

ACT School Attendance Policy

Commitment

ACT Schools recognises its statutory duty to promote regular attendance and work with parents/carers, pupils and relevant agencies to support children and young people to access suitable education.

Purpose

ACT School believes that working in close communication with pupils and their families, as well as engaging with outside agencies to support attendance, can assist in working towards improved attendance rates.

ACT School recognises that many pupils attending the provision have experienced significant barriers to education, including adverse childhood experiences, trauma, mental health needs, additional learning needs and disrupted educational histories. Attendance will therefore be promoted through supportive, relational and trauma-informed practice whilst maintaining the school's statutory duties regarding attendance.

Attendance interventions will take account of a pupil's Individual Development Plan (IDP), Additional Learning Needs, disabilities and any reasonable adjustments required under the Equality Act 2010. Attendance concerns will be explored through a trauma-informed approach that seeks to understand barriers before implementing enforcement measures.

Where barriers to attendance are identified, the school may develop an Attendance Support Plan with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant professionals. The plan will identify barriers to attendance, agreed strategies, reasonable adjustments, responsibilities and review arrangements. Attendance Support Plans will be reviewed regularly by the Deputy Head of Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance, supported by relevant staff and professionals involved with the pupil. Where appropriate, pupils will be supported to share their views regarding barriers to attendance and contribute to identifying strategies that support their engagement with education.

Scope

Information detailed within this policy applies to all staff directly and/or indirectly involved with the teaching and learning and support for pupils attending ACT School Provision.

Responsibilities

The Headteacher, Deputy Head of Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance and Delivery Director have overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation.

The Headteacher, Deputy Head of Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance, outreach team and the admissions officer will be responsible for the implementation and day-to-day management of the policy and procedures.

All delivery staff will be responsible for:

1. Ensuring that they fully support the procedures detailed within the School Attendance Policy and that they are consistently and fairly applied.
2. The accurate completion of registers each day using the correct codes and by the specific times

The Deputy Head Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance, supported by the Family & Community Outreach Officer and School Admissions Officer will oversee attendance reporting.

Communication and Storage

The ACT School Attendance Policy will be stored:

- Externally via the ACT School Website
- Internally via the Calon system

Attendance records contain personal data and will be collected, stored, processed, retained and shared in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and the school's Data Protection and Records Management policies. Attendance information will only be accessed by authorised staff and shared with external agencies where there is a lawful basis or statutory duty to do so.

Procedure

Please see Annex 2 for flow chart of response regarding attendance

Legislation and Statutory Framework

Please see Annex 1 for the Law in regard to the attendance of children of compulsory school age.

Use of registers

- Registers are legal documents and it is essential that they are completed accurately every day using codes allocated by the Welsh Government (WG) and as advised by the Education Welfare Service (EWS), as necessary.
- Attendance must be recorded at the commencement of each morning and afternoon. The morning register closes at 9.30am and the afternoon register closes at 12.45pm. A pupil arriving after this time will be registered as U (Late after registers closed).

Please note: pupils who are not on the premises but are taking part in an approved educational activity should be shown as present. The nature of the activity should be stated. (see symbol box, below)

Attendance codes will be updated in line with the latest Welsh Government guidance.

Attendance codes to be used within ACT Schools are outlined below.

Code	Meaning	Category
/	Present at morning registration	Present
\	Present at afternoon registration	Present
L	Late arrival before the register closes	Present
B	Educated off site (not dual registration)	Approved educational activity
D	Dual registration (attending another educational establishment)	Approved educational activity
J	Interview	Approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity
W	Work experience (not work-based training)	Approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances	Authorised absence
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised absence
F	Agreed extended family holiday	Authorised absence
H	Agreed family holiday	Authorised absence
I	Illness	Authorised absence
M	Medical or dental appointment	Authorised absence
R	Religious observance (day set aside exclusively for religious observance)	Authorised absence

Code	Meaning	Category
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
N	No reason provided for absence yet	Unauthorised until reason provided
G	Family holiday not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence
U	Late arrival after the register has closed	Unauthorised absence
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend	Not required to attend
Y	Partial and/or forced closure	Not required to attend
Z	Pupil not on roll yet	Not required to attend
#	School closed to all pupils	Not required to attend

Additional guidance regarding the use of registers

- Registers must be completed at the start of each morning and afternoon session.
- Where a pupil is absent, the reason for absence must be recorded and the appropriate code applied.
- Pupils who are not physically on site but are participating in an approved educational activity should be recorded using the appropriate attendance code, with details of the activity recorded.
- Attendance codes will be reviewed and updated in line with the latest Welsh Government guidance.
- For each pupil who is absent, a statement is required to indicate whether or not the absence is authorised.

