ASHLEY COLLEGE

Attendance Policy and Procedures

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Attendance Policy and Procedures

OUR PRINCIPLES

Attendance and punctuality are crucial to our pupils' progress, wellbeing, and overall success. At Ashley College, we do everything we can to maximise pupil attendance, while recognising the unique challenges faced by our pupils due to their health needs.

We handle attendance issues with particular sensitivity and understanding, as all our pupils have medical or health-related barriers to attendance. Our approach is proactive: we aim to identify, tackle, and resolve any problems affecting school attendance as swiftly as possible.

Given the context of our setting, we recognise that our attendance rates cannot be directly compared with those of mainstream schools. Our pupils are with us precisely because of their health needs. Therefore, rather than setting traditional improvement targets, we focus on emphasising the importance and benefits of good attendance and punctuality. We have high expectations for regular and timely attendance, within the constraints of each pupil's individual circumstances.

We value the essential role that families play in securing good attendance. Our approach is based on forging strong partnerships with families, maintaining open communication, and working collaboratively to overcome barriers to attendance. We tailor our strategies to each pupil's needs and, where concerns arise, we welcome and make full use of support from the School Attendance Service and other relevant agencies.

It is important to note that data shows pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 tend to have higher attendance rates over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. Many children, including those at Ashley College, may experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations, or variable moods. Unless there is a medical reason for absence, these pupils are still expected to attend regularly. In many cases, attending school can help address underlying issues, while being away may exacerbate them. Prolonged periods of absence can increase anxiety about returning, making early intervention essential.

We are committed to complying with all legal requirements regarding attendance, working closely with parents, carers, and external agencies to support our pupils. Our priority is to create a supportive, understanding environment, ensuring every pupil has the best possible chance to succeed.

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

OUR PROCEDURES

Monitoring and tracking:

- pupils sign in at reception when they arrive
- morning register is closed at 9.30 and after that pupils are marked as late
- the administrator checks absences against individual timetables
- SLT (and the child's social worker if applicable) is notified of absences by 10.00am or earlier
- attendance is input to SIMS daily
- SLT scrutinise attendance weekly and an analysis is written every half term.
- attendance data is sent to Brent Local Authority in regular census exercises
- we maintain accurate attendance records in our management information system (SIMS) and update these daily

Attendance data is:

- Recorded daily and monitored by the SLT
- Shared with Brent Local Authority through regular census exercises (autumn, spring, and summer)
- Analysed weekly by SLT, with written analysis produced every half term
- Reported to the Department for Education through statutory census returns
- As alternative provision, we work closely with commissioning schools and the local authority to ensure attendance information is shared appropriately to support pupils' educational continuity and safeguarding.

Absences

As our pupils have health needs and/or medical conditions all absences are considered on a case by case basis. Where there are absences that we have not been given prior notice or other causes for concern we may use one or more of these measures:

- letter to parent/carers warning of our concern
- meeting with parent/carers and pupil
- pre-referral meeting with School Attendance Support Officer
- formal referral to the School Attendance Support Officer
- multi-agency meeting to agree a strategy for improving attendance

Building Trusting Relationships with Families

At Ashley College, we recognise that working in partnership with families is essential to improving school attendance. Our approach prioritises building trusting, collaborative relationships with families.

Conversation before correspondence:

Before sending any formal letters about attendance concerns, we will:

- Have an informal conversation with families, either in person or by telephone

- Listen carefully to understand what is making it difficult for their child to attend
- Work together with the family to identify practical solutions and create a plan to improve attendance
- Assign a member of staff who has a good relationship with the family to lead these conversations wherever possible

We believe that talking and listening to families is the most effective way to understand and address attendance barriers. Formal letters will only be used when informal conversations have not led to improvement, or when we have a statutory duty to provide written communication.

Personalised support:

- We recognise that each pupil and family faces unique challenges. Our approach includes:
- Acknowledging the pupil's individual needs and circumstances in all communications
- Demonstrating our understanding of the family's situation
- Highlighting how regular attendance can specifically benefit their child (e.g., building friendships, developing social skills, reducing anxiety about school)
- Explaining what the pupil misses out on when they are absent, tailored to their interests and goals
- Providing practical support to overcome barriers (e.g., wake-up calls, transport assistance, flexible start times)

We do not wait for attendance to reach a particular threshold before addressing concerns. As soon as we identify a worrying trend or pattern, we contact families to discuss it. This is particularly important for our vulnerable pupils, where early intervention can prevent prolonged absence and support successful re-engagement with education.

