

## ACS Attendance Policy

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Please note:

In countries where ACS International Schools is operating outside of the United Kingdom (UK), the UK regulatory framework will provide the foundation for best practice as far as this policy is concerned. All ACS schools will operate in compliance with the relevant legislation of the country in which they are operating.

### *Document Status*

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## 1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 ACS notes that educational research shows regular attendance at school is an important factor in students' academic progress and personal development.
- 1.2 This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.
- 1.3 The use of the words parent and parents in this policy is intended to refer to the legal guardian of the student. No assumption of biological parentage is implied.

<b>Nominated Lead Member of Staff:</b>	Compliance Officer - Dr. Richard Harrold
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## 2 Records of Student Attendance and Student Absence

- 2.1 Attendance records will be maintained and each absence from school must be explained by the responsible parent.
- 2.2 UK law requires all children must receive a full-time education between the school term following their fifth birthday and and the last Friday in June of the school year in which they turn 16. Children of this age must attend school so long as they are well. If permission for absence is not given or ten days' unauthorised absence exceeded in a given school year, the family is in breach of the law and the school is obliged to make an annual return of such unauthorised absences to the government.
- 2.3 Since a child's attendance at school is primarily the responsibility of his or her parent(s) and the student himself or herself, the parent(s) must verify the reasons for the dates of absence in writing, at the request of the school.
- 2.4 When a student wishes to be excused before the close of the school day, permission must first be secured by the parent from the school.
- 2.5 The Divisional Principal's authority is required for permission for a student to be absent for any reason other than illness.
- 2.6 A complete roll call will be made at the beginning of school and, in the case of middle and high school settings, at the beginning of each lesson. A list of students who are absent is to be given to the divisional office and a consolidated list will be drawn up in a manner determined by the Head of School. The parent of each student on the list whose absence is unexplained will be contacted to ascertain the reason for the absence.
- 2.7 When the student returns to school, a written explanation for the absence is required from the student's parent.

- 2.8 In unusual circumstances of prolonged absence, the school will reserve the right to require a student to retake courses or to repeat a year. More unusually, the student will not be invited to return for the next academic year.

### **3 Truancy and Unauthorised Absence**

- 3.1 ACS acknowledges its responsibility under [Children Missing Education 2016](#) to report children missing from education.
- 3.2 The Head of School shall set up controls to prevent/detect truancy and to decide appropriate consequences for students who are truant from school.
- 3.3 It is the Head of School's responsibility for seeing that the Compulsory Attendance Law is enforced at all times.

### **4 Students' Arrival/Departure from School**

- 4.1 Supervision of students will begin not less than 30 minutes before the time set for the beginning of registration. Students may not arrive at school and remain unsupervised earlier than this, except as follows:
- When earlier arrival is made necessary because of bus schedules.
  - When students are requested to come earlier for participation in school activities.
  - When the parent or guardian has applied for and been granted an exception by the administration.
- 4.2 No student shall be permitted to leave the school at recess or at any other time before the regular closing hour, except as follows:
- When permission has been granted by the school and/or divisional office, at the request of the parent.
  - When pursuing an approved schedule of school activities which requires the student to leave the school (for example a field trip).
- 4.3 Students shall be instructed to go home, or elsewhere as directed by the parent, immediately following the close of the school day, unless attending a regularly organised programme of instruction, recreation, or school activity which follows the dismissal of school.
- 4.4 Parents must notify the Divisional Principal or divisional secretary of any deviation from a child's regular routine for leaving school. If a child is to be collected by another child's parent or another adult because of a play date or similar privately arranged event, the parents of *all* the affected children must notify the school.
- 4.5 Students shall be required to remain in the appointed place while waiting for

the school bus, following dismissal.

- 4.6 Parents or others authorised to care for a child shall be notified before a child is sent home or elsewhere, at other than the regular time of dismissal.

## **5 Statutory Framework**

- 5.1 The Education Act 1996 states that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable —

- (a) to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs s/he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age —

- (a) when s/he attains the age of five, if s/he attains that age on a prescribed day,

and

- (b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his/her attaining that age.

Prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March

A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year (the last Friday in June) —

- (a) if s/he attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,

- (b) if s/he attains that age on that day, or

- (b) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his/her attaining that age.

## **6 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **6.1 Governing body**

As part of ACS' whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff;

- annually review the school's attendance rules and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents and children to implement the rules effectively;
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children and staff;
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site;
- ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff;
- ensure that senior leaders make the necessary referrals to the local authority and other relevant agencies in individual cases of non-attendance;
- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future.

