Behaviour and Inclusion Policy Suite

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Status: Statutory
Adopted: June 2023
Renewal Period: Yearly
Next Review: June 2024

Section A: Introduction

We take seriously our shared responsibilities of working together as a community, striving for excellence in all we do and ensuring that all of us are valued for who we are and who we can become. Through high academic and personal expectations, we inspire our students to enjoy their time here and ensure that they leave fully prepared for the next phase of their lives, reflecting on the importance of attendance and belonging.

The Governing Body recognises the causal link between student attendance and student achievement and acknowledges that full attendance underpins learning. It expects staff to place high priority on punctuality and attendance by students in partnership with their parents in order to maximise student achievement and progress.

In this way we promote effective partnership and liaison with outside agencies to provide support, advice and guidance for students and parents. Rigorous intervention is triggered by a systematic approach to the monitoring and analysis of attendance data. Patterns of good attendance and punctuality are celebrated and rewarded, and students who make every effort to improve are encouraged and recognised.

All young people have a right to education and it is well documented that poor attendance can result in restricted access to the curriculum, disaffection from school, lowered academic success and loss of educational opportunity. We embrace our moral duty to ensure that attendance is a high priority and are unwavering in our drive to continue to improve the attendance of all students to give them the very best possible chance of success.

Ansford Academy aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance;
- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence;
- Exceeding current national and Somerset average attendance rates for secondary schools;
- Setting aspirational targets for our school average attendance rate (this academic year 95%) ;
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- Acting early to address patterns of absence, ensuring that the number of students identified with persistent absence are significantly below national and Somerset averages for secondary schools;
- We will also support parents and carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Section B: Legislation and Guidance

The Law firmly places the responsibility for attendance with the parents or carers of the child. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they receive sufficient full time education. Attendance includes punctuality and the responsibility for ensuring a child is in school on time also lies with the parent or carer.

If a child who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly and there are no legitimate reasons, then parents are guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted, parents will be liable to a fine of up to £2500/and or a prison sentence of up to 3 months. Magistrates may also impose a Parenting Order.

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance published by the DfE in May 2022 (*Working Together to Improve School Attendance*) and also refers to the DfE's statutory guidance published in January 2015 (*School attendance parental responsibility measures: Statutory guidance for local authorities, school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and the police*) and *Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance*, February 2023. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- ▪ The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- ▪ The Education Act 2002
- ▪ The Education Act 1996
- ▪ The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- ▪ The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- ▪ The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- ▪ The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- ▪ The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- ▪ The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census published in March 2023 (*School census 2022 to 2023 Guide, version* 1.4) [1] which explains the persistent absence threshold and further details about the coding of absence.

Section C: Strategies

The Governing Body agrees Annual Attendance Targets as part of the annual review of the attendance policy and is committed to the following approaches for maximising standards of attendance:

- ▪ promoting a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance[2], creating a welcoming and caring ethos where good attendance and punctuality are recognised as 'the norm' and are valued by the school community;
- ▪ where appropriate, making decisions that allow for a programme of personalised learning and individual learning pathways often in consultation with other agencies;
- ▪ acknowledging and recognising high levels of attendance and improved attendance through individualised contact, use of the rewards system and Head of Year Assemblies;
- ▪ emphasising parental responsibility as shown by the Home-School Agreement;
- ▪ working in partnership with parents and carers and communicating clearly about matters relating to attendance;
- ▪ using an accurate system for collating and monitoring attendance with a rapid follow-up of any unexplained absence;
- ▪ evaluating attendance data systematically and targeting appropriate intervention including a focus on cohorts and vulnerable groups (including students with SEND and medical conditions);
- ▪ providing support for students and families who, for genuine reasons, may experience attendance problems, working together to understand and address barriers to attendance;
- ▪ offering a tailored approach to the reintegration of students after long periods of absence, ensuring targeted support is in place for those who are persistent or severely absent;
- ▪ raising awareness about the importance of uninterrupted attendance with staff, parents, carers and students, ensuing that all staff receive the appropriate training and understand the importance of good attendance;
- ▪ employing a clear set of criteria for authorising planned absence;
- ▪ working in partnership with our partner primaries to maintain clear criteria for the granting of exceptional leave of absence;
- ▪ ensuring an effective partnership with the Education Engagement Service[3] (EES) and a range of multi-agencies, sharing information and working collaboratively with others.

