



Arun Court School: Policy Number 12C

Arun Court School – ATTENDANCE – last updated December 2021

Ratified by main EMAT meeting:

Signature (+ date) Chair of EMAT: Mr Paul Phillips

Signature (+ date) Proprietor:Mrs Beverley-Sarah White

Signature (+ date) Principal of SchoolVicki Williams

Date of next review: December 2022 (or earlier if further legislation released)

This policy is due for ratification January 2022, following updates in line with DFE advice updated on 16th December 2021

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/framework-for-securing-full-attendance-actions-for-schools-and-local-authorities>



ATTENDANCE POLICY

CONTEXT STATEMENT

We recognise that we work with student's whose attendance at previous settings has been weak. One of the reasons we wanted to gain school status was because when our students were dual registered they would often refuse to attend their main placement school. We want to encourage our students to value education and to see it as a privilege that is sadly not available to all children in the world. Our students are in a school that has long holiday periods, has therapy in place so that a student can leave a session at any time, a flexible curriculum up to the end of year 9 and a later start time. So, for students who don't like school, or find school overwhelming we are a really good compromise. We also do not have many of the 'school structures' such as uniform or calling teachers by family names.

We know it is very hard for parents who may feel threatened, controlled or are highly anxious about their child's well-being to encourage them to attend but it is really important that we work together to ensure attendance is high. We actively teach perseverance and resilience every day, and these valuable lessons lose impact if they are not consistently attended therefore hampering your child's mental health recovery.

WHEN AND HOW IS ATTENDANCE RECORDED?

- We record attendance twice daily in a paper register which is then entered into an electronic system.
- Attendance is recorded at the first lesson in the lower school and then again after lunch in the early afternoon
- Attendance is recorded at the first lesson in the upper school and then again after lunch in the early afternoon
- A student is marked as absent if they are not in school by 10.05
- A student is marked as absent if they are not present at 13:05
- It is important to understand that if 'late' is recorded that is allocated as a whole missed session – morning or afternoon
- If a student is marked absent the school office is notified and they will call parents to find out the reason for the absence. The reason for the absence is recorded and provided it is for a designated reason within the register codes it is classed as 'authorised'
- If a family cannot be reached by phone we will keep trying ALL numbers on the student registration form. This is very important with regards to safeguarding as there have sadly been cases where single parents have died unexpectedly and their child has been at home, unable to contact for help, in some cases this led to a further death of a child.
- Unauthorised absence is recorded as such, and this may include holidays taken out of school vacation periods

Admissions Register

The office staff hold the responsibility of keeping the Admissions Register up to date.

The name of the pupil will be included in the register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or has been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

For each pupil the admission register will contain:

1. i) name in full;
2. ii) sex;
3. iii) name and address of every person known to the proprietor to be a parent of the pupil (and an indication of the parent with whom the pupil normally resides and which parent holds parental responsibility as defined by Section 3 Children Act 1989);

(address of any new or additional places of residence of the child, the full name of the parent with whom the child will normally live in future and the date from which the child will normally live there will be added if required.)

1. iv) at least one telephone number at which the parent can be contacted in an emergency;
2. v) day, month and year of birth;
3. vi) name and address of the school last attended, if any;
4. vii) day, month and year of admission or re-admission to the school;
5. viii) expected start date;

(If a child does not arrive on the expected start date then the Local Authority will be contacted at the earliest opportunity.)

Parent Help - What might be different to having a young person placed in a state school or a non-specialist Independent school?

In a state school the head teacher must inform the LEA when a child ceases to attend and is to be home educated; has moved out of the area; has been certified as medically unable to continue attending; is detained under a court order; or has been permanently excluded.

Whereas at Arun Court

As a Non-maintained Independent Specialist School, no child is removed from our register unless agreed with the Local Education Authority through the emergency or annual review process.

As all children placed with us have an EHCP, parents can not notify the school of their intention to home educate. Children with an EHCP are classed as vulnerable and can't be home educated without LEA agreement and safeguarding checks once an EHCP has been issued. It is important to also note that parents choosing to home educate will not gain access to EHCP funding.

Students who receive the status of being medically unfit to attend will still need to have an emergency review and parents will need to provide medical advice to this effect. The school can't 'sign off' an unwell child, nor can CAHMS by itself – there must be a multi-professional approach

In a state school when a child is deleted from the school roll at both non transition and transition times the name of the pupil's new school and expected start date will be added to the admissions register. This information will also be sent via a secure system to the local authority to ensure all parties are aware of pupil's whereabouts.