If the reason for the absence is not known when the register is taken, the absence should be recorded as an 'N'. This is amended when a reason is known or within ten school days.

An absence is authorised when:

- a note is sent into school by the parent or guardian before or immediately following the absence and the Headteacher agrees with the reason given; all notes are kept in the pupil's file
 - a parent or guardian telephones school to advise of the reason for absence and the Headteacher agrees with the reason given.
- The provision does not authorise absence for holidays.
- The school admissions officer will collate and record all attendance returns using the recording documents as specified by the Local Authority (LA). The Local Authority receives regular attendance reports and monitors attendance trends.

The administrator is responsible for providing the Headteacher with accurate and up to date attendance and absence records and returns as and when required.

Special circumstances

The Headteacher has the discretion to authorise absence for extenuating circumstances.

The Headteacher will respond sensitively to requests for authorised absence within the confines of the 'C' code. Parents should not expect, or be led to expect that as a right, we will agree to absences.

Examples of such circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- **Traveller pupils.** The school recognises the specific circumstances that may affect Traveller families and will adopt a sensitive and supportive approach while promoting regular attendance.
- **Excluded Pupils.** Where a pupil has been temporarily excluded from the provision, the absence should be recorded as authorised.

Where a pupil is permanently excluded the absence will be recorded as authorised until the conclusion of any review or appeal process. If permanent exclusion is confirmed, the name will be removed from the school roll immediately.

Attendance expectations and absence procedures

Attendance concerns may constitute a safeguarding concern where absence is unexplained, prolonged or linked to wider indicators of vulnerability. The school will consider attendance alongside wider safeguarding information when determining appropriate actions. Where concerns indicate that a pupil may be missing education, the school will follow Local Authority Children Missing Education procedures and work collaboratively with relevant agencies.

Expectations of pupils

- Ensure you arrive at ACT appropriately prepared for the day and go to your class. Attendance must be recorded at the commencement of each morning and afternoon.
- Be in your class for your first lesson.
- If you are expected to change classrooms or teachers ensure you are on time and present.
- Never leave the site without permission.
- Following any absence complete any missed work that may be provided by your tutor.

Expectations of Parent/Carer

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law. See Annex 1.

- Ensure your child leaves for school on time, ensuring they arrive at school before the registers close.
- Telephone your child's school if your child is to be late.
- For routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments please ensure they are made outside of school hours. If this is not possible an appointment card or letter should be sent/shown to the School Admissions Officer or Family & Community Outreach Officer via the contact details provided by the school.
- Contact the School Admissions Officer or Family & Community Outreach Worker, preferably between 8.30 a.m. and 9 a.m. on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend through illness, giving an indication of the expected duration and return date to school.

- If a text message is received because of your child's absence it is important that you respond to this text to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- Contact your child's Deputy Head if the reason for absence requires a more personal contact.
- In case of emergency, we need up to date contact numbers at all times so please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers/addresses. (As a school we request a minimum of two emergency contact details be provided)
- Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing and can only be authorised by the Headteacher. Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school, include general holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts and birthdays.

Monitoring

A School Attendance Officer employed by the Local Authority works in partnership with schools, pupils, parents, and carers to promote and improve school attendance. They monitor attendance, provide advice and support to families where attendance is a concern, identify and address barriers to regular attendance, and, where appropriate, refer cases to the Education Welfare Service for further intervention. Where necessary, they also take appropriate action in line with education legislation and Local Authority procedures to help ensure every child has access to their education.

The Education Welfare Service

The Local Authority (L.A.) is charged in law with enforcing school attendance. The L.A. can in cases of irregular attendance, apply to the courts for an education supervision order or a prosecution. Education Welfare Officers (EWO) are employed by the L.A. to help it carry out its statutory responsibilities. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will be contacted when required to discuss attendance issues.

Patterns of absence

When a pattern of absence becomes evident the Headteacher, Admissions officer or Outreach team will take action which may include:

- Contacting parents by telephone, text and/or letter with copies of such letters being retained on the pupil's file
- Requesting medical evidence when a pupil is off sick or has a medical appointment.
- The School Attendance Officer requesting to visit the family.

