

# **Annan School**

## **Attendance Policy**

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**Reviewed by: Mark Hunter**

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# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Aims and responsibilities

- The school aims to encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality, with the intention of enabling all children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them at Annan School.
- The school aims to work together with parents to ensure that all children registered at the school attend both regularly and punctually.
- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age, registered at the school, attend on a regular and full-time basis.
- The school has a statutory responsibility to maintain a record of attendance and absences and record any absences as authorised or unauthorised.

## Guidance

This policy has been drawn up based on the statutory guidance contained in:

[Working Together to Improve School Attendance - Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities August 2024](#)

## Strategies to promote regular, punctual attendance

- The school will communicate regularly with parents on attendance matters
- Appropriate personal encouragement or congratulation will be offered to individual children
- The attendance expectations will be issued to all new parents
- Parents will be reminded of the attendance expectations when necessary
- The school will publish the dates of forthcoming holiday periods on the website and also make these available to parents on request to the school office
- Details of annual attendance will be issued with the end of year school report for each child

## Working in partnership with parents

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools work collaboratively in partnership with parents, based on the following principles:

- **Expect**  
Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.
- **Monitor**  
Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
- **Listen and understand**  
When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
- **Facilitate support**  
Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.
- **Formalise support**  
Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners (which may include the local authority or other outside agencies), should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract.

## Compulsory School Age

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child, on reaching compulsory school age, receives efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. Parents of children registered at a school have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or if a 'leave of absence' has been granted in advance by the school principal.

A child becomes of compulsory school age on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first. If a child's fifth birthday is on one of those dates then they reach compulsory school age on that date.

## Authorised and unauthorised absence (applies to all compulsory school-age children)

Parents may not authorise their child's absence - only the school can do this on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents. Should parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence, or should the reason fall outside the school's ability to authorise it, the school will record such absence as unauthorised. Attendance data will be monitored regularly to identify patterns of poor attendance. The school has a statutory duty to advise the local authority of those pupils who fail to attend school regularly.

### (i) Illness

Parents should contact the school **before 8.30am** if their child is too ill to attend school that day. Parents are required to give the nature of the illness. Contact can be made by phoning the school office (option 1) or by e-mail. As the classes are small it is important that we know **each day** which children will be in so that the teachers can plan accordingly. Therefore, please contact the school **each day** before 8.30 if your child remains too ill to attend school. Please also continue to advise the nature of the illness or change of symptoms.

**Absences for sickness will be authorised without the need for a doctor's certificate.** However, should there be a repeated pattern of absences due to illness or the time away from school seems excessive with regard to the nature of the illness, parents will be informed that continued absence can only be authorised with a doctor's certificate.

### (ii) Holidays in term time

Parents should not take a child on holiday in term time - it can be disruptive to the child's learning and to the learning of the other children in the class.

The DfE does not allow schools, including independent schools, to authorise holidays in term-time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. If a parent wishes to take a child on holiday in term time and believe that there are 'exceptional circumstances' they should write to the school Principal for an exceptional 'leave of absence' for their child. The application must be made in writing at least two weeks in advance of any proposed holiday. The parent must state clearly the exceptional circumstances for needing to take the proposed holiday. The school will consider the 'exceptional circumstances' of the application together with consideration of the child's attendance record, the learning needs of the child and any planned activities for the class during the period in question. **Parents should not book their holiday unless the school has granted a leave of absence.**

If the school does not grant a leave of absence, the proposed holiday should be rescheduled to take place during the school's published holiday dates. Should the proposed holiday proceed without agreement, any absence will be marked as unauthorised. Parents should be aware that they will be failing to meet their legal duty (compulsory school age children only). The school is required to report unauthorised absences to the local authority when they pass the threshold set out in the regulations. See **Reviewing absences and reporting to the local authority.**

### (iii) Other absences

The school may be able to authorise other absences such as:

- medical and dental appointments, but only when the appointment cannot otherwise be made outside school hours or during school holidays. A copy of the appointment letter/text is required as proof of appointment;
- days of religious observance, on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body the parent(s) belong to;
- exceptional family circumstances, such as a bereavement of a family member;
- adverse weather conditions that may make getting to/from school unsafe.

Absence from school will not be authorised for:

- sickness of brothers, sisters or parents
- birthdays or other 'home' days
- late nights/tiredness
- seeing relatives
- late returns from holiday
- work commitments (or other appointments) of parents
- transport difficulties where alternative arrangements could have been made

### School Responsibilities

- The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.
- Teachers will complete registers twice a day - at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- If a child is absent and the school has not been informed of the reason for the absence the school will telephone the parents to ensure:

(a) that the child is safe

(b) to establish the reason for their absence and then complete the register accordingly.

Parents will be telephoned during the first morning of absence. Where telephone contact cannot be made, parents will be contacted by email or text and asked to contact the school office.

If no contact can be made by a second day of absence the school will telephone a named emergency contact. The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead will be consulted where the reason for absence is unclear or unexplained in accordance with the school's ***Children Missing from Education Policy***.

