



Attendance and Absence Policy

Version: 4

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ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE POLICY

Date of Policy: 05/10/2026

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months (as a minimum).

Review Date: 05/10/2027

Aims

This policy aims to maintain high levels of good attendance from learners who attend AP Education to ensure continuity of their education as well as their safety on days when they are allocated to attend our provision.

Guidance and Definitions

This policy follows:

- Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, statutory guidance, in force from 19 August 2024)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Children missing education (DfE, statutory guidance)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (DfE)
- Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs (DfE)
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (DfE)

AP Education is not the learner's school of registration. The commissioning body keeps the attendance register, records the attendance code and keeps legal responsibility for attendance. Our role is to give the school and local authority accurate and timely information so they can record attendance correctly (for example code B, for attendance at approved off-site education) and act on absence.

These thresholds mirror the DfE's definitions, which are based on possible sessions. Many of our learners are commissioned for only a few sessions a week, so a single missed session can move the percentage sharply. We therefore also review any learner who misses 2 consecutive sessions or 3 sessions in a half-term, whatever their percentage

Responsibilities

Ensuring regular attendance is a shared responsibility among all AP Education staff, learners, parents or carers. The referring party also retains legal responsibility for the learner's attendance.

AP Education ensure that our Education Delivery Co-Ordination team is responsible for attendance and reporting for all learner provision. Our team can be contacted at anytime via attendance@ap-education.com or 08004880424. Anyone who requires management oversight can either ask for an Education Service Manager, Darren Smith or Penny Darby.

Our attendance team is responsible for:

- overseeing this policy and making sure it is followed;

- reviewing attendance and lateness data weekly;
- making sure absence follow-up and notifications to schools and local authorities happen within the timescales in this policy;
- leading attendance support plans for learners at risk of persistent or severe absence;
- acting as the link with school and local authority attendance officers and Virtual Schools;
- producing the half-termly vulnerable groups analysis
- reporting attendance termly to the Senior Leadership Team; and
- making sure staff and tutors are trained in this policy.

Learners' responsibility:

- Arriving at the provision at agreed times.
- Attending all lessons/sessions/activities at the provision on their allocated days.
- Informing staff if there are any reasons which may be preventing them from attending the provision on their allocated days.

Parents/Carers responsibility:

- Ensuring that their child is present at the provision on designated days and is punctual.
- Should their child be unable to attend provision it is the essential to notify the AP Education Team, requesting to speak with the dedicated Education Delivery Co-Ordinator, directly either via:

Phone – 0800 488 0424

Email – attendance@ap-education.com

- Parents/Carers are requested to provide a valid reason for their child's absence or lateness.
- We request that any medical or dental appointments are arranged outside of provision hours, where possible.
- Attend meetings to discuss their child's attendance and/or punctuality as appropriate.
- Work in partnership with the provision to improve the attendance and punctuality of their child.
- Parents/Carers should not take their child on holiday in term-time - it can be disruptive to the learners learning. Holidays in term time will almost always be unauthorised.
- Only in very exceptional circumstances will a holiday, or time out of provision to travel, be authorised. Applications should be made as far in advance of the holiday as possible, and parents/carers should speak to AP Education before anything is booked.

- We request that all notification of non-attendance is given with prompt notification and prior to session start time/date.

AP Education will:

- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the provision including learners, parents/carers and staff.
- Strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, where each member of the provision community feels wanted and secure.
- Work with learners and their parents/carers to ensure each learner attends the provision regularly and punctually.
- Provide support, advice and guidance and regular information to parents and learners on issues relating to attendance and punctuality.
- Recognise the needs of the learner when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
- Establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges good attendance and punctuality.
- Develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- Ensure the daily attendance of each learner is reported to their home school verbally by an agreed time each day.
- Ensure the weekly attendance of each learner is reported to all required parties by emailing their attendance report to the designated person.
- Utilise appropriate systems to record attendance in accordance with the contractual requirements stipulated in any external agreements or local authority frameworks.
- Be responsible for all parents/carers and learners to complete an induction on the understanding of attendance expectations prior to the provision commencing.

