



ACS Attendance Policy (UK)

Please note:

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.

ACS International Schools is committed to protecting individual's personal data, and aims to remain at all times fully compliant with data protection laws and guidance from the relevant regulators. ACS further commits to ensuring that the planning and writing of all policies and procedures that involve the handling of personal data are guided by the principle of privacy by design, and that individuals' rights to have their data safeguarded are a paramount consideration in ACS' pursuit of all its operational and strategic practices.

ACS is committed to inclusion across race, gender, faith, identity and abilities. We believe that diversity helps us to fulfil our purpose, realise our vision and exemplify our values.

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 biannually.
- 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.
- 1.4 ACS acknowledges the responsibilities outlined by the Department for Education for parents, independent schools, and governing bodies—working in close collaboration with local authorities (See Appendix 2).

- 1.5 ACS vigorously supports school attendance because:

- Education is compulsory in the UK (see section 2).
- Students' social-emotional and personal development requires interaction and engagement that comes naturally with being in school.
- Regular school attendance supports good mental health for students and promotes healthy family relationships.
- Attendance is closely related to academic achievement: students with higher rates of attainment consistently have better school attendance records. Attendance rates below 95% often negatively impact academic progress. Research in the UK has indicated that a single missed day of school impact a student's life chances.

2. Compulsory Education

- 2.1 The UK requires that children ages 5-18 are in education full time.
- 2.2 Specifically, 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.

In England, 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.

*A student can leave school on the last Friday in June if he or she will be 16 by the end of the summer holidays.

They must then do one of the following until they are 18:

- stay in full-time education, for example at a college
- start an apprenticeship or traineeship

spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering, while in part-time education or training

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 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 local authority.

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 Head of School must authorise a student to be absent for any reason other than illness, and they may delegate the authority to authorize specific reasons for absence to divisional school leaders.
- 2.6 A complete register of attendance will be made at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, and, in the case of middle and high school settings, at the beginning of each lesson. The register will record which students are present and absent from school, including which students are attending approved educational activities outside school, which students are unable to attend school through exceptional circumstances, which students are taking authorised leave of absence and which students are taking unauthorized leave of absence.
- 2.7 The parent of any student on the list whose absence is unexplained will be contacted to ascertain the reason for the absence, and a written explanation for the absence will be required from the student's parent upon the student's return to school.
- 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' attendance policy is informed by the guidance provided by the Department for Education in [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) (2023), and 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.
- 3.4 **For sponsored students under UKVI child student/student visa route:** exceeding 10 consecutive full days unauthorised absence will be reported to the UKVI within 10 working days from the 10th day of unauthorised absence. With that report, ACS is required to cease UKVI sponsorship of the student, and therefore they would be excluded from the school.

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 of Early Childhood and Lower School students 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. 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 School attendance officers

Heads of School must identify staff whose responsibilities must include:

- following up on all student absences promptly
- monitoring and analysing attendance data
- send attendance notices to parents
- notify the local authority about any student with less than 90% attendance within the specified period
- work with school DSL to provide accurate information to the local authority about children missing education
- providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance
- keep accurate and timely records
- notify school leaders, pastoral support staff, and safeguarding teams of urgent or chronic attendance concerns
- gather and record information about students transferring from ACS:
 - the date the student left for another school
 - the name of the new school
 - the date when the student is due to start attending their new school
- When students transfer in or out during the school year,
 - notify the local authority within 5 days
 - provide the local authority with information held within the admission register about the student
- Enter into ACS's register
 - the date the student left for another school
 - the name of the new school
 - the date the student is due to start attending their new school
- For sponsored students studying under a child student/student visa
 - notify UKVI of leavers if they withdraw before the end of the course as specified on their Confirmation for Acceptance of Studies (CAS).

6.4 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;
- use the school's Learning Management Systems in line with agreed expectations, which can support students who are absent
- 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.

6.5 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.

6.6 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.
- use the school's Learning Management Systems and other resources for remote learning (in developmentally appropriate ways) to monitor documented content, learning engagements, assignments, and assessments that took place in the absence.

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 will 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 Attendance in all ACS registers including online registration will be recorded using the unified codes outlined by the the DfE).

ACS is committed to its duty of recording at every attendance taking whether every student is

- Present;



- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

7.4 ACS is committed to its duty to follow up absences to:

- Ensure the appropriate safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether or not the absence is approved;
- Identify the correct code before entering it in the attendance system; and
- Log any subsequent changes absence codes after an initial re-coding from 'N'

7.5 When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school on the first day of absence no later than 9:30am, the reason for absence, and 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 for parents requiring translation services.

7.6 Illness (physical and mental health-related)

7.6.1 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.

7.6.2 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.

7.6.3 For an extended absence for mental health (anxiety or other social, emotional or mental health concerns exceeding three days), the divisional principal must be notified, along with the school counsellor and (D)DSL. Absence for mental health concerns that involves more than 3 days consecutively or 5 days within a semester requires a safeguarding risk assessment entered in MyConcern.

7.6.4 ACS promotes school attendance as a major component of students' mental wellbeing, being mindful of [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#). In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, a coordinated plan registered with the Local Authority Inclusion Service may involve the use of a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs, in collaboration with mental health professionals. We will provide reasonable accommodations that encourage regular attendance for the full school day.

7.7 Medical or dental appointments



7.71 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.

7.8 Bereavement

7.81 The school may authorise absence for a family bereavement, at the discretion of the Head of School. We recognise that travel may require additional absence in the context of our international community.

7.9 Suspension (temporary exclusion)

7.9.1 Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. The student's single point of contact will arrange for work to be sent home, where appropriate.

7.10 Family holidays and extended leave

7.10.1 Parents must ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. In exceptional circumstances, parents may request a leave of absence during term time from the Head of School.