---

[1] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1146649/School_census_business_and_technical_specification_2022_to_2023_v1.4.pdf
[2] *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* May2022
[3] The Education Engagement Service (EES) forms part of the Local Authority's Early Help Framework. It supports schools and families to improve attendance and fulfils the Local Authority's statutory duties to improve and promote school attendance. The EES may consider legal action against parents in line with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Section D: Roles and Responsibilities

1. Governors of the Community, Culture and Welfare Committee are responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. They also hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

2. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented across the academy and communicated to parents as well as for making decisions regarding parental requests for holidays or pre-planned exceptional leave of absence.

3. The Deputy Headteacher: Welfare and Inclusion is responsible for:

   a)   monitoring school-level attendance data, identifying trends and presenting termly summary reports to the senior leadership team and the governors;
   b)   initiating whole school policies as required;
   c)   developing coherent whole school systems for improving attendance including supportive interventions;
   d)   promoting good attendance through assemblies and communications with parents and carers;
   e)   supporting other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students. (This includes close liaison with the Pastoral Support Leader (PSL), Attendance Officer and other members of the admin team who ensure that data is circulated regularly to the Deputy Headteacher and the Heads of Year);
   f)   developing safeguarding systems and effective working with partners and other agencies to protect and promote the welfare of students, maximising their attendance;
   g)   ensuring that Pupil Premium students are monitored carefully and appropriate intervention is provided where needed;
   h)   monitoring the attendance of Looked After Children (LAC) students in line with their Personal Education Plans (PEP).

4. Heads of Year, in conjunction with the PSL and tutors, are responsible for:

   a)   monitoring the attendance of their Year Group, including the monitoring of vulnerable students and disadvantaged groups;
   b)   being vigilant in monitoring absence and alert to any patterns that may indicate: SEND needs, or the potential of as yet undiagnosed SEND needs, which may be the underlying cause of poor attendance and referring these to the SEND team; possible safeguarding issues associated with poor attendance and referring these to the safeguarding team; unreported bullying which should be investigated so that appropriate intervention and support can be provided;
   c)   promoting and celebrating good attendance through the rewards system, Year Briefings and Assemblies;
   d)   challenging unexplained or persistent absence through contact with parents and carers;
   e)   meeting with parents and carers where attendance and/or punctuality are a cause for concern;
   f)   closely monitoring students with previous attendance concerns and those whose attendance falls below 95%.

5. The Pastoral Support Leader is responsible for:

   a)   liaising with Heads of Year, tutors, parents and the EES on any attendance issues causing concern;
   b)   establishing strong relationships with families and multi agencies to secure good attendance; breaking down any barriers to attendance;
   c)   monitoring the patterns of whole school attendance, including the monitoring of cohorts, individuals, vulnerable students and disadvantaged groups;
   d)   targeting appropriate intervention to secure improvement;
   e)   putting in place early intervention for students where appropriate;

f)   using knowledge of historical patterns of attendance to identify students at risk of poor attendance and apply early intervention;

g)   co-ordinating the sending of letters to parents and carers of those students with attendance concerns in liaison with the Attendance Officer;

h)   identifying and reporting children who are missing in education and those families embarking in EHE

i)   coordination of part-time timetables;

j)   offering support through external agencies as required;

k)   completing forms for Fixed Penalty Notices where applicable and maintaining a log;

l)   issuing Fixed Penalty Notice requests in line with LA guidance;.

m)   representing the school at TAS, TACs, TAFs and Local Authority Attendance Meetings

6. The Attendance Officer is responsible for**:**

a)   monitoring registration marks for morning and afternoon attendance on a daily basis;

b)   checking daily messages on the absence line, attendance mailbox and schoolcomms;

c)   recording on SIMs the details of messages left by parents and carers on the absence line ensuring that absences and punctuality coding is accurately recorded in line with register open and close times and reasons for absence;

d)   contacting parents of students with unexplained absence;

e)   sending any concerns to the relevant pastoral team for follow up;

f)   alerting relevant members of the pastoral team should any student leave the site without permission;

g)   monitoring incomplete registers on a daily basis and provide the PSL with regular information to act on;

h)   daily monitoring of attendance at Alternative Provision settings;

i)   daily monitoring of part-time timetable attendance and coding this appropriately on SIMS.

