

# The American School in London

## Attendance Policy: High School

*The current version of any policy, procedure, protocol or guideline is the version posted on the ASL website. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that they are following the most up-to-date version.*

<b>Responsible party</b>	High school principal
<b>Approved by</b>	Board of Trustees
<b>Approval date</b>	November 2022
<b>Next review date</b>	November 2024

Classroom learning experiences are a meaningful and essential part of a student's education. Even when a student makes up work while out of school, the classroom experience simply cannot be replicated. In addition to students missing out on the opportunity to ask clarifying questions in class or discuss concepts with a classmate, absences also impact teachers who have to reteach material and students in attendance who may miss out on collaboration with and contributions from their peers. Also, an absent student misses out on the social-emotional connections to their peers, teachers and staff in the community, which can make re-entry increasingly difficult. ASL's comprehensive attendance policy is based on the premise that students must be present at school to learn at their highest potential. Please note that in addition to classes, attendance is mandatory at advisory meetings, assemblies, grade-level meetings, and other events during the school day, such as Human Rights Symposium and Aequitas workshops.

## **Absence procedure**

For safety reasons, it's imperative that the attendance office is notified if a student is not at school. Following the procedure below will help develop a sense of personal responsibility among students.

Parents should contact the attendance office before 9 am on the day of absence, 020 7449 1208 or [hsattendance@asl.org](mailto:hsattendance@asl.org). If necessary, the attendance office will contact parents after 9 am to establish the whereabouts of students who are not at school. If no contact is made between the family and the attendance office, an automated email will be sent out at the end of each day alerting parents and students that class absence(s) has been recorded as unexcused. Please note that all communication with regard to attendance should go directly to the attendance office, although if sending an email, we encourage parents to copy advisors and affected teachers as appropriate.

If a student believes there has been an error with regard to attendance in a class, they should contact the appropriate teacher immediately.

## **Leaving school early**

Students who need to leave school before the end of the day for an appointment should have a parent/guardian contact the attendance office by 9 am on the day of the proposed absence. Students should sign out at the attendance office prior to leaving. A student may not leave school early unless the attendance office has permission from a parent/guardian. This does not include students using open-campus privileges during breaks, lunch or free periods.

## **Excused absences**

We understand that there will be days when sickness or other special circumstances necessitate a student missing school. In certain cases—examples of which are listed below—absences will be excused by the School.

- Personal illness and recovery
- Hospitalization
- Family emergency
- Bereavement and funeral attendance
- Religious holidays
- Interviews or examinations for a new school or university
- University visits
- Visa/passport renewal
- Graduation or wedding of an immediate family member

- Medical and dental appointments (please schedule these outside school hours whenever possible)

ASL realizes that many families enjoy taking advantage of the numerous travel opportunities that exist by virtue of the school's location. Please note, however, that the School strongly discourages the extension of vacations and other recreational travel to include scheduled school days.

Any absence not covered by the list above will be considered unexcused; however, absences that fall into the excused categories above will also be recorded as unexcused if the attendance office is not notified in time by a parent/guardian. If students are to be absent from school, it is important to notify the attendance office before 9 am. On rare occasions when parents forget to call or email, it is important to inform the attendance office as soon as possible. After-the-fact reporting is permitted until midnight on the Sunday following the absence. If the absence satisfies the school's criteria for excusal, then the absence will be recorded as excused.

Please note that for absences not reported to the attendance office by midnight on the Sunday following the absence, the recorded unexcused status will become permanent.

Medical letters or certificates are required for absences after three consecutive days of illness, for an ongoing illness that results in cumulative days of absences in a short time period, or for absences from PE owing to a medical restriction. Medical notes must be on official-headed paper; personal emails from a doctor will not be accepted. In general, families should always liaise with the School in cases of medical emergencies; we always stand ready to support students.

### **Unexcused absences**

Absences not covered above will be deemed unexcused and include but are not limited to:

- Purposefully skipping school
- Missing school owing to oversleeping, poor planning or forgetfulness
- Staying home to catch up on work or prepare for an assessment (Note: students who have an AP exam in the afternoon may take that morning off; students who have a morning AP exam may take that afternoon off)
- Any absences not reported by a parent/guardian by Sunday of each week (please note that absences cannot be retrospectively excused after this period)

## **Consequences for unexcused absences**

For every class (including advisory) a student misses that is deemed unexcused, students and parents/guardians will be sent an automatically generated email from Veracross, our student information system. Students are expected to reach out to their teacher immediately, find out what they missed and make plans with their teacher to complete make-up work as soon as possible. At the discretion of the teacher and department head, classwork from unexcused absences may receive reduced credit or no credit at all.

