



Abbots Langley School

Inspiring life-long learners

Attendance Policy

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body on a two yearly basis.

This policy was reviewed and updated in **November 2017**

Next review date: **November 2019**

Introduction

Hertfordshire County Council is committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for individual children, individual schools and for Hertfordshire as a whole. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Hertfordshire County Council is committed to openness and equality of opportunity in every activity, from the way we employ staff to the way we deliver services. It is a central responsibility of members, managers and employees of the County Council to ensure that every individual that we come into contact with is treated with dignity and respect.

Abbots Langley School expects all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Absence

If a child is absent because of ill health or a medical appointment, a day of religious observance or an exceptional family circumstance such as a bereavement, an absence from school authorisation request or a note to the class teacher or telephone the school before 9.30 am must be provided so that the absence can be officially recorded. Absences without adequate explanation are marked as unauthorised. These include birthday treats, day trips or family outings, but also late arrival at school (after 9.15 am) without proper explanation. Attendance is monitored termly by the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO).

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell or the parent requests an authorised leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Only the headteacher can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without an exceptional circumstance, even with the support of a parent. Pupils who arrive in school after the registers have closed (9.15 am) without good reason are marked as having an unauthorised absence. If a child is absent Parents/carers must notify the school of the reason for the absence. This can be done either by phone or email to the school before 9.30 am on the day of the absence. Absences are recorded in the class register, with the appropriate absence code. If a parent or carer knows that their child will be absent from school e.g. for a medical appointment, a note or an absence from school authorisation request should be sent to the school prior to the day of absence. If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then contact the parent/carer after 9.15am in order to check on the safety of the child.

Long-term absence

When a child has an illness that means he/she will be away from school for over five days, depending on the circumstances, the school may send work home, so that they can keep up with their school work. If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the home education support service, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

Repeated unauthorised absences

Attendance records are monitored. The school will contact the parent/carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents/carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents/carers understand the seriousness of the situation. The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any

parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

Requests for leave of absence

Parents/grandparents/carers must check term time dates (available on the school website and circulated a year in advance) before making flight bookings.

Headteachers have the discretion to authorise leave of absence only if there are exceptional and unavoidable circumstances which warrant it and application is made in advance. Term time absence will be recorded on the pupil's report. The school's procedures for authorising term-time absence considers:

- Absence in term-time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances e.g. family funeral
- Each request for leave of absence will be considered individually, taking into account: the circumstances for the request, the supporting evidence provided, the overall attendance of your child(ren), your child's stage of education and progress and where appropriate both internal and external examinations and assessments.
- If the absence is approved by the Headteacher you will be advised as to how many days the Headteacher has approved for your child's absence.
- If the school does not agree the absence and you take the leave without permission or your child is absent for more than the agreed number of days the absence will be unauthorised.
- Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of the school may lead to your child(ren) being referred to the Attendance Improvement Office and the possibility of statutory action and a fine.
- All requests for the authorisation of absences must be made on the school's official form, obtainable from the school office, at least two weeks in advance, where possible
- It is not acceptable to ask schools to provide homework or catch up activities due to parents choosing to remove children during term time. Absence from school for family leave of absence is not a right.

Responsibilities

Parents and Carers Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school. Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents should:

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn

- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify their child's school if he/she is absent. This should be done on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence.
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- avoid booking holidays during term time

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance. Schools are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity. For pupils of compulsory school age, schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

Schools should:

- work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole - as one of their key tasks
- have clear policies in place to address persistent absence
- support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance
- be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and this should be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. Schools should recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications. They should also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school.
- Produce school attendance policies which are consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents, pupils and staff
- in recognition of local circumstances registers may be kept open for a reasonable period (no longer than 30 minutes)
- set attendance targets each year agreed by the headteacher, school improvement partner and Chair of Governors at the annual target-setting meeting in the Autumn Term. It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be. The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

ISL Attendance Team fulfils the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

Maintained Schools

Each maintained school in Hertfordshire will be allocated an Attendance Improvement Officer who will work in close partnership with the school. In working closely with schools, the Attendance Improvement Officer will offer the following services:

- Consultation Visits Consultation visits by the AIO will be allocated according to need. Need will be identified using the school annual DfE Absence data. The purpose of the consultation visit will be to identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This will include the regular examination of attendance registers. It will also agree on focused, time-limited action which needs to be taken by the school and/or the AIO. Before accepting a referral, the AIO will expect school staff to have first undertaken some preliminary work themselves, eg. action by the class teacher or year head, contact with parents, etc. Feedback and exchange information in relation to work which has been undertaken by the AIO and/or the school will be provided. It will identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters. It will advise the school on strategies for improving attendance and assist schools in identifying PA pupils and those at risk of becoming PA and ensuring that effective plans of action are in place Casework. AIOs may undertake early intervention (pre-referral) work prior to a case being accepted. This may include the following:

- telephoning or writing to the parents about their child's absences or lateness
- attending a meeting with parents arranged by the school to emphasise the need for good attendance and the possibility that, if there is no improvement, the AIO will become formally involved.