## **6.2 School leadership team**

As part of ACS' whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to students and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families;
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement;
- coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full review;
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues;
- ensure that legislation and government guidance on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislative changes and how to implement them;
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively;
- develop and engage with multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend;
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.

## **6.3 Teachers and support staff**

As part of ACS' whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to students and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families;
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement;
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue;
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily;
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed;
- work with external agencies to support students and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

#### **6.4 Parents**

As part of ACS' whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school;
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home;
- encourage and support their children's aspirations;
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school, and include an expected date for return;
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as making medical and dental appointments outside school hours;
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises;
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance;
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance;
- not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the Head of School.

## 6.5 Students

As part of ACS' whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that students make every effort to:

- be aware of the school's attendance rules, and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents and the school timetable;
- speak to their homeroom teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance;
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable;
- bring a note of explanation from their parents to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen;
- follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. Students are held responsible for this and it is made clear to all students what this procedure is by their homeroom teachers. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.

## 7 Categories of Absence and Procedure for Reporting Absences

7.1 Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the student's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences.

7.2 Staff should make it clear on the school register when taking attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised. Where staff have concerns regarding absences they should follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

7.3 When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return. This should be followed up with a written note from the parent of the child. Alternative arrangements will be made individually with non-English speaking parents.

### 7.4 Illness

7.41 Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents will need to alert the school on *each day* of absence. When the child returns to school they should bring a note from their parents explaining the absence.

7.42 For prolonged absence due to illness, parents may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

## **7.5 Medical or dental appointments**

7.51 Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

## **7.6 Authorised absences**

7.61 There may be some instances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement.

## **7.7 Exclusion**

7.71 Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. The homeroom teacher or subject teacher will arrange for work to be sent home where appropriate.

## **7.8 Family holidays and extended leave**

7.81 Parents should make every effort to ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. Parents may request a leave of absence during term time. Requests for leave of this type must be made in writing to the Head of School at least 14 days in advance of the leave being taken. Retrospective applications will not be considered. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration.

7.82 The Head of School may only grant requests for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and the Head of School's decision is final on whether the request is approved and the length of absence approved.

7.83 All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing, and will outline the details of when the child is expected to return to school. Parents should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

7.84 It remains the Head of School's decision whether to authorise any request for absence during term time. If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents may be subject to further action by the school or prosecution by the local authority.

## **7.9 Religious observance**

7.91 ACS recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times.

7.92 Parents will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

## **7.10 Study leave**

7.10.1 The school has a period of study leave leading up to certain examinations where students are granted authorised absence to revise at home. The school operates study sessions at school within this time to help with revision and to reduce the amount of time spent out of school.

## **7.11 Late arrival**

7.11.1 Registration begins at 8:30 AM daily. Students who arrive after this time but within the registration period will be marked as late. The registration period ends at 8:40 AM.

7.11.2 Divisional handbooks at each campus set out the procedures for signing in when students are late arriving to school (i.e. after 8:30 AM). Students arriving late must be signed in at their divisional office and a reason given for their lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised. It is vital that students sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all students are accounted for.

7.11.3 In Middle and High School settings a register is also taken at the start of all lessons by the subject teacher, and any unexplained absences reported back to the school office. If a student is late to a lesson, this will be recorded on the register.

7.11.4 Persistent lateness may result in disciplinary action.

## **8 School action: following up absences**

8.1 Class registers are passed to the school office at the end of the registration period. Under UK law, electronic registers are considered equivalent to ink registers.

8.2 Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, ACS will contact the parents. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the principal, deputy head, homeroom teacher or other appropriate person will contact the parent to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

8.3 Parents will be contacted if a student gives a reason for an unauthorised absence that appears false or that gives rise to doubt.

8.4 Upon a student's return from absence, divisional offices will require students to provide a written explanation for the absence from their parents. This is for the school records and is necessary no matter what the reason or length of the absence.

8.5 Upon a student's return from absence, the school will support that student when they re-enter school to help them catch up on any work that they have missed.

- 8.6 Where a student has been absent from school for a period of more than 20 school days, and where the absence was unauthorised and both the school and Local Authority have been unable to contact the parents, the school may remove the child from the school roll. The school will notify the local authority when such action is taken, in accordance with its duty under Children Missing Education, 2016.
- 8.7 ACS may take disciplinary action against any students who are discovered to be persistently truanting, and parents may be contacted to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help. ACS may take further action against the parents, including referral to the local authority to begin criminal proceedings against the parents.

## **9 Associated Policies**

- 9.1 This policy is associated with and should be read in conjunction with the following ACS policies:
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
  - Student Behaviour Policy