Understanding and Removing Barriers to Attendance

Many of our learners have been out of school, excluded or unable to attend. Absence is often a sign of an unmet need rather than a choice. Common barriers include:

- SEND, including sensory needs, communication needs and anxiety about new adults or places;
- medical conditions, including long-term or fluctuating illness and appointments;
- anxiety and mental health needs, including emotionally based school avoidance;
- bullying or child-on-child abuse, and fear of contact with peers;
- family circumstances, such as caring responsibilities, housing instability, bereavement or domestic abuse;

- transport and travel difficulties; and
- exploitation or other safeguarding risks.

AP Education works with the learner, family and commissioning school to understand and reduce these barriers. Support may include:

- flexible session times, lengths and venues (home, community or online), agreed with the commissioner;
- a gradual start and the same tutor wherever possible, to build trust;
- reasonable adjustments and approaches from the learner's EHCP or ILP (see SEND Policy);
- for anxiety and mental health needs, a relational, low-pressure approach, and working through the school to involve mental health support teams, CAMHS or Early Help;
- raising transport issues with the commissioner; and
- attendance support meetings with the family, school and other professionals, with an agreed attendance support plan.

Our approach is supportive, not punitive. Decisions to authorise absence, and any legal intervention, rest with the school and local authority.

Failure to Arrive / Non-Attendance at Provision

AP Education treats attendance as a safeguarding matter as well as an educational one. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, being absent, as well as missing, from education can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including neglect, sexual abuse, child sexual and criminal exploitation, and mental ill-health. Where a learner's whereabouts cannot be confirmed, or absence is unexplained, repeated or follows a concerning pattern, the matter must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead the same day, and managed under our Safeguarding Policy and Children Missing Education Policy. Registers are checked and parent/carer contact attempted within 30 minutes of a missed start time; the referring school and/or local authority is notified of any unexplained absence within one hour and in any event before the end of the scheduled session, with written confirmation the same working day.

1. Initial Checks

- Attendance registers will be checked immediately following the agreed arrival time.
- Tutors will confirm whether any notification of absence has been received via phone or email.

2. Parent/Carer Contact

- If no notification has been received, AP Education Delivery Co-Ordinators will attempt to contact the parent/carer without delay to:
 - Establish the learner's whereabouts
 - Ascertain the reason for non-attendance

- Assess whether there are any immediate safeguarding concerns

3. Referring school / local authority notification

- Where the learner does not arrive and cannot be accounted for, the referring school and/or local authority will be notified in line with agreed contractual and safeguarding arrangements.
- Daily attendance outcomes will continue to be reported as required.

4. Escalation to safeguarding

- Where a learner's whereabouts cannot be confirmed, or concerns arise regarding their safety or welfare, the non-attendance will be treated as a safeguarding concern and managed in line with the AP Education Safeguarding Policy.
- This may include escalation to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and, where appropriate, external agencies.

5. Recording and monitoring

- All failure-to-arrive incidents will be accurately recorded on the attendance system, including:
 - Time of expected arrival
 - Actions taken
 - Contacts made
 - Outcomes
- Patterns of non-attendance will be monitored, reviewed and shared with relevant professionals to support early intervention.

6. Persistent non-attendance

- Where a learner repeatedly fails to attend provision, AP Education will work collaboratively with parents/carers, the learner, and the referring school or local authority to:
 - Identify barriers to attendance
 - Review risk assessments
 - Agree additional support or alternative arrangements where necessary

Lateness

Recording:

- A learner is late if they arrive after the scheduled start time.

- The tutor records the actual arrival time, minutes late and reason on the register [in DC Pro] for every session.
- If the learner has not arrived by the start time, the non-arrival procedure above applies straight away.
- The session is not normally extended past its scheduled end.