Whereas at Arun Court the LEA will denote the end of placement date and send the school information as to the next confirmed placement to ensure that safeguarding materials are transferred. Usually this is completed collaboratively and the school will have supported in the transition process.

Where a pupil is registered at more than one school, his /her name may only be deleted from the admissions register of a school which he/she has ceased to attend where the proprietor of any or every other school at which the pupil is registered gives his/her consent, (except where the pupil has died, been permanently excluded or of no fixed abode).

Dual registration is not usual in our setting and is only ever part of a transition process. As all young people have EHCPs the recording and reporting arrangements are decided with the LEA and recorded within the review paperwork and any dual arrangement as defined under the National Schools contract. We do not as a general rule encourage or provide dual or part-time placements.

Attendance Register

It is a statutory duty for class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class teachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance registers twice daily at the start of the morning and afternoon session.

It must show whether the pupil is;

1. i) present;
2. ii) absent;
- iii) attending an approved educational activity outside school;
 1. iv) unable to attend through exceptional circumstances;
 2. v) taking authorised absence;
 3. vi) taking unauthorised

Registers will be retained for three years after the end of the school year in question. We follow the registration marks recording system laid out by Surrey County Council. The Principal, not parents, authorises absence. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged.

Absences known to be for the following reasons would be authorised:

- Illness
- Religious observance
- Attendance at medical appointments which can't be made outside school hours.

Calls and emails from parents regarding absences are logged by the school office onto the Daily Absence sheet which is shown to each class teacher after 9.30am by a member of office staff so they are aware of daily absences and the reason for the absence.

Family Holidays During Term Time

We send parents the term dates in advance so they can arrange their holidays without disrupting their child's education.

Holidays during term time are strongly discouraged due to the inevitable disruption to learning and emotional well-being. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and in law, have to apply for permission in advance. Arun Court School has longer holiday periods than state schools, our young people are on a programme of academic catch up and students are granted a place via EHCP funding. **Holidays are therefore extremely rarely granted, due to welfare considerations and appropriate use of public funds.**

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE BECOMES A CONCERN?

In November 2019 we were pleased to receive a successful Ofsted report, however continuing to improve attendance was a key requirement for the school to work on. Funding LEAs, mainly Surrey and Hampshire, have also expressed concerns about attendance and parents need to be aware that as 'auditors' of public finance the authority has the right to ask us to move to end a placement that a student is not attending – **non attendance is a key indicator that a placement is not suitable, even if this non-attendance is due to high anxiety or even hospital admission. Attendance becomes a concern if it is less than 96%.**

To help improve attendance, we have therefore enhanced and simplified our attendance response into the following staged format.

STAGE	ACTION	WHO MAY BE INVOLVED?
0 – INFORMAL	Your child’s keyworker will have been informed that there is a concern around attendance. They will ring you to discuss what issues there may be and how we can support. Following on from this a member of the strategic leadership team may call you to discuss resolving the situation and offering a variety of support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents, student and staff
1 – MEETING OF PROFESSIONALS	If the situation does not improve, then you will be sent a letter expressing concerns and suggesting a multi-professional meeting. At this meeting we encourage you to invite as many professionals as possible to help us all work together to create a plan. Most plans last for just 5 weeks over which a significant improvement of full attendance is expected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services invited by the young person’s parents • Various professionals on the school staff
2 - PLACEMENT AT RISK	At this stage a young person is either continuing to show low attendance or their overall attendance has dramatically dropped to a very low percentage (below 75%) All our young people are vulnerable and for us to be able to take on the legal responsibility of ‘safeguarding’ them we need to have physical access to them. At stage 2 therefore it is often the case that we will make referrals to external services such as children’s care and CAMHs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brokering Local Education Authority • Children’s Services • CAMHs • Commissioning and Legal Services • Services invited by the young person’s parents • Various professionals on the school staff
3- TERMINATION MEETING	At this stage we end the placement by mutual agreement, and have a meeting to try to decide better options for the young person. In some cases this may include A2E providing short term support prior to another school being found.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brokering Local Education Authority • Children’s Services • CAMHs • Commissioning and Legal Services • Services invited by the young person’s parents • Various professionals on the school staff
Timescales	<p>It is important that parents understand that the timescales are much shorter, and attendance is being rigorously monitored. It is possible that without a dedicated and rigorous response from families a placement could end within a 10-week period. Please work with us and support us in our aim of continuing to provide a good educational placement to your young person. Your young person’s anxiety is better served by attending our mental health recovery school where they can receive support from therapists and the well-being team – staying at home only provides a short term answer, as they need to access support.</p>	

ACTIVE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE POOR ATTENDANCE AND MAINTAIN GOOD ATTENDANCE

What is considered good attendance?