Families involvement

Families are our key ally in securing good attendance and have a legal duty to ensure their children attend school regularly. They agree in signing our Home/College agreement to:

- respond to morning check-ins by office staff from 7:30am
- engage with link tutors if they telephone in the morning to speak with you/your child to encourage attendance
- contact us by 8.30 am if their child will be absent
- send a letter or medical certificate to explain the absence
- arrange dental or other appointments outside lesson time except for emergencies
- not take holidays with the child in term time
- allow staff to visit their child at home if they have not been in school for a period of five school days (authorised or unauthorised)

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend their session every day as shown on their timetable
- attend lessons punctually
- attend appropriately prepared for the day with correct uniform and equipment
- discuss promptly with a member of staff any problems that may affect their attendance.

Families will:

- fulfil their legal obligation to ensure their child attends the school or tuition daily
- ensure that their child arrives punctually and prepared for the day

- ensure that they contact the service daily to report absence, or before if this is known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend
- supply written confirmation of absence with reason on request
- contact the service promptly whenever any problem occurs that may mean their child is unwilling/unable to attend
- notify the service of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
- notify the service immediately of any changes to contact details
- where possible arrange medical appointments out of the school day

To achieve these aims and expectations Ashley College will:

- provide a welcoming atmosphere in a safe learning environment
- provide a supportive response to any pupil's or families concerns
- encourage and promote good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition
- keep regular and accurate records of attendance, punctuality and absence.
- contact parents on the first day of absence 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 families . Although families may offer a reason, only the Headteacher 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
- provide outreach support and deliver homework packs wherever possible
- regularly inform families of the % attendance of their child via Class Dojo
- send letters home or conduct a home visit if valid reasons for absence are not supplied
- work with multi agencies, such as School Attendance Support Service, Health and Social Care, regarding children who are not attending regularly
- meet regularly with the School Attendance Support Service to monitor and support regular attendance and punctuality and refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance and persistent non-attendance to them
- work with School Attendance Support Service to issue fixed penalty notices where this is justified
- Data is analysed weekly, and half-termly to identify trends however due to our small pupil numbers this data is in line with our understanding of the pupils who use the service

Definitions

- Everyday counts as two sessions (morning and afternoon)
- Every half-day absence has to be classified as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised Absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from the Families . The Headteacher authorises the absence.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher and which the school does not consider reasonable

Penalty Notice

Ashley College works closely with Brent Local Authority's School Attendance Support Service when attendance concerns cannot be resolved through supportive interventions.

Penalty notices are fines that can be issued to families for failing to ensure their child attends school regularly. However, given the nature of our provision and our pupils' health needs, penalty notices are used only as a last resort and only when:

- All supportive interventions have been exhausted
- There is clear evidence that absence is not related to the pupil's medical or health needs
- The absence is unauthorised
- The legal threshold set by Brent Local Authority has been met

Brent Local Authority's threshold for penalty notices:

Penalty notices will only be considered when a pupil has accrued 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence within a 10-week period.

Our approach:

Before any penalty notice is considered, we will:

- Have held multiple meetings with families to discuss attendance concerns
- Provided opportunities for families to engage with support services
- Clearly communicated our expectations and the potential consequences of continued unauthorised absence
- Worked with the School Attendance Support Service to explore all possible supportive interventions
- Ensured that any absence related to the pupil's medical or health needs has been properly considered and, where appropriate, authorised

We are committed to working in partnership with families and will always prioritise supportive, collaborative approaches over punitive measures. Our goal is to help every pupil overcome barriers to attendance and access their education successfully.

Examples

Authorised absences:

- Genuine illness of the pupil
- Hospital/emergency dental/emergency doctor's appointment for the pupil
- Major religious observances
- Visits to prospective new schools
- External exams or educational assessments
- Attend interviews for prospective school and Post-16 destinations

Unauthorised absences:

- Shopping/day trip/ family day out/visit
- A birthday treat
- Tiredness due to a late night
- Oversleeping due to a late night
- Pupil looking after children or another family member
- Any medical appointments for other family members
- Holidays
- Tiredness due to extra-curricular activities
- Not wanting to participate in a school activity (Ashley College will always provide alternatives)

Each pupil's attendance can be summarised as:

96% +	Good – Well done! This will help all aspects of the pupil's progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic. This pupil's attendance is at, or above, the school target.
90% – 95%	Below expected – Strive to build on this. This pupil's attendance is below expected and will be monitored. A letter may be sent to parents informing of their child's attendance.
85% - 90%	Poor – Absence is now significantly affecting the pupil's attainment and progress. This is a cause for concern and will be closely monitored. ASHLEY COLLEGE staff will meet with the pupil and their parents to plan targets for improvement.
80% and below	Unacceptable – Absence is now seriously affecting attainment and progress and disrupting the pupil's development. The pupil's attendance is now a major concern. Meetings will be held and it is probable that a referral to BSAS will be made.