Where the School Attendance Officer is involved, the provision will work closely providing support and addressing barriers to attendance. The provision will follow up and continue to monitor the situation.

- The Education Welfare Service being informed and requested to visit the family.

Where the Education Welfare Service is involved, the provision will follow up and continue to monitor the situation. If legal action is taken, the provision will make available all relevant records and information. When the Education Welfare Service is involved and attendance concerns persist, the school may request supporting evidence regarding illness where appropriate and proportionate, taking account of the pupil's individual circumstances and medical needs.

If a Pupil is absent, we will:

- Telephone and text Parent/Carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by 10 am.
- If no response is received after two days unauthorised absence, the school's Family & Community Outreach worker will call, if no response to call the School's Admissions officer will issue an attendance letter and a welfare home visit will be scheduled following four days of non-attendance. If there are safeguarding concerns, following a visit. Contact will be made with the family as soon as possible by the Deputy Head of Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance.
- If a pupil's absences are increasing and we are not aware of a good reason the parent/carers will be invited to meet the Family & Community Outreach Officer and the Senior Leadership Team.
- If absences persist over 10 days (not necessarily consecutive) the Admissions Officer/Outreach worker or Headteacher will discuss actions with the School Attendance Officer.
- The School Attendance Officer will monitor and support pupil attendance and, where appropriate, refer cases to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) for further intervention in line with the school's attendance procedures and Local Authority guidance.

ACT Schools will take a phased response to attendance:

- 1st day response phone call or text message via Arbor
- 2nd day response phone call from Family & Community Outreach Worker
- 3 days/3 non-consecutive days of unauthorised absence will result in a 3 Day Absence letter. Pupil to be put into 3-day monitoring group for 2 weeks
- 4th day response phone call or text message, home visit by Family & Community Worker and Pupil & Community Outreach Worker, as well as 5-day absence letter. Pupil put onto 5-day absence monitoring group
- 10th Day response phone call or text message, 10th day of absence letter
- Referred to School Attendance Officer
- Combined home visit from School Attendance Officer and Family & Community Outreach Worker
- Parental meeting
- Referred to EWO
- Parental meeting
- Review of pupil programme (referred to Outreach if applicable)
- Use of Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) as appropriate
- Legal action by EWS as appropriate.

Target setting

The school will set attendance improvement priorities annually as part of its self-evaluation and improvement planning processes. These priorities will be informed by attendance data, pupil needs and Local Authority expectations.

Schools need to be aware of the interventions that have been successful as part of their evaluation process. Regular evaluative activity will be completed in relation to attendance as part of School Evaluation and School Improvement Planning processes. School attendance will also be subject to challenge and scrutiny across the school, and wider ACT. When evaluating procedures, the school will consider whether or not:

- Attendance has improved
- Punctuality has improved
- Parental response to absences has improved
- Reintegration plans have been successful

Attendance Monitoring

The school is committed to promoting excellent attendance through regular monitoring and early intervention where concerns arise. Attendance data will be reviewed at planned intervals to identify patterns, support pupils and families, and ensure appropriate action is taken where necessary.

Attendance Monitoring Responsibilities

Daily Monitoring

- Attendance will be monitored daily by the Family & Community Outreach Worker.
- Any unexplained absences, emerging concerns, or patterns requiring immediate attention will be identified and followed up in line with the school's attendance procedures.

Weekly Monitoring

- Attendance will be reviewed weekly by the **Deputy Headteacher Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance** in partnership with the Family & Community Outreach Worker.
- Weekly reviews will focus on identifying pupils at risk of persistent absence, evaluating the impact of interventions, and agreeing any further actions required.

Fortnightly Monitoring Meetings

- Fortnightly attendance meetings will be held between the Family & Community Outreach Team and School Attendance Officer.
- These meetings will review attendance data, identify pupils whose attendance is causing concern, monitor the impact of existing interventions, agree further support strategies, allocate actions, and determine whether referrals to external agencies or statutory attendance processes are required.
- Outcomes and agreed actions will be recorded and reviewed at subsequent meetings to ensure progress is monitored effectively.

Half-Termly Monitoring

- Attendance data will be analysed on a half-termly basis to review attendance trends across year groups, vulnerable groups, and individual pupils.
- The effectiveness of attendance strategies and interventions will be evaluated, with additional support planned where necessary.