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for effective learning, promoting positive relationships and developing good attitudes to education.

- Good attendance is considered above 96%, or approximately no more than one day of absence each half term.
- 85% attendance results in half a term absence over a year
- 90% attendance result in one day absence every two weeks or 4 weeks over a school year

How can we support your child to attend?

- An innovative timetable with lots of therapy and well-being work to reduce student anxiety and coaching to encourage growth mindset
- Therapy animals on site, themed days and events all help make school feel like an exciting place to be
- Our Wellbeing and SEND team can support you with home visits, strategies around behaviour, including building your confidence as a parent, to help you to challenge negative or controlling behaviours from your child around attendance
- Use of the learning pathway document and meeting to set short term targets with designated rewards
- Attendance is rewarded and praised
- Our timetable allows for shorter sessions and regular breaks to really help support students with attendance issues, later and staggered starts also mean highly anxious children can be supported
- The Key Worker system allows students to be greeted by a friendly face each morning, and to have someone to check in with during the day for reassurance
- We understand that the young people have mental health needs and parents will want to react sympathetically to signs of anxiety however allowing them to stay at home is only delaying the issue – **if they are in our setting, they can access the resources and therapy support to improve their mood and deal with their anxiety. Potentially losing their school place is more anxiety-inducing.**

ATTENDANCE & SAFEGUARDING

When young people are in school, we are able to monitor their well-being, notice changes in behaviour and provide support to families. It is critical that attendance is viewed as part of our safeguarding practices. The link between poor attendance and safeguarding issues is clear, but staff need to be reminded of the need for vigilance. They need to be able to spot attendance patterns and recognise changes in pupil behaviour which may lead to, or explain, sudden or extended absences.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING ATTENDANCE

School Leadership and management

We have a clear vision and aim within our school that is dependent on good attendance. It is only with good attendance that young people can access the support they need and in turn complete the 3 aims of the school:

1. Develop resilience and positive mental health
2. Catch up academically after prolonged periods of disengagement or absence from previous schools
3. Re-discover a love of learning and have a realistic future plan, including as to how to manage their anxiety

Parents, students, the school and the brokering LEA must all ensure that the privilege of having an EHCP and being able to attend a very alternative setting such as Arun Court School is taken seriously. Students who do grasp this opportunity often transition from us to mainstream schools and colleges, going on to have great success – but those who do not attend are not able to do this. Put simply, attendance increases the likelihood of mental health and academic recovery.

Additionally, ensuring your young person attends is a **legal responsibility** of parents. If your young person does not attend they are at risk of the placement failing, and non-attendance is also regarded as a safeguarding concern. We therefore expect good attendance and punctuality from our whole school community and will directly challenge families who fail to support their young person to attend.

Our senior team is all involved with attendance, as it is a core priority within our school, but our Principal Vicki, and our Executive Head / Proprietor Beverley-Sarah, are particularly involved in both championing good attendance and challenging non-attendance.

We have allocated significant funds into improving attendance, including incentives for families, and this expenditure continues to be a high priority for us.

Brokering Local Education Authorities

With re-structuring within Surrey LEA over the last two years we have experienced issues regarding ensuring that young people are correctly placed, attending and safeguarded. We have raised concerns about young people being kept on roll, but not actually attending, at the request of the Local Education Authority. We are also concerned that we still do not have a named designated contact for the school, as this was previously the case. These practices are:

- A safeguarding risk
- Contrary to our continuation of placement policy
- Damaging to relationships between the families and school
- Damaging to the mental health of the child and the family, due to the length of time taken for the LEA to act
- Wasteful of public finances

In the case of placement breakdown, where families do not wish to have contact with the LEA or school, create a safeguarding responsibility that is not tenable for the school and is potentially dangerous for the young person. Where this is the case, **the school will make repeated requests to the LEA as well as making referrals to children's services regularly.**

The school has a policy of challenging such requests and keeping detailed records of attempts made to persuade the LEA to ensure a pathway to a correct placement, where the young person will be attending a setting physically, is in place in a timely fashion.