Responding:

- **First late arrivals:** The tutor welcomes the learner without blame and notes the reason.
- **3 late arrivals in a half-term:** The Education Delivery Coordinator speaks with the learner and parent or carer to understand the cause and agree support.
- **Continued lateness:** Lateness is added to an attendance support plan and discussed with the school.
- **Unexplained or worsening lateness:** This can indicate a welfare concern. Such lateness is shared with the DSL.

Lateness is included in the weekly attendance report to the commissioning body.

Tutor lateness: If a tutor will be late, they must tell their Education Delivery Coordinator before the session start time. Tutor lateness is recorded separately, never counted against the learner, and managed under the Code of Conduct.

AP Education will ensure that any learner that has been missing education are notified to the commissioning body within the following timescales:

- DC Pro – when an N Code is triggered this will create an automatic notification to the School/Local Authority. An N Code would be logged if we cannot establish contact with a parent within 15 minutes of session start time
- Where a learner has been absent from sessions for 5 consecutive sessions AP Education would conduct a welfare check and the commissioning School/Local Authority are notified the same day.

Where a learner has not attended for 10 consecutive school days (or the equivalent commissioned sessions), AP Education will follow the local Children Missing Education (CME) procedures of the local authority where the learner lives. This applies where the school has not given a reason it accepts. AP Education will:

- confirm the absence in writing to the commissioning body and the local authority's CME or attendance team the same day;
- ask them to confirm what action they are taking. Under the DfE's CME guidance, schools must notify the local authority when a pupil has been absent without permission for 10 or more consecutive school days;
- complete the local authority's CME referral where it asks providers to refer directly; and
- record every notification and response.

Our earlier triggers mean the school and local authority should already know well before 10 days: same-day notification of unexplained absence, and a welfare check after 5 consecutive missed sessions. Where a learner's whereabouts are unknown at any point, this is a safeguarding concern and is reported to the DSL immediately.

If a learner is missing:

The following procedure should be followed by staff:

- AP Education staff to conduct a search of all building and the immediate surrounding area.
- If the learner is not located within an agreed time frame, contact is to be made with the parents/carers and the local police providing a clear description of the learner including what they are wearing.
- If appropriate, a member of staff may search the locality. If they find the learner, they must keep the learner within their sight, but they do not chase the learner as they may pose as a flight risk and alert all parties immediately.
- AP Education staff will follow our Attendance Monitoring Process regarding non-attendance of the learner to the provision.
- This should be reported as a safeguarding concern following safeguarding procedures.

If a learner is found to be missing during an off-site visit, staff should follow the same procedures as those used for missing learners on site.

If a learner is found to be missing, either on-site or while off-site, staff are required to complete the following procedures:

- Document the incident thoroughly, specifying the learner involved and the resolution. Please outline the systems and record-keeping procedures utilised by all parties involved with the provision.
- Arrange a strategy meeting with the referring school / local authority and parents/carers to review the individual risk assessment for the learner involved.
- Arrange an in-person review of provision with an Education Delivery Co-Ordinator, Tutor, Parents/Carers and learner present to monitor the session.
- Review the procedures put in place to safeguard the learner every half-term to ensure appropriate control measures are in place and all staff are fully informed.

Monitoring Attendance of Vulnerable Groups

Every half-term, the Attendance Team analyses attendance and lateness for all learners and for these groups:

- learners with an EHCP or on SEN support;
- learners with a social worker (child in need or child protection plan);
- looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- learners with medical conditions;
- young carers; and
- learners at risk of, or meeting, persistent or severe absence.

The analysis compares each group with all learners, identifies learners whose attendance is falling, and records the actions agreed. For looked-after children, attendance is shared with the Virtual School. For learners with a social worker, concerns are shared with the social worker. Findings are reported termly to the Senior Leadership Team, and to commissioners on request.

To make this possible, each learner's group information is recorded at referral [confirm: on DC Pro] and updated when circumstances change.