ACHIEVE BEYOND SCHOOLS

"We R.A.I.S.E. each other"

Attendance Policy

Independent School Standards: paragraphs 15 and 34

Latest review and update	September 2026
Next external review and update	September 2027

AIM

At Achieve Beyond Schools, Stafford, we aim to:

- promote excellent attendance and punctuality knowing that absence and lateness from school affects the pattern of a pupil's schooling and regular absence and lateness will seriously affect their learning and wellbeing
- ensure every pupil has access to their full-time entitlement and make our 95% attendance expectations and target clear to all families
- act promptly to address patterns of absence
- overcome barriers to attendance, including in relation to mental health conditions through additional support
- support parents/carers in meeting their legal responsibilities to ensure good attendance.

This attendance policy pays regard to national guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE), including 'Working together to improve school attendance' (July 2026). However, we are aware that not all aspects of legal intervention are open to us as an independent school – education supervision orders, prosecution and parenting orders may be used, while penalty notices and attendance contracts may not.

RECORDING AND MANAGING ATTENDANCE

The register is a statutory document and is taken twice a day. Each day counts as two sessions of attendance, and we use national attendance and absence codes accordingly. Registers are marked at:

- **morning:** 09:30 (open until 10:00)
- **afternoon:** 13:00 (open until 13:30).

Pupils must arrive at school by **09:30.** If a pupil arrives after the registration period they will be formally marked in as late. At **10:00 the registers will be closed**. In accordance with the regulations, if a pupil arrives after that time, they will receive a mark to note that they are on site, but this will not count as a 'present' mark, and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. It is essential that pupils arriving and leaving school with a family member outside the normal hours are signed in and out from school offices. These records are used in the case of fire/emergency.

If a pupil has not arrived, the pupil will be marked as absent, and the school will follow up with a phone call to the relevant family asking for an explanation of the absence.

The school day starts at 09:00 and ends at 14:30. Timings are made clear to all families and local authority transport teams. If a pupil is going to be absent from school the parent/carer must contact the school as soon as possible on the morning of the first day of absence before 09:30.

We encourage good punctuality by being positive role models to our pupils and through celebrating and rewarding good punctuality, as we do attendance but if a pupil has a persistent late record, families will be asked to meet with a Head of School to resolve the problem.

As a special school catering for a large proportion of pupils who arrive to school from a wide range of locations on transport provided by placing authorities' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) teams, we acknowledge that sometimes transport providers arrive late to school. This can be for reasons beyond pupils' and families' control, such as heavy traffic or the late arrival of escorts and therefore pupils will not be penalised for lateness that is beyond their control.

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCES

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the family), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of absence is required.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- families keeping their child off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never properly been explained
- truancy before or during the school day
- pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- activities such as shopping, looking after other pupils or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time.

If a pupil is absent, we will:

- contact parents and carers every day to clarify the reason for a pupil's absence from school; this will happen as soon as is practicable on the first day and the reason for absence will then be recorded on the register
- attempt to contact the pupil's emergency contacts (we ask for at least two for every pupil) if we are unable to obtain the reason for a pupil being absent
- carry out a home visit if we have been unable to contact the family or emergency contacts.

As a final resort, if we have not been able to ascertain where a pupil is after following the steps above, the pupil will be classed as a 'missing child', and they will be reported to the police.

We will always invite the family in to discuss the situation with a leader if a pupil has persistent or severe absence however, parents & carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage in resolving any attendance and/or punctuality problems, together. We may consider referring the matter to the relevant Education Welfare Services team if attendance fails to improve.

ILLNESS AND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. We should be notified of these appointments in advance. If it is necessary for a pupil to be out of school for this reason, the pupil should wherever possible return to school directly after the appointment and not take the entire day off.

Long-term medical conditions requiring regular and repeated visits to medical professionals during term time need to be evidenced, reviewed and monitored by leaders. For unavoidable medical appointments during the school day – the parent/carer must phone us or send us a note in advance of the appointment.

HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. It is strongly discouraged by the government, placing authorities and Achieve Beyond Schools, Stafford. It is the family's obligation to inform the schools (in writing or at a meeting arranged with a Head of School) of a period of absence. It must be made by the parent or carer with whom the pupil normally resides. Any period of leave for holidays taken in term time will be classed as unauthorised unless aged by the Executive Head.