The following consequences shall be incurred for unexcused absences:

- For every class a student misses that is not excused, the student will attend one after-school study hall.
- The study hall will take priority over any other school-related extracurricular activity a student might have on the day their study hall is scheduled.
- Any student who receives more than three unexcused absences in a semester will have their campus closed indefinitely and be required to attend a meeting with their parents/guardians and the director of student life to discuss next steps.
- Further truancy could lead to more serious consequences, including but not limited to a family meeting with the principal, and suspension.

The number of excused and unexcused class absences (with the exception of school trips) and tardies accrued by each student will be part of their permanent record.

## **Excessive absences**

Patterns of excessive absence (regardless of whether excused or unexcused) will be monitored and recorded throughout the year. When a student's attendance record gives ASL cause for concern, the School will require an attendance review meeting with the student and parent/guardian, the dean, the advisor and other personnel as appropriate to discuss an appropriate course of action. In accordance with UK law, the School is obligated to report excessive absences to Westminster Council.

A student who misses more than six class periods in a semester-long course and 12 class periods in a yearlong course may not receive credit in that course. When a student has reached four (semester)/eight (year) absences, an attendance review meeting will be set by the dean and a plan will be put in place. In the event that a student exceeds the six (semester)/12 (year) threshold, a second attendance review with the high school principal and/or assistant principal will take place. At this point, the student risks losing credit and may need to repeat the course if it is a graduation

requirement. Exemptions to this policy may be considered in exceptional cases by the administration.

These figures include both excused and unexcused absences, but exclude absences owing to school activities, such as AP exams, athletics competitions, drama or music performances, and school trips.

### **Tardiness**

A student arriving less than 10 minutes late to class (five minutes for advisory) will be deemed tardy. A student arriving 10 or more minutes late (five minutes for advisory) will be deemed absent from class. Students should not leave class without permission from their teacher, and unnecessarily long breaks will result in consequences that could include after-school study halls.

Patterns of tardies and/or those of significant duration (longer than just a few minutes) will also be monitored, and parents/guardians may be contacted to address excessive lateness.

### **Tardy procedure**

Students arriving to class late should report to the attendance office (O-346) and sign in by scanning the QR code and by completing and submitting the online form, which is confirmed by their teacher when they get back to class. The attendance officer will adjust the attendance from “absent” to “tardy” if the student is less than 10 minutes late for a class period, or less than five minutes for advisory. If the attendance office is unattended, students must still sign in using the QR code and form, then go directly to class.

- It is the responsibility of students to ensure that they are present and prepared for the beginning of each class. If a student arrives to class after attendance is taken, they must go immediately to the attendance office to have their attendance adjusted.
- Students who are taking tests in SLD must check in with their classroom teacher at the start of the period so that the correct attendance can be recorded.
- PE students must go directly to the locker rooms at the beginning of class, where they are then given five minutes to change into their PE uniform. Students who are late to the meeting point will receive a tardy. On days when a PE class travels off-campus, students who miss the bus for PE will be given an unexcused absence and must check in immediately with the attendance office, after which they will be instructed to go to the library.

## **Consequences for excessive tardies**

- After a student's third unexcused tardy in a given week, the student will attend one after-school study hall the following week.
- The study hall will take priority over any other school-related extracurricular activity a student might have on that day.
- Any student who receives more than 10 unexcused tardies in a semester will have their campus closed indefinitely and be required to attend a meeting with their parents and the director of student life to discuss next steps. Further tardies in a quarter could lead to more serious consequences.
- Tardy counts will reset back to zero at the conclusion of each semester.

## **Extracurricular participation**

Students who are absent from more than two classes in one school day, regardless of whether the absences are excused or unexcused, may not participate in extracurricular/athletics activities (including practices, games, rehearsals, competitions and performances) on that day. The attendance office will run reports during the last block of each day and notify the appropriate personnel if any student-athletes are ineligible for participation that day, although students are expected to monitor their own eligibility on a day-to-day basis. Students with excessive class absences may have their participation in extracurricular/athletics activities suspended indefinitely.

## **Alternatives and Music Tour**

Participation in Alternatives and Music Tour is mandatory. All students are expected to participate in the Alternatives or Music Tour programs, including group meetings, half-day excursions, and the four-day/three-night spring trips. Both programs are a fundamental part of the school's culture and learning. Additionally, great time and care is taken to place a diverse mix of students in each experience. A student who misses any portion of the experience upsets this balance and can potentially leave students without a roommate or friend from their grade on their trip. Completed Alternatives trips will be recorded on each student's transcript.

## **Assessments and assignments**

Coming to school late or leaving early does not exempt students from due dates. If a student arrives late to school and misses an assessment or the chance to turn in an assignment earlier in the day, they should see their teacher that same day to turn in the assignment or arrange to take the assessment later that day.