- Ashley College and the School Attendance Service work closely together and regularly monitor both attendance and punctuality. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously.
- However, each case is different and the service acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

Persistent and Severe Absence

Ashley College uses the Department for Education's definitions to identify pupils requiring additional attendance support:

Persistent Absence: A pupil is classified as persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of their possible sessions. This is equivalent to missing one day or more every two weeks.

Severe Absence: A pupil is classified as severely absent when they miss 50% or more of their possible sessions.

Our response to Persistent Absence:

When a pupil's attendance falls into the persistent absence category, we will:

- Arrange a meeting with the pupil and their families to understand the barriers to attendance and work collaboratively to develop solutions
- Create or review an individualised attendance support plan, taking into account the pupil's health needs and any other relevant factors
- Work closely with Brent Local Authority and the School Attendance Support Service to put targeted support in place
- Consider whether adjustments to the pupil's timetable, provision, or support are needed
- Increase the frequency of contact with families to monitor progress and provide encouragement
- Review the effectiveness of interventions regularly and adjust our approach as needed
- Ensure all relevant staff are aware of the pupil's attendance concerns and are working together to support improvement

Our response to Severe Absence:

Severe absence is treated as a top priority at Ashley College. When a pupil's attendance falls into this category, we will:

- Immediately convene a multi-agency meeting involving families, the School Attendance Support Service, and any other relevant partners (such as health services, social care, or CAMHS)
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the barriers to attendance, including any safeguarding concerns
- Develop an intensive, personalised support plan with clear, achievable targets and regular review points
- Consider whether a referral to additional services is needed (e.g., educational psychology, mental health services, or medical professionals)
- Provide outreach support, including home visits where appropriate, to maintain the educational relationship and support re-engagement
- Explore all possible adjustments to provision, including temporary part-time timetables where medically necessary, with a clear plan to build back to full-time attendance
- Monitor progress weekly and adjust strategies rapidly if improvement is not seen
- Consider whether a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or Early Help assessment is appropriate to coordinate support

Given the nature of our provision, we recognise that many of our pupils arrive with a history of severe absence. Our approach is always supportive, non-punitive, and focused on understanding and removing barriers to attendance while maintaining high expectations within each pupil's individual context.

Improving attendance

We motivate good pupil attendance by ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. Link tutors play a key role in promoting good attendance for all pupils through daily link tutor sessions, and once a week focused pupil discussion. They also liaise with Families on a weekly basis giving praise and feedback to encourage improved attendance. SLT also address attendance during the 6 weekly reviews and discusses next steps with Families and pupils.

Incentives are:

- weekly certificates for pupils with 80% or above attendance and 80% or above punctuality
- half termly certificates: 100 % attendance Platinum, 95% - 99% Gold, 90% to 94% Silver and 80% to 89% Bronze
- half termly gift vouchers of £10 for 100% attendance and 100% punctuality and £5 for 95% attendance and 95% punctuality
- ~~a~~ttendance percentages are measured on each pupil's agreed individual timetable
- praise cards given by link tutors each week – praise cards can be added up to cash in raffle tickets to be entered in to the half-termly draw
- attendance reward trip at the end of each term to motivate pupils to improve and make further efforts in coming to school

Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectations (ABIEs)

From the 2026/27 academic year, the Department for Education has introduced Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectations (ABIEs) for mainstream schools. Each mainstream school will receive a unique ABIE made up of an overall baseline improvement for all schools and a context-based improvement factor, calculated by comparing attendance data from the previous academic year with data from similar schools.