7.10.2 Requests for exceptional leave must be made in writing to the Head of School at least 14 days in advance. Retrospective applications will not be considered. By law, the Head of School may only authorise student absences in exceptional circumstances. The Head of School's decision is final.

7.10.3 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 any change in the approved date of return.

7.10.4 Unauthorised absences may subject parents to further action by the school, fines, or criminal prosecution.

7.11 Religious observance

7.11.1 ACS recognises that families celebrate holidays and honour commitments as part of their communities of faith which do not coincide with ACS school holidays; Heads of school will allow authorised absence for religious observances.

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

7.12 Study leave



7.12.1 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.

7.13 Late arrival

7.13.1 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.

7.13.2 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.

7.13.3 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.

7.13.4 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 or other appropriate person will contact the parent to discuss possible reasons and school or community-based 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 DSL 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 (which may impose fines and make criminal referrals for prosecution).

9 Associated Policies

9.1 This policy is associated with and should be read in conjunction with the following ACS policies:

- Admissions and Continuing Enrolment Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Student Mental Health Policy

9.2 ACS guidance is available for developing learning plans for students with an excused absence and assessing their welfare.

Appendix 1

Procedures followed by ACS to meet our school attendance duty of care

Schools share with local authorities and parents a duty to ensure children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education. ACS follows the procedures outlined below to ensure we are mindful of our duty as well as compliant with statutory guidance.

Students are entered on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, ACS will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts. ACS will also consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

ACS monitors student attendance through a register taken electronically twice daily (in early childhood and lower school settings), and every lesson (in middle school, upper school, senior school, and high school settings), using codes as specified by the Department for Education.

ACS monitors attendance closely and families of students with poor or irregular attendance are contacted by divisional attendance officers to establish reasons for absence and to remind parents of their part in the shared school attendance duty of care.

ACS conducts audits of attendance procedures to ensure procedures are being followed and that they are appropriately robust. Poor student attendance is referred to the local authority, and ACS campus attendance officers agree with the local authority the intervals at which ACS will inform them of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or have missed ten school days or more without permission.

The chart on the next page shows how ACS Cobham and ACS Egham will respond in a case where we have identified a child whose absence from school with no explanation provided by parent/carer is causing concern. This chart is taken from Surrey County Council's Policy Guidance for Safeguarding Children Missing Education May 2017 (Revised November 2017).



FIRST DAY OF UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE

School identify a child is absent and no explanation provided by parent/carer

School **MUST** attempt to contact home via either automated calling system or a designated member of staff telephoning the parents.

(a) Parent/carer responds:

- i) *Aware and reason for absence provided* - school to remind parent they should contact school as early as possible on each day of absence.
- ii) *Not aware* - Parent & School to start checks (school site, friends/family etc) to ascertain child's whereabouts. Ongoing risk assessment/consideration of vulnerability regarding informing police

b) Parent/carer does not answer/respond:

- * Message should be left on answering service requesting parent/carer contacts the school as soon as possible.
- * If the child is subject to child protection plan or is a child in care then the named social worker should be informed.
- * If there is reason to believe that the child may be the victim of a crime the police should be informed.
- * Unexplained absence should be recorded as unauthorised (Code O).

If you are concerned the child is vulnerable and at risk of harm, refer straight to the MASH

DAYS TWO TO TWENTY

If the judgement on **Day One** is that there is no reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm, the process of school attempting to contact the family by automated system or telephone should continue daily.

Schools should also attempt to contact the parents/ make enquiries via other contact numbers and emergency contacts held for child.

Schools should attempt to contact the parents via email if known. If schools have had no response to their enquiries they should write on **Day Three** to home address asking family to make contact to explain absence.

The Education (Pupil Registration) England Regulations 2006 states

that schools **MUST** refer to the Education Welfare Officer when a child has not attended for 10 consecutive days and the absence is unauthorised. However schools should seek advice from their Education Welfare Officer before day 10 in order that a decision can be made regarding whether a visit needs to be made to the home address sooner to check the welfare of the child.

CHILD MISSING FROM SCHOOL FOR MORE THAN 20 SCHOOL DAYS

If a child continues to be missing from school for 20 school days and the school and the LA have exhausted enquiries and has been unable to locate the pupil and her/his family, under the regulations, it is permissible for the child's name to be removed from the school roll and details of the child up-loaded to the DfE Lost Pupil Database.

If information is received indicating that the child is on roll at another school, all relevant agencies including EWO and CME Tracking Officer should be informed.

If concerns remain in relation to the whereabouts of the child, the CME tracking Officer should continue to pursue reasonable enquiries and missing person activity in accordance with local procedures until the pupil is tracked and on the roll of another school.



For ACS Hillingdon, the procedure followed is drawn from [The London Borough of Hillingdon Children Missing Education Policy \(2019\)](#) as follows:

If ACS Hillingdon attendance officers identify a child whose absence from school with no explanation provided by parent/carer is causing concern, the point of contact at the London Borough of Hillingdon is Lesley Campbell whose contact details are below:

E-mail: LCampbell@hillingdon.gov.uk

Tel: 01895 250858

The London Borough of Hillingdon Participation Team will assume responsibility for ensuring the child missing education returns to education. This may involve liaising with a number of partner agencies of which ACS Hillingdon is one. ACS Hillingdon attendance officers will offer every assistance to the Participation Team and the other partner agencies in returning the child to education. This will include sharing all relevant intelligence known about the child and family when they were removed from the school's roll or added to the school roll outside regular admissions cycles.

Further details about the role of the Participation Team and its partnership with all schools in the London Borough of Hillingdon are outlined in [The London Borough of Hillingdon Children Missing Education Policy \(2019\)](#).



Appendix 2

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), revised September 2023, and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)