social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, social communication and autistic spectrum conditions and associated complex needs. All of the children and young people have had disrupted attendance at school in the past, either via exclusion or school refusal. Many have experienced sustained failure of the education system.

ACE aims to maximise every individuals’ potential to develop into a confident, secure, well-adjusted and skilled young person who will make a positive contribution to British society and live as independent a life as possible. ACE sets annual targets for whole school attendance and monitors the attendance year to date and weekly for each child. ACE also regularly meets to discuss the attendance of students where attendance has fallen below 80%.

We believe that all our pupils, regardless of gender, ethnicity, ability, disability or sexuality are entitled to a high-quality education that will maximise their life chances. The school values each pupil and is committed to providing all with a high standard of education and opportunities for learning in order that they can best enjoy the experiences, opportunities and rewards of adult life. Attendance at school is a crucial part of this, and ACE aspires to achieve attendance in line with national mainstream school attendance.

**2. Aims**

The aim of this policy is to promote good attendance and excellent punctuality at school. Students, Local Authority, parents/carers and school staff should always be mindful that poor attendance and/or punctuality represent a great challenge to learning and can impact adversely on the learning and behaviours of others. The school’s objective is the removal of barriers to learning and to this end the clear and consistent implementation of school rules, policies and procedures by all staff is viewed as the best way to deliver this broad aim. We believe that improving school attendance is the responsibility of all staff

This policy supports the ethos, mission statement and vision of the school. It should be read in conjunction with other whole school policies, particularly those relating to positive behaviour management, anti-bullying and equal opportunities.

 **3. Partnership with parents and carers**

The school considers that in delivering its aims and objectives it can only succeed in partnership with students and their parents/carers, plus the Local Authority. The school recognises the central role parents/carers play in encouraging students to attend school regularly and on time. Support of parents/carers is essential if the school is to succeed in raising levels of attendance and punctuality. To equip parents/carers to provide this support the school will contact parents/carers regularly to keep them informed about student progress generally and issues regarding attendance and punctuality. Should parents/carers wish to discuss the school’s policy on attendance and punctuality or any other aspect of school policy they are welcome to contact the school and home visits can be arranged if required.

**4. Why regular attendance matters**

 Regular attendance at school means attending on every day that a student is required to attend unless the school authorises the absence (see below) . This is a key factor in enabling students to maximise their learning and improve their behaviour. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

Lessons are planned to ensure progression in learning term on term and year on year. Progression means that the students learn by building on previous learning. If a student has not accessed school through absence either for a period of time or by failing to attend for a day each week this learning pattern will be disrupted. This has consequences for the individual student’s learning and also for the learning of others in the class. In addition, absence has been shown to have an adverse effect on behaviour – not only in terms of a lengthy absence requiring a student to refamiliarize themself with the expectations, rules, policies and procedures of the school as regards behaviour, but the impact of absence on learning and the resulting frustration on the student’s part can cause behaviour to deteriorate.

 **Lateness**

Patterns of punctuality and repeated lateness will be monitored across the school, and where this is an issue for individual pupils, it will be addressed through parental engagement and individual punctuality management plan, which will act as a support for both parents and students.

**Absence**

The school has clearly defined systems for identifying students whose attendance is a cause for concern, and for implementing work for those pupils. Admission and attendance registers and day to day processes are completed in line with the DfE current guidance for schools (Working together to improve school attendance, Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities August 2024).

The Head teacher has responsibility for monitoring whole school attendance and evaluating the effectiveness of the school’s policy and procedures.

## **Unauthorised absence**

Unauthorised absence is when the Headteacher of a school or academy has not given permission for a child to be absent. Children should not be taken out of school without good reason, and parents and carers must follow the school's policy when requesting absence.

Examples of unacceptable reasons for missing school are:

* birthdays and holidays
* lack of school uniform
* looking after siblings or visiting relatives
* translating for a parent
* shopping trips
* waiting in for a delivery

**Authorised absence**

The Head teacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher’s discretion. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind each request. Leave of absence will not be granted for a protest activity during school hours.

All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

* Illness and medical/dental appointments – Medical proof may be required
* Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
* Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad: in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA)
* Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with
* Study leave for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with
* A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable, where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable

### **Family holidays**

Family holidays should not be taken during term time. The Headteacher can only authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If the Headteacher grants a leave of absence request, they must determine the length of time the child can be away from school.