Once a case has been accepted, the AIO will undertake direct work with pupils and their parents. This can include:

- arranging meetings between the school, parents and pupils
- making home visits to assess the situation and determine what action needs to be taken
- offering specific support to parents and individual pupils, either at school or elsewhere
- facilitating meetings
- enabling the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies through the use of Integrated Practice/Common Assessment process. The AIO may also arrange for the pupil to receive specialist support such as counselling or group work. Attendance Improvement Officers will usually work with children whose absences have not been authorised. However, AIOs may work with children whose absences have been authorised. In-service training for school staff Attendance Improvement Officers will offer, or assist with, INSET sessions on a range of subjects related to the attendance or welfare of pupils, including:

- the promotion of regular school attendance
 - working effectively with the AIO
 - addressing persistent absence
 - legal responsibilities relating to school attendance
6. The Use of Legal Action If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school). The LA will serve a School Attendance Order under Sections 437 - 439 of the Education Act 1996. If a pupil, who is registered at a school, fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance. If 'exceptional mitigating circumstances' are not deemed to exist then cases which remain open for more than 24 weeks will be referred for legal action. Legal action will, however, be taken earlier when appropriate. If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the AIO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date. In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Team will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available. The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced. The Attendance Team will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored
- the attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted
- the AIO will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school

Attendance Registers

The rules governing the maintenance of registers, including removal from roll, are contained in the Education (Pupil Registration, England) Regulations 2006 as amended 2010, 2011 and 2013. Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases. Registers must be taken at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. If the register

is called at the end of the afternoon session schools should ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils do not leave school between registrations. They should ensure that pupils can be accounted for in an emergency and that a pupil removed from the school at lunchtime will not go unnoticed. Registers must record whether each pupil is present; attending an approved educational activity; absent; or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. In the case of a pupil of compulsory school age who is absent the register must also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the school. Registers should open and close at regular, set times and this information should be contained in the school's attendance policy. HCC recommends that registers should not be kept open for longer than 30 minutes. When calling the register, the appropriate mark and/or symbol should be placed against each pupil's name - gaps should not be left so that entries can be made later. In marking registers, schools should use the national set of symbols as advised by the Department for Education. When the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised and any subsequent correction to the register made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence has been established. All schools are required to notify the Local Authority of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason. This duty also extends to academies. Deletion from Roll A pupil's name may not be deleted from the attendance register unless it has also been deleted from the admissions register. Full details are contained in regulation 8 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended) When a pupil's name is removed from the admissions register the school must notify their local Attendance Team. A pupil of compulsory school age should have his/her name deleted from the admissions register when:

- the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a School Attendance Order and another school is substituted by the LA for that named in the Order or the Order is revoked
- the pupil has been registered at another school. (Schools can register Traveller children even if they are on the roll of another school. The school the child normally attends is the base school; the other registration is temporary)
- the school has received written notification from the parent that they are educating the pupil themselves. (Elective Home Education)
- the pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer lives within a reasonable distance of the school
- in the case of a pupil granted leave of absence, the pupil has failed to attend the school within the 10 school days immediately following the last day of absence which was granted and the school is not satisfied that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause and both the school and the local authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry to locate him/her
- the pupil is certified by the School Medical Officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age
- the pupil has been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days, the absence is unauthorised, and there are no reasonable

grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause and both the school and the AIO have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate him/her

- the pupil is serving a custodial sentence of four months or longer and the head teacher does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will return at the end of that period
- the pupil has died
- the pupil has been permanently excluded and the exclusion has been upheld
- the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education and has not on completing such education transferred to a reception class at the school
- the pupil attends a special school and the LA gives consent for his/her name to be removed
- the pupil is a boarder at a maintained school or Academy and charges for board and lodging are payable by the parent of the pupil; and the charges remain unpaid by the pupil's parent at the end of the school term to which they relate. If a school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure should establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Confirmation should then be sought from the receiving school. When this information has been obtained, the school should complete form EWN1 and return it to the local Attendance Team office. Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed. If a school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has "disappeared" the matter should be drawn without delay to the attention of the Children Missing Education Officer by telephoning 01992 556867 or by written referral to CME Officer, Central Attendance & Employment Support Team, Room 134, CHO 135, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford SG13 8DF. Further guidance and a referral form is available at www.thegrid.org.uk/administration/pupil_welfare/attendance.