The Local Education Authority has a duty of care and is legally bound to provide young people with an EHCP with a satisfactory level of education. We feel strongly that this should be wherever possible an Ofsted registered school that they are mentally and emotionally able to physically attend.

Parents

Parents and Carers are key to ensuring that young people attend school. Having a SEND or mental health need does not mean that your young person is exempt from attendance expectations. In our setting we expect Parents and Carers to:

- Treat staff with respect
- Actively support the work of the school
- Call on staff for help when they need it
- Communicate as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence or require support
- Be open to discussions around attendance, especially when the school feels that attendance is linked to co-dependency and the mental health needs of the parent or wider family

Responsibility of the school – monitoring attendance

We use clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve, reward and incentivise attendance and address absences. Make sure these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils.

We make sure parents understand the importance of good attendance through communication with key workers, workshops and parent presentations, pathway meetings and progress reports.

We make sure escalation procedures to address absence are initiated proactively, understood by pupils and families, implemented consistently and their impact reviewed regularly.

Every member of staff knows and understands their responsibilities for attendance. As a small staff we all hold pastoral responsibilities and act as key workers.

Although we have such a small cohort, we have robust school systems provide useful data at cohort, group and individual pupil level to give an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns amongst groups such as:

- children who have a social worker including looked-after children
- young carers
- children who are eligible for free school meals
- children who speak English as a second language

We monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to allow early intervention to address issues. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children's social care and early help services which are working with families. This also includes raising concerns quickly with brokering LEAS and anticipating their involvement at emergency review meetings.

Responsibility of the school – interventions

We will plan and deliver interventions in a targeted way, in response to data or intelligence. If the LEA provides a named visiting 'place holder' for our school we will meet with them each term and highlight concerns about specific children, including attendance issues.

We will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence (register inspections, code analysis, cohort and group monitoring, punctuality, lesson attendance across subjects and benchmarking).

We will use attendance, pastoral and SEND staff who are skilled in supporting pupils and their families to identify and overcome barriers to attendance.

We will create action plans in partnership with families and other agencies that may be supporting families, for example, children's social care and early help services. Commission or deliver interventions to improve attendance.

We will monitor the impact of any intervention, making adjustments if necessary and using findings to inform future strategy, including where necessary the termination of an unsuitable placement.

Where interventions fail to address attendance issues, identify the reasons why and, where appropriate, change or adjust the intervention.

We will follow local authority codes of conduct, policies and procedures and make referrals for statutory intervention when interventions have not resulted in improved attendance and relevant triggers / thresholds are met.

Responsibility of the School – Types of Intervention

Discuss the importance of improving attendance. Discuss with the family the young person's barriers to attending and create a plan to address their concerns.

Identified barriers are school related but can be catered for – such as changing groups, accessing different parts of the curriculum, a change in the physical environment, a greater emphasis on recovery

Identified barriers are home related such as co-dependency needs, transport.

Identified barriers are medical in nature such as psychosis breakdown, phobia

Identified barriers are parent misconception

'My child has SEND needs / mental health needs, so should be able to pick and choose when they attend'

Consider a range of methods to improve attendance:

- Reduced curriculum and increased well-being work
- 1:1 teaching with a gradual return to the classroom
- Coaching for the family and support with behaviour
- Agreeing changes requested, where possible
- Creating bespoke rewards for good attendance
- Key worker home visits, morning calls so the young person is prepped ahead of the day
- Slightly later arrival or departure temporarily

If the above measures do not improve attendance, we have to consider whether we are the right placement, whether alterations are needed to the EHCP

Refer to social care and CAMHs. Inform the young person's GP. Inform the LEA that we have concerns around the young person's medical fitness for school. Set up regular home visits and zoom calls to support the family.

If the child's health improves plan for a gradual return, agreeing a temporary part time package with the LEA as necessary

If the child remains critical, we are not the right placement, and we will seek to end placement. We are not a hospital school and do not hold clinical responsibility. The LEA should work with us to ensure a new EHCP reflects the child's current presentation.

Emergency meeting with LEA caseworkers as we will seek to put in an agreement that unless attendance improves, and parents meet their legal obligations, we will have to terminate the placement. **We expect the LEA to support us, and indeed lead, in this respect.**