- The school secretary will check the registers daily in order to enter the appropriate attendance codes for authorised/unauthorised absences. The school will also compile other data from the registers in line with the ***Admission and Attendance Registers Policy***.

### Reviewing absences and reporting to the local authority

The school will regularly and actively review the reason for pupil absences. In particular, where a pupil has five consecutive school days of absence for any reason, or where their attendance has fallen below 95% since the beginning of the school year, then details of their absence and a copy of their attendance data for the year to date, will be notified to the school Principal as soon as this absence is flagged, for review and action if necessary.

Where pupils of compulsory school age are absent for a **continuous period of ten school days** (and the absence has been recorded as 'unauthorised') the school is required to report such absence to the local authority. Where a pupil's attendance falls below 90% (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), the school and the local authority are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance.

Where a pupil has been absent due to sickness/illness and the school has reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will miss (or has missed) **15 days consecutively or cumulatively** since the beginning of the school year because of sickness, the school is required to inform the local authority.

## Communicating with parents

The Principal will contact the parents of any child identified as having attendance problems informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending.

The child's attendance will be closely monitored and if after a further period there appears to be no improvement the parents of the child will be invited to a meeting with the Principal to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the child from attending.

If after such meeting the attendance of the child does not improve, or there are further unauthorised absences, the process will be formalised, for example through an attendance contract.

If the absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, the school will work with the local authority or other outside agencies, to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is in place to enable families to respond.

At this stage, parents will be reminded that continued poor attendance could result in the school implementing, as a last resort, the **Exclusion Policy** which would lead to the child's name being removed from the school register. The school has a statutory responsibility to inform the local authority of all school age children whose names have been removed from the school register.

The local authority has the statutory duty to ensure to that all children of compulsory school age are receiving a satisfactory full-time education and has the power to prosecute – see [School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#).

## Late arrival

The school recognises that there may be occasions when a pupil arrives after the beginning of the school day due to exceptional unforeseen circumstances. However, punctuality, arriving at school in time for the start of the school day, is important for children to feel 'ready' for the day. It is also important so that the class can start the day promptly and is not disrupted by pupils arriving late and disturbing the rhythm of the morning.

Registers are taken at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions:

<b>Juniors</b>	morning session starts at <b>8.45am</b>	afternoon session starts at <b>1.30pm</b>
<b>Infants</b>	morning session starts at <b>9.00am</b>	afternoon session starts at <b>1.00pm</b>
<b>Kindergarten</b>	morning session starts at <b>9.15am</b>	afternoon session starts at <b>12.15pm</b>

Children may arrive **up to 15 minutes before the times shown above** (unless they are in breakfast club).

Children arriving after the above times (except children in the Kindergarten – see below\*) **must** go to the office to be recorded on the **late arrivals register**, so that the school has an accurate record of who is on the school site.

The school has a statutory duty to set a 'closing time' for the daily register, this has to be no more than 30 minutes after the start of the session. For this purpose the school register closes at **9.15am (Juniors)** and **9.30am (Infants)**.

Children arriving after the register has been taken but **before the register closes** will be recorded as 'Late'. Children arriving **after the register closes** (without pre-arranged permission) will be marked as having an '*unauthorised absence*' for that session.

*\*For children below compulsory school age (i.e. Kindergarten) the above requirements do not apply. Kindergarten children should always be taken to the kindergarten on arrival (there is no 'late' arrival). However for children in the 'Saplings' – we ask that children follow the above timings for Infant classes and report to the office if they arrive after 9.00am.*

The school will actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival.

## **Pupils absence due to their mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs/disabilities ((SEND)**

The school will be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

- The school recognised that many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, other school activities or variable moods. These pupils are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.
- School staff play a critical role in communicating this expectation to parents. They should also work with pupils and parents to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible. It may be helpful to refer to DfE's non-statutory guidance on [mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance](#) for case study examples.

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil, but additional support may need to be provided.

### **In developing additional support the school will:**

- work with parents to understand the individual needs of the pupil and family;
- facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue;
- consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents;
- consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxious feelings about school attendance.

### **Reduced timetable**

The school does not offer part-time schooling. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for the school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable (referred to as a 'reduced timetable') to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school full-time and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible.

The decision to offer a reduced timetables lies with the Principal. In considering a reduced timetable, the Principal will work closely with the school Learning Support co-ordinator and class teacher to ensure the rationale and practicalities of any such arrangements before discussing these with the parent.

A reduced timetable will:

- have the agreement of both the school and the parent the pupil normally lives with;
- have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan;
- have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary;
- have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process.
- Where the pupil has a social worker, the school will keep them informed and involved in the process.

- If the pupil has an education health and care plan, the school will discuss the reduced timetable with the local authority so that any support package that is in place can be reviewed as swiftly as possible.
- In agreeing to a reduced timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore the absence will be recorded as 'authorised'.

### **Policy monitoring and review**

This policy is monitored by the Proprietors and staff of the school and will be reviewed for changes in procedures and statutory guidelines in accordance with the school's annual policy review schedule.