



## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

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## 1. Purpose and Ethos

Abbot's Lea School recognises the clear link between regular attendance, safeguarding, wellbeing and educational outcomes. We are committed to ensuring that all students access full-time education, attend school regularly and on time, and are supported to overcome barriers to attendance.

This policy reflects the statutory expectations set out in the Department for Education's Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024) and places attendance firmly within the school's safeguarding and inclusion responsibilities.

Attendance is a shared responsibility between the school, families, students and partner agencies.

## 2. Legal Framework

This policy is informed by, and compliant with, relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2023
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE: *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (2024)
- DfE: *Children Missing Education*

## 3. Expectations and Definitions

Students are expected to attend every day the school is open.

Abbot's Lea School sets a target of 100% attendance, with an expected minimum of 97%.

- Regular attendance: 97% and above
- Persistent Absence (PA): below 90%
- Severe Absence (SA): below 50%

DfE expects schools to intervene well before attendance reaches persistent absence thresholds.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

- Holds leaders to account for attendance outcomes
- Reviews attendance data and impact of strategies

Headteacher

- Ensure statutory duties are met

- Promote a whole-school culture of high attendance
- Authorise formal interventions and escalation

Deputy Headteacher and Designated Attendance Lead

- Monitors attendance data regularly
- Oversees support and multi-agency working
- Accountable to Headteacher and GB for effectiveness of the policy

Staff

- Facilitate positive relationships with students and families
- Identify early signs of attendance concerns
- Maintain accurate registers

Families

Families have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually.

## 5. Attendance Procedures

Registers are taken at the start of each session in line with statutory requirements.

Families must notify school on the first day of absence, stating the reason.

Where contact is not received, the school will follow safeguarding procedures, including welfare checks where necessary.

## 6. Managing Absence

### Authorised Absence:

May include illness, medical appointments or exceptional circumstances, agreed by the Headteacher.

### Unauthorised Absence:

Includes:

- absence without reason
- holidays during term time
- persistent lateness

Holidays in term time will not be authorised except in exceptional circumstances, in line with national guidance.

## 7. Punctuality

The school day begins at the published start time.

- Repeated lateness is monitored and addressed as a safeguarding and learning concern.
- Persistent late arrival may be recorded as unauthorised absence.

The Headteacher may, in exceptional circumstances and for a defined period of time, authorise part time timetable, including agreed late arrival and/or early finish, as a measure of support for an individual student.

## 8. Support and Intervention

Abbot's Lea School adopts a support-first approach, offering:

- early conversations with families
- reasonable adjustments and flexibility where appropriate
- targeted support plans
- referral to external agencies when necessary

Escalation, including penalty notices or formal action, is used only where support has not led to improvement, in line with statutory guidance.

## 9. Safeguarding and Equality

Attendance is a key safeguarding indicator. Any unexplained or concerning patterns of absence are acted upon promptly.

In applying this policy, the school ensures compliance with the **Equality Act 2010**.

- Reasonable adjustments may be made for students with SEND, medical needs or vulnerabilities.
- Attendance expectations are applied fairly while recognising individual circumstances.
- Adjustments do not remove the expectation of education, but support access to it.

## 10. Appendices

### Appendix A: Illness, Medical Needs and NHS Guidance

Abbot's Lea School recognises that some absences due to illness are unavoidable. Decisions regarding attendance when a child is unwell are made with consideration of the child's wellbeing, the wellbeing of others, and statutory safeguarding responsibilities.

#### Use of NHS Guidance

The school adopts current NHS guidance as its operational threshold for determining when a child should remain at home due to illness and when they are fit to return to school.

In particular:

- Families are expected to follow NHS advice relating to symptoms, exclusion periods and recovery times.
- The school references NHS guidance when determining whether an absence should be authorised, and when advising families about return to school.
- Where guidance changes, the most current NHS advice available at the time will apply.

This approach ensures:

- consistency and clarity for families
- alignment with public health expectations
- proportionate decision-making, particularly for medically vulnerable students

Where there is uncertainty, the school may request additional information or medical evidence to ensure appropriate support and risk management.

## **Appendix B: Managing Attendance Through Support and Escalation**

Abbot's Lea School adopts a support-first approach to attendance, recognising the complex needs of many learners and families within the school community.

### **Early Identification**

Attendance is monitored daily, and concerns may be identified through:

- regular absence or lateness
- patterns of absence
- withdrawal from learning or changes in behaviour
- safeguarding indicators

### **Graduated Response**

Support may include, but is not limited to:

- discussion with families
- reasonable adjustments or flexibility
- attendance support plans
- involvement of safeguarding staff
- referrals to external agencies where appropriate

Formal escalation, including involvement of the Local Authority or penalty notice consideration, is used only when supportive measures have not resulted in improvement and in line with statutory guidance.

## **Appendix C: Term-Time Leave and Exceptional Circumstances**

The school is unable to authorise term-time leave except in exceptional circumstances. The presence of SEN does not automatically constitute an exceptional circumstance.

When considering requests, the Headteacher may take into account:

- the student's attendance record
- safeguarding or welfare considerations
- family circumstances
- timing and length of the request

All decisions are made in line with national guidance and Local Authority expectations. Unauthorised absence may result in further action.

## **Appendix D: Attendance, Safeguarding and Vulnerable Learners**

At Abbot's Lea School, attendance is recognised as a key safeguarding responsibility.

- Unexplained absence is followed up promptly.
- Patterns of absence may trigger safeguarding review.
- Students who are persistently or severely absent are prioritised for support and monitoring.

The school recognises that attendance issues may reflect wider needs and will ensure responses are proportionate, inclusive and child-centred.