Termly Monitoring

- A termly attendance report will be produced and shared with the Senior Leadership Team.
- The report will review overall attendance, persistent absence, and the effectiveness of attendance improvement strategies, informing future planning and priorities.

Annual Monitoring

- Attendance will be reviewed annually as part of the school's self-evaluation and policy review process.

- The effectiveness of the attendance policy, monitoring procedures, and intervention strategies will be evaluated to ensure compliance with statutory guidance and to support continuous improvement.

Types of Absence

ACT Schools must record every absence that a pupil takes from school and this is why it is important that parents/carers advise school about the cause of any absence, preferably by text or phone on the first day of absence.

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. It is the Headteacher's, not parents, who make the decision to authorise absence from school.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes but is not exclusive to:

- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have not been explained

This type of absence may lead to the use of Penalty Notices or other sanctions from the Local Authority. ACT School will issue warning letters and make referrals to the Local Authority in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct where appropriate.

Persistent absence

Persistent absence will be identified in line with current Welsh Government guidance. The school will monitor attendance patterns carefully and provide early support where attendance is reducing.

- Whilst we understand that pupils can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. If a pupil is reluctant to attend or a parent/carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school as soon as possible to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution
- Parents/Carers are asked to contact ACT School's Family & Community Outreach Worker in the first instance.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

The provision does not authorise absence for holidays.

The Family and Community Outreach Worker

The school's Family & Community Outreach Worker provides support for parents/carers and advice on problems relating to attendance and encourages good communication between home and school.

The school's Family & Community Outreach Worker will always seek to resolve attendance difficulties using a child-centred approach and support methods such as personalised attendance plans, graduated reintegration, reduced timetables (where appropriate) and phased returns by agreement with the family. These support measures will only be used exceptionally, as a short-term intervention, and agreed with parents/carers. Any reduced timetable will be formally agreed by the Headteacher and Deputy Head Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance, documented, reviewed regularly (normally at least every six weeks, or sooner where circumstances require), and include clear arrangements to ensure the pupil continues to receive suitable education. Reduced timetables will not be used as a long-term alternative to full-time education.

If a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists the School Attendance Officer will be contacted to provide further support to the school and family through positive relationships, recognition, restorative conversations rather than punishment.

If a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists the Education Welfare Officer will be contacted and will consider the instigation of legal proceedings which include; Penalty Notices, Parental Prosecution and Education Supervision Orders. Details regarding attendance law, penalty fines and legal interventions are available from the Local Authority.

Document / Policy Change Request

Any requests for change to this policy must be submitted to the Headteacher or Deputy Head Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance.

Document / Policy Reviewing and Approving

The Headteacher and Deputy Head Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance are responsible for ensuring this document is reviewed annually.

Annex 1 – Legislative Framework

The Law Relating to School Attendance

The school is committed to promoting excellent attendance and recognises that regular attendance is fundamental to safeguarding, wellbeing and educational achievement.

Parental Responsibility

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that every child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any additional learning needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Where a child is registered at a school, Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that a parent may be guilty of an offence if the child fails to attend regularly, unless a statutory defence applies.

A statutory defence may apply where:

- the child was absent with the school's permission (authorised absence);
- the child was prevented from attending through illness or another unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent or child belongs; or
- the school is beyond the statutory walking distance from the child's home and suitable transport arrangements have not been made by the local authority where it has a legal duty to provide transport.

Responsibilities of the School

The school will:

- maintain accurate admission and attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010;
- monitor attendance daily and identify concerns at the earliest opportunity;
- work collaboratively with parents, carers, placing local authorities and other professionals to promote regular attendance;
- provide appropriate support and intervention where attendance concerns arise;
- fulfil its safeguarding responsibilities where poor attendance may indicate that a child is at risk of harm or requires additional support.

Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to the following legislation and guidance:

- Education Act 1996
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018
- Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales (2021)
- Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010
- Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Welsh Government guidance relating to school attendance, safeguarding and pupil wellbeing.

Our Approach

As an Independent Special School, the school recognises that many pupils have complex social, emotional, behavioural and additional learning needs. Attendance is therefore promoted through a supportive, child-centred and trauma-informed approach. The school works in partnership with families, placing local authorities and external agencies to identify and address barriers to attendance, ensuring that every pupil is supported to engage in education as fully as possible while maintaining high expectations for attendance.

Annex 2 – ACT response to attendance