7. Teachers and Tutors are responsible for:

a)   ensuring that an accurate register is taken at the designated times;

b)   recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes;

c)   ensuring that a register is taken for each lesson and following up on any suspicious absenteeism;

d)   challenging lateness and setting high standards of punctuality themselves;

e)   establishing positive lines of communication with parents surrounding attendance.

8. Parents are partners in the education process and their positive involvement is essential. They are responsible for:

a)   ensuring that their child attends school daily and arrives at school punctually, in accordance with their legal obligations;

b)   working with the School to ensure that their child has full time attendance, planning holidays outside of term time and during the school holidays;

c)   completing, in advance, an official leave of absence request form if, in exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence is requested;

d)   making every effort to ensure that medical and dental appointments are arranged outside of school hours;

e)   contacting the School on the first day of absence and on subsequent days using the school absence reporting line 01963 350895 (Option 1), by text using Schoolcomms or by email: attendanceofficer@ansford.net or by completing the Attendance Absence Form on the parent portal

f)   explaining all absences to the relevant members of the pastoral team;

g)   Parents and carers will be asked to provide evidence of a doctor's involvement for prolonged or intermittent absence exceeding 10 sessions or in the case where a student's attendance has dropped below the concern level;

h)   Providing at least two up-to-date contact numbers for their child;

i)   Informing the school as soon as possible if their contact details change. This includes home addresses, email addresses and phone numbers.

Section E: Authorisation of Absence

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of safeguarding. Absence can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children.

All absence is challenged and the School determines whether to authorise an absence in line with Local Authority and National Guidelines.

Ansford Academy also recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence as it will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for absence is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm.

No holiday absence will be authorised in term time except in compassionate or very exceptional circumstances with consideration also being given to the student's attendance, attainment and public examinations. Absences may only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher and where prior permission has been sought. Retrospective requests will be denied as a matter of course.

Student punctuality will also be regularly monitored. Sanctions will be put in place when it is appropriate to do so. Parents will be contacted to discuss persistent lateness and lateness after the close of the registers could result in a request for support from the Education Engagement Service. See Appendix 2 for the definition of legal registration times.

Section F: Medical Appointments

Where possible, medical appointments should be made outside of school hours or in the school holidays. However, we realise this is sometimes not possible and in these cases time away from school should be kept to a minimum. Students should come into school before and after appointments to ensure they miss as little lesson time as possible. Students should sign out before leaving for appointments and sign in when they return.

Section G: Term Time Leave

Arranging holidays or planned absence during term time causes issues for many reasons:

- the student's education suffers as lessons and extra-curricular activities are missed;
- there is no opportunity for teachers to set additional work or to assist a child in catching up on their return from holiday;
- parents may be in breach of their legal obligation to send their child to school.

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 that placed greater restrictions on families and schools in relation to planned term-time leave. The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 states that 'Headteachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application'.

Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances, and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. As such, requests for term-time leave will be considered on a case-by-

case basis. The Headteacher will determine how many sessions may be authorised in cases where term-time leave is agreed.

The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent (the parent with whom the child normally resides). Applications for term-time leave must be made in advance and in writing. Failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised. When an application for term-time leave is declined, any resulting absences will be unauthorised. Unauthorised absence relating to term-time leave being taken will be sent to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice when 10 or more sessions are unauthorised.

Unauthorised absences resulting from term-time leave being taken is likely to result in the Local Authority issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for each child absent from school. The Education Engagement Service issues penalty notices on behalf of the Local Authority in line with the Somerset Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, which is available at www.somerset.gov.uk.

If a Penalty Notice is issued and not paid, the Local Authority will consider prosecuting parents in line with Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. This can result in a fine of up to £1,000 for each offence.