MONITORING ABSENCE

The Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 do not apply to independent schools. As such, Achieve Beyond Schools, Stafford, are not required to share the daily attendance data. We recognise that absence that is below 90% is doing considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the fullest support and cooperation from families to deal with this.

We are committed to working with families to reduce absence and ensure pupils have the highest possible levels of attendance and monitor attendance in the following ways:

- when a pupil's attendance drops below 95%, this will usually be addressed through informal conversations with Teachers. Where there is a lack of engagement and/or the attendance drops further, a more formal conversation will be had with families to highlight the need for immediate action and to be clear about the next steps, which could include an attendance warning letter (decision on sending these are made on a case-by-case basis) and/or weekly attendance meetings to identify any possible obstacles to attendance and to create a plan of action. If the attendance continues to drop further, the matter will be raised with the pupil's placing authority
- Heads of School meet with families whose absence or punctuality are a cause for concern to explain the consequences of severe and/or persistent absence and the potential need for legal intervention in the future. However, the focus will always be on trying to identify what support can be offered to remove barriers and improve attendance
- leaders monitor and analyse attendance data on a weekly basis to identify patterns and trends, including pupils at risk of poor attendance and to develop strategies to support individual/cohorts of pupils. As schools, we have a duty to inform families of their child's attendance and how this can impact on their learning
- termly attendance meetings are held between leaders and and the Proprietor Body to discuss individual pupils and concerns surrounding attendance levels
- attendance data is also analysed on a termly and yearly basis between leaders and the Proprietor Body, which includes comparisons against similar settings and national data
- pupils who are absent for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions will always get immediate attention from a Head of School and Executive Head (we know that pupils who are absent from education for prolonged periods of time and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a

range of safeguarding concerns and can eventually lead to pupils being missing in education)
- there may be occasions when a pupil's health means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long-term. We may seek medical evidence to better understand the pupil's needs as per the statutory guidance 'supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' and action will be on a case-by-case basis.

See appendix A for further information on the actions we take to promote good attendance and address absence.

PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

At Achieve Beyond Schools, Stafford, we aim to promote excellent attendance and punctuality by having attendance champions (Jasdeep Dosanjh, Heads of School) who oversees the following:

- regular communication and working together with parents, carers, and social workers
- contact with home will also always be made should a pupil's attendance be a cause for concern, with the aim of establishing the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance and thinking together to establish how we can overcome the barriers
- making reasonable adjustments to policies and practice to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend, in agreement with families and local authorities
- recognition for good attendance or improving attendance through termly attendance certificates, specific rewards and other events.

THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

We communicate and work with local authorities if a pupil's attendance falls or we become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs. Where needed, we will work with the local authority to review and amend the EHCP to incorporate the required attendance support. As per the 'working together to improve school attendance' statutory guidance, Achieve Beyond Schools, Stafford, keeps pupils' placing authorities regularly informed of all their pupils' attendance. We are obliged to inform placing authorities when a pupil fails to attend regularly or misses 10 consecutive school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the absence codes statistically classified as unauthorised (paragraph 49). We also inform placing authorities if a pupil misses or is expected to miss 15 days due to illness. Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year). Severe absence is when a pupil is missing 50% or more of school. Here support from the attendance support team and/or social care services will be intensified. If all the above has not been successful and if other ways of trying to improve the pupil's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the local authority may look to prosecute families; this could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support. Full details of the options to enforce attendance at school are available from the pupil's local authority.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – school attendance actions

Attendance	Probable actions
80–90%	

	• Teachers to have informal and supportive conversations with families • Head of School to offer further and specific support, based on the reasons around pupils' low attendance • Ensuring pupils have access to learning, including via work packs and/or online learning
70–79%	• All the actions outlined above • Supportive letters sent home, written by Teachers and pupils (if appropriate) • **Stage 1** letter sent by the (DSL) to flag attendance as a cause for concern and the need to improve • Head of School to carry out weekly meetings (using various medium forms) with families to identify any possible obstacles to attendance and to create a plan of action.
Below 69%	• All the actions outlined above • **Stage 2** letter issued by the DSL, along with a referral for additional support to external agencies – EWS or Early Help • Weekly home visits carried out by the DSL or Teachers to build relationships and encourage school attendance • Any medical reasons will be considered, reasonable adjustments will be put in place depending on the pupil's individual circumstances