Taking a child on holiday without permission, or staying longer than agreed, is an unauthorised absence and you will be breaking the law. This could lead to the Education Welfare Service issuing a penalty notice, a criminal record if the case is proven in court, or the loss of a school place.

## **Part time timetable**

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need to provide a student with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable, to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school or another setting full-time and a part-time timetable is used to help the student access as much education as possible. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a student’s behaviour.

A part-time timetable should:

* Have the agreement of both the school and the parent the student normally lives with
* Have a clear ambition and be part of the student’s wider support, health care or reintegration plan
* Have regular review dates which include the student and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary
* Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the student, after which the student is expected to attend full-time. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process. In some limited cases, a student with a long-term health condition may require a parttime timetable for a prolonged period
* Where the student has a social worker, the school is expected to keep them informed and involved in the process
* If the student has an education health and care plan, the school should discuss the part-time timetable with the local authority so that any support package that is in place can be reviewed as swiftly as possible
* In agreeing to a part-time timetable, the school has agreed to the student being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore will record the absence according

## **Children missing in education**

Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

All pupils are entered onto the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, ACE will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child’s whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

ACE will monitor pupils’ attendance through our daily register. The local authority will be given the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly or have missed ten school days or more without permission on a termly basis. We will continue to monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

ACE have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this will investigate any unexplained absences. Further information about schools’ safeguarding responsibilities can be found in our Safeguarding policy and the Keeping children safe in education statutory guidance.

**Students with a social worker and/or youth offending team worker**

To facilitate effective working across the local authority area, ACE will inform a student's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences from school. ACE will also inform them if the student’s name is to be deleted from the school register.

**Students with mental and/or physical ill health, SEN and/or disability**

ACE is a calm, safe and supportive environment where students want to be and are keen to learn. Many students will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. These students are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future. Some students face more complex barriers to learning such as long-term physical or mental conditions or who have a special educational need /disability. ACE will work with families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible.

In developing this support, ACE will;

* Understand the individual needs of the pupil and family and work to develop individual support
* Work in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with other the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available)
* Regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs
* Facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue.
* Consider 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 should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.
* Consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxious feelings about school attendance.
* Make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil’s total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness

**Registers**

ACE maintains an electronic register.All pupils (regardless of their age) are placed on the admission register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register.The admission register contains specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with their starting date, information regarding parents, and details of the school last attended.

**Data Sharing**

ACE regularly tracks and monitors the attendance of individual students. Data is shared on an individual basis where it is beneficial to the student, with any relevant outside agencies.

**Attendance Prosecution**

ACE will use all available interventions as a means of improving attendance and will only issue penalty notices after interventions are unsuccessful and parents have not made adequate attempts to ensure their child attends school every day.

ACE can issue penalty notices if a parent or carer is unwilling to improve their child's attendance. Parents and carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly, and absences are not authorised. Penalty notices are issued if a pupil has twenty or more unauthorised absences within a three-month period, or if there has been an unauthorised leave of absence of five or more consecutive days. A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The school must have notified the parents of the days the pupil must not be present in a public place.

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution and does not require an appearance in court. Payment of a penalty notice enable parents and carers to avoid convictions. Penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024, as amended and can only be issued by a headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police.

The Education Welfare Service will consider a penalty notice based on the information supplied by the school. Payment within 21 days of receiving a notice is £60 and £120 if paid between 22-28 days. If no payment is received, legal proceedings will begin in the Magistrates Court.

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed or where support has been deemed inappropriate in the circumstances of the individual case. Prosecution can result in a fine of up to £1,000 for each child. When a parent knows their child is failing to attend and doesn't act, a higher penalty of up to £2,500 and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.

**ACE strategies to reduce persistent absence**

How we define persistent absence

DfE Guidance defines persistent absence as falling below 90%. We at ACE recognise the challenges our students face and the added barriers to good attendance and therefore have adapted our persistent absence figure to reflect this and take into consideration each students circumstances on an individual basis, whilst maintaining high expectations.