 In exceptional cases, the Local Authority may seek to prosecute parents in line with Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 without issuing a Penalty Notice.

Section H: Children Missing Education

 In line with the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023), school leaders have ensured that:

- all members of staff are aware of attendance guidance and expectations;
- all members of school staff understand what to do when a child's attendance becomes a concern;
- the school has in place required and appropriate policies, and robust procedures and responses for students who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions);
- all staff are aware of the risks of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the legal requirement to take immediate action if there is reason to believe a child is at risk or that it has taken place.

Section I: Removing Students from the School Roll

Schools are required to inform their local authority when a student is removed from roll.

Procedures are in place to ensure this information is shared in a timely manner when we plan to take students off-roll, or when they:

- leave the school to be home educated;
- move beyond a reasonable distance from the school;
- remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age;
- are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to school afterwards);
- are permanently excluded.

Students who are expected to start attending Ansford Academy but fail to take up the place will be referred to the Local Authority.

When a student leaves Ansford Academy, the student's new address, school, and expected started date will be recorded. This information will be passed to the Local Authority.

Section J: Monitoring

1. Termly monitoring of whole school attendance and the attendance of groups of students takes place in senior leadership team meetings and in Community, Culture and Welfare Governors' Meetings.

2. Fortnightly monitoring is conducted in the Attendance Monitoring Meeting attended by the Head of Year and the Pastoral Support Lead: Attendance Intervention and Support. In addition, complex cases are discussed fortnightly at the KS3 and KS4 Wave meetings attended by the Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher for Behaviour and Pastoral teams.

3. Weekly monitoring of the attendance log is undertaken by the Pastoral Support Leader and appropriate interventions are planned and actioned and shared with pastoral teams.

4. Weekly monitoring of academy attendance headline figures, cohort trends and complex cases is undertaken and discussed by the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that all leaders hold the current attendance picture and are aware of the whole school context.

5. Daily monitoring is undertaken by the attendance officer who liaises closely with the Pastoral Support Leader to ensure that all absences are explained, that the correct coding has been used, and that contact is made with parents and carers as required. As part of the daily monitoring, the Attendance Officer will prioritise contact for students with Pupil Premium status or those with a safeguarding concern.

6. Additional measures are in place to monitor the attendance of vulnerable students. Including:

    -   daily school contact with parents (and any external professionals such as social workers) in relation to absences of vulnerable students or those at risk of persistent or severe absence;
    -   students with complex needs (including those with medical needs) will be supported to ensure their attendance is maximised and its improvement is planned for. The attendance of students in this group is monitored daily;
    -   when a student is dual registered or accessing learning off-site, their attendance at that provision will be monitored daily. Ansford Academy holds the legal responsibility for these student's attendance and safeguarding;
    -   students with Special Education Needs or Disabilities (SEND) whose attendance is poor are monitored through the internal school processes and offered additional support in line with their needs, taking into account their EHC Plan if applicable.

7. Additional measures are also put in place to monitor and support students who are displaying any social, emotional or mental health issues which are having an impact on their attendance[4]. (This applies to any student displaying a social, emotional or mental health need and not only for students that have a diagnosed mental disorder, or a disability or special educational need.)

    ▪   where provision and resources allow, the school will create a plan to implement reasonable adjustments[5] to alleviate specific barriers to attendance to support students and their families;
    ▪   all cases will be triaged to ensure that support is prioritised and targeted for those students with additional need;

---

[4] As outlined in DfE guidance 'Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance.' February 2023 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1136965/Summary_of_responsibilities _where_a_mental_health_issue_is_affecting_attendance.pdf
[5] This term describes actions taken in general terms as opposed to a school's duty to make reasonable adjustments to students with a disability under section 20 of the 2010 Equality Act.