Responsibilities of the AIO

Attendance Registers - If the allocated AIO is concerned that a school's registers have not been kept in accordance with the requirements of the relevant regulations he/she will:

- notify the headteacher of the concern and suggest that the matter is addressed
- if no appropriate action is taken by the school, and the AIO remains concerned, the Attendance Team Manager will address the concern with the headteacher
- if the matter still remains unresolved, the Attendance Team Manager will write to the Headteacher formally noting the concern. A copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant ISL Area Manager and the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance.

Registers

Retention Registers should be kept in a secure place for a period of not less than 3 years. When computerised registration systems are used a print-out of the register should be made not less than once a month. A print-out of the register

relating to a particular school year should be bound in a single volume and retained for a period of not less than 3 years. Registers should be made available for inspection by Attendance Improvement Officers when requested.

Punctuality

Abbots Langley School will actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness will be monitored and followed up. Pupils are asked to arrive 5 or 10 minutes before the beginning of the school day. Supervision of children by a member of staff is provided from 8.45am. Parents are requested to say goodbye to their children at the classroom doors to avoid congestion in cloakrooms. The headteacher will monitor individual children's attendance and punctuality along with that of year groups and the whole school, reporting findings to the governing body. Children arriving between 9.00-9.15am will be recorded as late after registers have closed. Children arriving after 9.15am will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Parents and children will be informed of the days and times of after-school activities and clubs. Children are not permitted to stay in school out of school hours unless they are attending an after-school activity. Children must be collected at 3.15pm. If parents are unavoidably detained (after 3.30pm) and are unable to collect their children on time, we ask them to inform the school by telephone in advance of 3pm to prevent children becoming anxious. Children whose parents have not arrived to collect them on time will wait by the office, where they will be safe. Parents should ring the security bell to gain entry on arrival and the headteacher will monitor and follow up any persistent cases.

Authorising Absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence should be treated as unauthorised. Schools should communicate to parents their policies with regard to the notification and categorisation of absence. Some parents, such as those whose first language is not English or who do not read or write may experience difficulty in providing notes. In such cases schools should seek to make alternative arrangements. Schools are encouraged to keep all absence notes for at least a term and when a pupil's absence is a cause for concern to retain the notes until there is no longer a concern. Absence should be authorised if:

- the pupil is absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school')
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- the school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home; and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for

any of the following: the child's transport to and from school; boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school; enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home

- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision
- there is a close family bereavement
- leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application. (Parents should be reminded that they cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence)
- leave of absence should be granted to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance licence where absence is required without the written permission of the head teacher.
- Absence should be unauthorised if no explanation is forthcoming from the parents or if the school is dissatisfied with the explanation

Administrative Codes

There are a number of administrative codes which are not counted as a possible attendance in the school census. They must only be used in the circumstances described:

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (Code Y) This code is collected in the school census for statistical purposes but is not counted as a possible attendance It may be used when: the school site, or part of it is closed due to unavoidable cause; or the transport provided by the school or the local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school
- Not required to be in school (Code X) is used to record sessions that non – compulsory school age children are not expected to attend
- Pupil not on admission register (Code Z) enables schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.
- Planned whole or partial school closure (Code #) should be used for closures that are planned or known in advance eg holidays, curriculum planning/training days (up to five per year) or the use of the school as a polling station
- Different Term Dates for Different Pupils (Code #) can also be used to record staggered starts or induction days. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year.

Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

Pupils who are engaged in off-site educational activities should be recorded as attending (or absent from) an approved educational activity using the appropriate code. The key features of approved educational activity are that they must be:

- educational and
- approved by the school and
- supervised by the school or someone authorised by the school (Study leave is NOT an approved educational activity)

A pupil should be recorded as approved educational activity if he/she is attending:

- a field trip or educational visit (Code V)
- an approved sporting activity approved by and supervised by someone authorised by the school (Code P)
- an off-site educational activity (Code B) Note: The B code must not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools are ultimately responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site.
- Dual Registered – at another educational establishment (Code D) Note: This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the school census. This code should be used where pupils are attending as ESC, hospital or special school on a temporary basis or for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are known to be registered at another school for the session in question. Each school should only record the attendance/absence for those sessions where the pupil is expected to attend. Schools must ensure that they follow up all absence in a timely manner.

Flexi-schooling

Head teachers can agree to flexi-schooling arrangements where the parents take on the responsibility for their child's education for part of the school week. Head teachers are advised to consider any such requests from parents very carefully before agreeing to them and are advised to draw up a written agreement with the parent. Where agreement has been reached, pupils should be marked authorised absent from school during periods when they are receiving home education.

Part-time time-tables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs. A part time timetable must be time limited and must not be treated as a long term solution. The school should mark the sessions where the pupil is not expected to attend as authorised absence. (C)

Requests for Family Holidays During Term time

Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which come into effect on 1st September 2013 remove all references to family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. At the request from headteachers the local authority has provided a standard letter to be handed to parents and carers to support the governing body and headteachers in communicating their decision making regarding individual requests for leave of absence for holidays in term time.