Positive reinforcement and incentives

* Weekly rewards for 100% attendance
* Termly rewards trips
* Positive phone calls and texts home
* Awards

**Stage 1**

A student's level of attendance has fallen below that which is acceptable, or a pattern of absence has been identified

* A letter of concern will be sent to parents
* Regular telephone communication
* Targeted mentoring sessions with student to identify any issues that we may be able to resolve.

**Stage 2**

No improvements are made following interventions at stage 1

* Parental meeting will be arranged to discuss the reasons for the absences and offer any additional support to parent and student.
* Regular home visits – Safeguarding welfare checks
* Penalty notice can be issued, this is at the discretion of the head teacher.
* Completion of an attendance support plan to be agreed by parent, students and head teacher/attendance lead

**Stage 3**

Persistent unauthorised absence, no significant impact from previous interventions

* Meeting with local authority EWO and other supporting agencies where necessary
* Parents/carers may be at risk of prosecution, final action will be decided by the Headteacher

**Appendix 1 – Attendance Codes**

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| **Code** | **Full name**  | **Description** |
| The student is counted as present. |
| / or \ | Present am or pm | Present in school during registration. |
| L | Late | Late arrival before the register has closed |
| The student is counted as present, at an Approved Educational Activity.  |
| B | Educated off Site | The student is at an off-site supervised educational activity approved by the school. |
| J | Interview | At a job interview, or interviewing with another educational establishment. |
| P | Sporting Activity (Approved) | Pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. |
| V | Educational trip | A residential trip organised by the school or a supervised strictly educational trip arranged by an approved organisation. |
| W | Work Experience | A student in the final two years of compulsory education is attending work experience. |
| The student is counted as absent, authorised. |
| C | Other Authorised Absence | Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. |
| E | Excluded | If a student is excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked E, for up to the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period (referred to as 'suspensions' by the DfE from Autumn 2021) or permanent exclusion. |
| H | Family Holiday (Agreed) | A leave of absence for a family holiday is granted entirely at the head teacher’s discretion. |
| M | Medical/Dental Appointments | The student is absent due to a medical or dental appointment that could not be made outside of school hours. |
| R  | Religious Observance | The student is absent for religious observance on a day designated by the religious body. |
| S | Study Leave | Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils for public exams. Students should still be able to come into school to revise. |
| T | Traveller Absence | Used when Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) or New Travellers are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school. |
| I | Illness | Where possible, use one of the other codes to enable reporting on your Covid-19 Dashboard. This code can be used for illness not covered by the codes above. |
| I01 | Illness | This code maps to the statutory mark of I. Students absent due to non-coronavirus related illness (unless the truthfulness of the claim is in question). This code should not be used for medical or dental appointments. |
| I02 | Confirmed case of Covid-19 | This code maps to the statutory mark of I. This is for pupils who have a confirmed case of coronavirus. |
| The student is counted as absent, unauthorised. |
| G | Family Holiday (Not Agreed) | The Holiday was not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the headteacher. |
| N | No Reason | The reason for the absence has not been provided. If no reason for an absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time, it should be changed to O. |
| O | Unauthorised Absence | If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised. |
| U | Late (After Register Closes) | Schools should keep registers open for a reasonable amount of time, after which the student should be marked with a U. |
| These codes are not counted so will not affect attendance figures. |
| D | Dual Registration | The student is registered at another school and attends it during this lesson e.g. students at a pupil referral unit. Schools should only record attendance and absences for sessions the pupil is scheduled to attend at their school.  |
| X | Non-statutory school age absence or covid-related absence | Where possible, use one of the other codes to enable reporting on your Covid-19 Dashboard. This code can also be used for any [covid-related absences](https://support.arbor-education.com/hc/en-us/articles/360014169657-COVID-19-Current-guidance-for-schools) not covered by the codes below (after confirming with the DfE). |
| Y | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | The school is closed due to an unavoidable cause or the student is unable to travel to the school. It can also be used where the pupil is in custody (for less than four months). This code is collected for statistical purposes but does not contribute to your attendance figures. |
| Z | Pupil Not On Roll | This code can be used when setting up registers in advance of pupils joining. Schools must take attendance for pupils from the first day the student should be attending the school. |
| # | School Closed To Pupils | This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as if the school is used as a polling station. |