As a Section 19 alternative provision, Ashley College recognises that ABIEs are designed primarily for mainstream settings. However, we remain committed to continuously improving attendance outcomes for our pupils within the context of their individual health needs and circumstances. We will:

- Monitor our attendance data regularly and analyse trends to identify areas for improvement
- Set ambitious but realistic attendance improvement targets that reflect our pupils' unique starting points and barriers to attendance
- Work collaboratively with commissioning schools, the local authority, and families to support each pupil's journey towards improved attendance
- Use the principles behind ABIEs to inform our approach, while recognising that our pupils' attendance must be understood in the context of their medical and health-related needs

We will access our attendance data through the DfE's 'View your education data' (VYED) service and use available tools to monitor patterns and inform our strategies, adapting these to our specific context as alternative provision.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

At Ashley College, we recognise that a significant proportion of our pupils arrive with a history of emotionally based school avoidance, including many who have experienced extended periods of 0% attendance in their previous educational settings. We understand the complex emotional and psychological barriers these pupils face, and we are committed to using creative, individualised approaches to support their re-engagement with education.

We adopt a flexible, problem-solving mindset to help pupils overcome barriers to attendance. Some of our strategies have included early morning wake-up calls for pupils struggling to get started with their day, providing new alarm clocks to support pupils in establishing better sleep and morning routines, and, where funding allows, organising taxis or arranging for staff to collect pupils using the school minibus when transport is a barrier and parents or carers are unable to help. Our link tutors offer personalised support, working with pupils through discussion, motivation, and the development of practical strategies to build confidence and routine. The Deputy Head also supports families, offering guidance through our family support group or in one-to-one sessions, helping families understand emotionally based school avoidance and offering practical advice.

All staff at Ashley College consistently reinforce the message that improved attendance leads not only to better academic progress and grades, but also to increased resilience and reduced anxieties related to school. We work collaboratively to ensure every pupil feels supported in their journey back to regular attendance.

Because of the nurturing and tailored environment at Ashley College, many pupils who previously struggled to attend school find it easier to re-engage with education. The nature of our provision, including small class sizes, strong pastoral support, and a deep understanding of each pupil's needs, often results in a much quicker improvement in attendance compared to their previous experiences. Research shows that a supportive, individualised approach, combined with strong home-school partnerships, is highly effective in helping pupils overcome emotionally based school avoidance and sustain improved attendance over time.

Our approaches are informed by best practice and research adopting the WARMTH framework , highlighting the value of early and sustained intervention, strong relationships between pupils, staff, and families, a flexible, non-punitive response to attendance challenges, and gradual reintegration, tailored to individual readiness and needs. We continuously monitor attendance data and adapt our strategies to ensure we are meeting the evolving needs of our pupils.

Part-time timetables

At Ashley College, we understand that some pupils may not be able to access a full-time education immediately due to health or medical needs. As an alternative provision, we are able to offer more flexibility than mainstream schools when it comes to creating personalised part-time timetables.

However, our aim is always to support every pupil to work towards a full-time timetable over time. Legally, all children of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. Part-time timetables are only acceptable as a short-term, carefully planned response to specific needs. They should never be used as a long-term arrangement and must be regularly reviewed and authorised by the school in partnership with parents and, where appropriate, external agencies.

For a pupil to be placed on a part-time timetable, there must be clear evidence of a health or medical need, or a requirement set out in the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). We document the rationale for any reduced timetable and ensure that it is the least restrictive option for the pupil.

While part-time timetables can support a gradual reintegration into education, they can also limit a child's access to the curriculum, social opportunities, and wider school experiences if used for too long. That's why we keep all part-time arrangements under regular review, with a clear plan for increasing attendance and supporting the pupil's progress back to full-time education.

External support

Where our contact with pupils and Families does not result in better attendance and we have cause for concern we refer to the School Attendance Service whose officer visits our school regularly to support our initiatives with letters, direct contacts or meetings or with other agencies that can help. The school SASO also delvers "attendance matters" presentations to all new Families , and re-visits this annually with any existing Families . They are available to informally meet families and create strategies to support improving attendance.

Home tuition arrangements

Arrangements for pupils taught in the home are no different in principle. Home tutors register absences for each lesson and contact the attendance officer, on the day, if a tutee fails to attend a lesson without prior arrangement. This information is input to SIMS. Persistent absences without authorised circumstances could lead to withdrawal of home tuition and a Brent Front Door or Educational Welfare Service referral.

Holidays during term times

The law does not entitle families to take children on holiday during term time. Unless they are deemed exceptional and authorised in advance by the Headteacher, holidays in term time are unauthorised and may result in legal action against the families .Pupils taken on leave without permission will be marked in the attendance register as taking unauthorised absence. This may result in a fixed penalty notice issued by the School Attendance Service.

School trips

If a pupil is not able to participate or attend a school trip they are still required to attend school. Any pupil not attending Ashley College because a school trip is running that they do not wish to participate in will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		

C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		

Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school

N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays