

Avenue House School
Children Absent from Education and Attendance Policy
2024-25



Avenue House School maintains its Attendance Registers in accordance with Statutory Regulations, as amended from time to time. The school adheres to Statutory Guidance when dealing with Children Absent from Education. The school will work in a collaborative way with external agencies, in accordance with the principles of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2024.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the approach taken to:

- recording attendance information on a daily basis;
- recording information at the point a pupil leaves the school; and
- managing a situation when a pupil is deemed absent from education.

Content:

1. Attendance
2. Children Absent from and/or Missing from Education
3. Procedures for Children Absent from/or Missing in Education
4. Safeguarding
5. Appendix - Attendance Guidance for Parents

1. Introduction

It is important that staff, parents and pupils are familiar with this policy. Regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Missing learning time through having persistent/prolonged absence or erratic attendance, leaves children vulnerable to falling behind in their learning and it is well known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement. Furthermore, poor attendance can also impact on a child's social and emotional development. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, beginning from the Early Years.

The Legal Framework

Legislation specifies the legal responsibility of parent/carer(s) of statutory school age children to ensure they attend school. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient full-time education which is suitable for their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities; either by regular school attendance or home education. The same law requires the school to have an Admissions Register and an Attendance Register, and to place all children on both registers. The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014) requires a daily record of the names of the children being cared for on the premises and their hours of attendance.

Link between attendance and achievement

There is clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels achievement, as well as a strong link between truancy and antisocial behaviour.

Parent/carer(s) responsibilities:

- encourage regular and sustained attendance, being fully aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure that the child in their care arrives punctually, prepared for learning
- provide clear reasons for any absence which ensures the school can code the absence properly and accurately
- contact the school on the first day of the child's absence before 8.30am
- avoid making arrangements to remove children from school during term time
- respond helpfully and positively to any enquiry made by the school to ascertain the reason for any absence, including any safeguarding matter

School responsibilities:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including addressing persistent or prolonged absence (deemed as attendance below 90%)
- work to ensure every pupil has good attendance so they can access the education they are entitled to
- act early to address patterns of absence to prevent persistent and prolonged absence
- encourage parents to ensure their child attends all learning opportunities regularly and punctually
- keep accurate and efficient records of attendance and registration at school, including attendance at all after school and before school activities.

We achieve this in the following ways:

- Teachers must take a register at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon;
- those taking the register must mark all children not present by the designated time, taking account of absence notes;
- follow up un-notified first day absence with a telephone call to the parent/carer(s) by 9:30am;
- monitor attendance and lateness and implement strategies for promoting improved awareness of attendance such as year groups or vulnerable children, as required, including the use of formal letters home;
- report on patterns of attendance at Governance Meetings to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils;

- specifically monitor any persistent or prolonged absence (individual attendance below 90%) and address any concerns at an early stage with the parents/carers;
- proper use of the DfE national codes to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations, including preservation of the entries on both the Admissions and Attendance Registers for a period of three years after it was made;
- only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence;
- close liaison and discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to identify children whose attendance is causing concern, including talking to children and parents regarding any unsatisfactory attendance to find out the reason and offer support;
- close liaison and discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where there are concerns about children having prolonged absence without parental response, especially where there have been safeguarding concerns;
- implementing any agreed improvement strategies, such as referral to the local authority attendance services and/or children's social care in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures; and
- provide parent/carer(s) with the timings of the school day and the calendar via the school website and any other usual method such as the school newsletter, in advance.

Good attendance

Our school considers good attendance to be above 96%.

Persistent absentees

Persistent absentees are pupils with attendance below 90%. The school will contact the parent/carer(s) if their child's attendance approaches this threshold. If attendance does not improve, the school will contact the local authority in accordance with local authority procedures.

Late arrival

It is essential that, if a pupil arrives late, they should sign in at the School Office so our systems remain fully updated in case an evacuation of the school is necessary and in order that we know exactly where every pupil is at all times.

Leaving school early during the day

Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by a known parent/carer for a specified reason. If a pupil has to leave the school during the day for illness or a parent is required to collect them for a medical appointment, they are required to sign out at the School Office. Where there are known medical appointments, parents should notify the school in advance.

Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by staff members (agreed by the Headteacher) to attend a school visit, an off-site scheduled lesson, or a sporting fixture.

Requests for absence from parent/carer(s)

Schools, not parents, authorise absence. Requests to the school for granting permission for leave of absence to a pupil during term time must be made in writing in advance directly to the Head. The

Head is only able to authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Authorised leave is unlikely to be granted for a family holiday.

We ask that parents make contact with the school when a child is going to be absent for ill health reasons so that the school can keep records updated and, importantly so that the school can be kept informed of their progress to full health and anticipated return date. If necessary, the school may ask for medical evidence of any illness. We expect any absence for illness to be evidenced by a note from the parent/carer(s) as soon as possible. An absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without the permission of the Head in advance.

Maintaining records and reporting to the authorities

The school's Attendance Register, completed on iSAMS, is backed up in the form of an electronic copy at least once a month.

Monitoring and review arrangements

Attendance rates are reported regularly to the Governing Board. Patterns or trends of persistent absence from school are subject to scrutiny for compliance and safeguarding purposes.

2. Children Absent/and or from Education Children Missing in Education are:

'Children who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing from 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.' (DfE Children Missing in Education 2016)

Children Absent from Education

Often children can be persistently absent from school or have prolonged absences. Of course, there may be a satisfactory reason for their absence, most often medical, for why this is needed, for example, the child is having operations/treatments. However, on other occasions, the child is frequently absent but there does not appear to be a satisfactory reason. This is different from a child being a 'child missing in education' (as described above) but it is still a concern. As stated above, it is mandatory that children of a compulsory age attend school, but of most importance, frequent absences impact on a child's development across all domains, not purely cognitive.

If a child's absence continues despite interventions to identify and address the underlying cause with both the child and parents, then consideration may be given to seeking advice from social care to support the family.

3. Procedures for Children Absent from Education and Children Missing in Education

If a new pupil fails to attend at the beginning of first day of the agreed or notified admissions date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. Schools must monitor all pupils' attendance through their daily register.

- Schools must address poor or irregular attendance with both parents and child.

Schools should follow their local authority guidance in terms of the intervals at which they will inform local authorities of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly or have missed ten school

days or more without permission. 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 Admissions Register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child.

The type of enquiries may include the school/local authority checking with relatives, neighbours, landlords – private or social housing providers – and other local stakeholders who are involved. They should also record that they have completed these procedures. If there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care (and the police if appropriate). This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds (and medical evidence) to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause. In these situations, where it is unknown why the child is not attending school, and the parents are not responding to school communication, consideration may be given to seeking advice from social care.

Home Education

Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove their child from school with a view to educating at home, the school will coordinate a meeting with parents/carers to explore why they are considering this option. Schools will explore keeping the child in school whilst respecting parental choice. Where a parent notifies the school in writing that they are home educating, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform the local authority. However, where parents orally indicate that they intend to withdraw their child to be home educated, the school should consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

4. Safeguarding

The school has a safeguarding duty in respect of its pupils, and as part of this will investigate any unexplained, persistent or prolonged absences. Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation.

It is important that the school's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

Where there are safeguarding concerns about any child's absence; persistent absence; prolonged absence; or unexplained absence, the school will always talk to the child and parents about their concerns. The school will also follow its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which includes notifying the local authority attendance services and referring to social care as appropriate. If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed, the school will inform the Police. Where there is a concern that a child's safety or well-being is at risk, the school will take action without delay.

5. Appendix – Attendance Guidance for Parents

Introduction

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The Legal Framework

Legislation in the UK specifies the legal responsibility of parent/carer(s) of statutory school age children to ensure they attend school. The same law requires the school to have an Admissions Register and an Attendance Register, and to place all children on both registers.

Link between attendance and achievement

There is clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement:

- of pupils who miss more than 50% of school, only 3% manage to achieve five A* to Cs including English and Maths;
- of pupils who miss between 10% and 20% of school, only 35% manage to achieve five A* to C GCSEs including English and Maths; and
- of pupils who miss less than 5% of school, 73% achieve five A* to Cs including English and Maths.

Parent/carer(s) responsibilities:

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If a pupil has to leave the school during the day for illness or a parent is required to collect them for a medical appointment, they are required to sign out at the School Office. Where there are known medical appointments, parents should notify the school in advance.

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We ask that parents make contact with the school when a child is going to be absent for ill health reasons in order that the school can keep records updated and importantly, so that the school can be kept informed of their progress to full health and anticipated return date. If necessary, the school may ask for medical evidence of any illness. We expect any absence for illness to be evidenced by a note from the parent/carer(s) as soon as possible.

An absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without the permission of the Head in advance.

Good attendance

Our school considers good attendance to be above 96%. The school will contact the parent/carer(s) if there are attendance concerns. If attendance does not improve, the school will contact the local authority by local authority procedures.

Updated: September 2024

To be reviewed: September 2025