- the school will set and maintain high expectations for students with mental health concerns, working quickly to make clear to all stakeholders that the aim of any intervention is to improve student attendance, maximising and prioritising, regular, face-to-face attendance as much as possible;
- the school will offer a calm and supportive environment for the student where students want to be and are keen and ready to learn ensuring that each student has access to key staff members who are supporting the family;
- the school will consider facilitating additional pastoral support, holding sensitive conservations with parents and students and making referrals to both in-school and external professional agencies if appropriate;
- the school will involve the family in conversations at an early stage, utilising their knowledge, in any plan that is implemented, reviewing progress with them regularly;
- the school will support parents if they feel their child needs to visit a specialist in relation to a mental health concern, and will refrain from routinely asking for medical evidence unless there is a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness or if the evidence will inform any agreed actions to support attendance;
- in developing a plan to support attendance through reasonable adjustments, the school will take into account the individual circumstances of the child and be mindful of any safeguarding responsibilities as set out in the most recent version of the KCSiE guidance;
- where appropriate the school will liaise with, and provide, cross-agency support such as working with medical professional, recognising when whole family/early help support is required;
- the school will work with the Local Authority if the support they have offered is not engaged with, or where all other options have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate, considering whether to formalise support or to enforce attendance through legal intervention;
- the school's designated Senior Mental Health Lead will liaise with external and internal mental health support agencies, the school's pastoral team and parents to ensure that students are best supported;
- children's social, emotional, mental health and wellbeing is promoted through a whole school approach using a variety of methods such as: training all staff in emotional coaching, through the teaching of PHSCE and RSE curriculums, providing wellbeing workshops (delivered by the Mental Health Support Team), signposting support and a self- referral email address available to all students (tellme@ansford.net)

8. Compliance with regulations relating to maintenance of the Admission Register and other procedures (e.g. Children Missing from Education, Meeting the Medical Needs of Students; Exclusion Procedures, Part Time Tables and Alternative Provisions) are monitored through the Pastoral Support Leader.

9. Student level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

10. The Governors Community, Culture and Welfare Committee monitors progress against annual attendance targets.

11. The Governing Body ensures that annual absence figures are published and used as benchmark data for school improvement.

Section K: Links with other Policies

This policy also links closely to the following policies and procedures:

- Anti-Bullying
- Behaviour
- Child Protection
- Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School

- Equality
- SEND
- Supporting Students with Medical Needs
- Leave of Absence and Holiday Request Form

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes Descriptions and Meanings

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance *Working Together to improve School Attendance* (detailed in section 2 of this policy). They apply to children of compulsory school age (defined in the document as "up to 16 years old up to the last Friday in June"). We make use of these codes for all students at Ansford.

Codes	Description	Meaning	Physical Meaning
/	Present (AM)	Present	In for whole session
\	Present (PM)	Present	In for whole session
B	Education off site (no Dual reg)	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
C	Leave of absence granted by school	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
D	Dual registration	Authorised dual placement with a secondary education provider	Out for whole session
E	Excluded	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
G	Family holiday (absence denied)	Unauthorised Absence	Out for whole session
H	Family holiday (absence approved)	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
I	Illness	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity	Out for whole session
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present	Late for session
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session

N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence	Out for whole session
O	Absent without authorisation	Unauthorised Absence	Out for whole session
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity	In for whole session
R	Religious observance	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
S	Study leave	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
T	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session

U	Late (after registration has closed)	Unauthorised Absence	Out for whole session
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity	Out for whole session
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity	Out for whole session
#	School closed to pupils & staff	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
Y	Enforced closure	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
Z	Pupil not on roll	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
-	All should attend/No mark recorded	No mark	

Appendix 2: Definition of Legal Registration times

Morning session	Afternoon session
Students are expected to arrive at school by 8:55am and should be present in their tutor room by 9:00 am ready for the electronic register to be taken. Morning registration finished at 9:20am but the register closes at 9:30am Students that are present at morning registration between 9:00am and 9:05am will be marked as present (/) Students that arrive between 9:05 and 9:30 are registered late (L code). Students that arrive after 9.30 am will be marked as late after registers have closed (U code). This counts as an unauthorised absence.	Afternoon registration takes place during period four of the school day (12:45 pm-1:45 pm) Students that are present in period four between 12:45 pm - 12:50 pm will be marked as present (/) Students that arrive between 12:50 pm 1:15 pm are registered late (L code) Students that arrive after 1:15 pm will be marked as late after registers have closed (U code). This counts as an unauthorised absence.