If students are in school for any period of time on assessment days or days when assignments are due, they are responsible for taking their assessment(s), turning in the

assignment(s) or meeting with their teacher if there is a complication. The same procedure should be followed if a student is temporarily ill during the school day and misses an assessment or an assignment that's due while in the nurse's office. Students should not miss class when there is work due or an assessment to take and then attend the rest of school. Patterns of unexcused or excused absences on assessment or assignment due days will be monitored closely and any concern in this area will result in a meeting with the student, parents/guardians and appropriate school personnel for further discussion.

Absence from any class for the purpose of preparing or studying for another class is not permitted and is considered unexcused.

### **Make-up work**

Students are encouraged to email teachers and/or look online for assignments when absent from school. Students returning after an excused absence will be given sufficient time to complete missed work. Typically, the work missed should be made up within an equal number of school days that were missed. Students with an excessive amount of make-up work after an absence should talk with their teacher(s) to determine next best steps and/or consult with their advisor for help and to determine whether an extension on certain assignments is necessary. Advisors and teachers will work together with students to come up with make-up deadlines that are fair and appropriate. Students will be required to adhere to these new deadlines as they would an original due date. Failure to make up work within the agreed-upon timeline may result in consequences including, but not limited to, reduced or no credit, after-school study hall and closed campus.

### **Long-term illness**

When students are too ill to attend school for multiple days, they should email their teachers (copying their advisor) and arrange when possible for a peer to receive notes or pass on assignments from their respective classes. In more severe instances, the advisor or dean will meet with the family to discuss the impact on learning while ill and devise a plan for making up work and school re-entry. **Please remember that a medical note is needed to excuse any absence owing to an illness of more than three days.**

In the event that a long-term illness causes a student to exceed the maximum number of allowable absences in any given class, the School will work together with the family to determine an appropriate course of action. This may include the opportunity to make up enough work to avoid receiving an incomplete in affected courses, a leave of

absence or the student retaking a course the following year. Please see the office of student advising academic policies on medical exemptions and waivers.

### **Field trips**

When a student takes part in an authorized school project or field trip that conflicts with the class schedule, the student must ensure that the teachers of the missed classes are aware in advance of the planned absence. Attendance on the field trip or involvement in a school project is dependent on the agreement of the advisor and the teachers that the student can afford to miss class(es) and has the time to make up any work assigned while away.

Students are strongly encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities, which sometimes lead to the opportunity to travel on day and even overnight trips. While we support these experiences, we're aware of the burden they can put on students as they try to balance travel and classwork. Thus, there may be times when the School does not allow a student to participate on an ASL-sponsored trip. Students are encouraged to identify these opportunities well ahead of time and work with their teachers, advisor and dean to make sure they are in good academic standing so they can participate.

Students must follow the pre-arranged absence procedure (see below) a week before departure on all ASL-sponsored trips. ASL reserves the right to suspend a student's participation in a pre-scheduled activity/trip if this process is not completed. Please note that ISSTs and robotics competitions do not require pre-arranged absences for students.

### **Pre-arranged absence procedure**

In certain cases, including scheduled medical appointments and school-related trips, performances or competitions in which students know that they will be absent ahead of time for more than half a day of school, the pre-arranged absence procedure must be followed. This process, outlined below, needs to be completed no later than one week before the absence begins.

1. The adult responsible for the absence should notify the attendance office via email. If this is a school-sponsored trip, this will come internally from an ASL faculty member. If the absence is not school-related, then a parent/guardian should email the attendance office, [hsattendance@asl.org](mailto:hsattendance@asl.org), with a note explaining the reason, dates and times of the absence, copying in the student's advisor, dean and affected teachers.
2. The student will then request an electronic pre-arranged absence form from the attendance office. For a personal absence, this form will only be given to the



student if the attendance office has received an email from the parent/guardian regarding the absence (see step 1).

3. The student will then forward the pre-arranged absence form submission to their teachers, requesting details of any work they are expected to miss.

Following the pre-arranged absence procedure is ultimately the responsibility of the student. This process helps students, parents, teachers, advisors and deans manage these absences in a way that minimizes the impact on all involved. Failure to follow this procedure in a thorough and timely manner may result in reclassifying the absence as unexcused, not allowing the student to miss school (in the case of a school-sponsored trip), and in some cases, the denial of such a request in the future.

### **Teacher not present in class**

In the unlikely event that a teacher is not present at the start of the class owing to unforeseen circumstances, the following procedure should be followed:

1. Students must remain in the classroom.
2. One nominated student should go to the nearest occupied classroom and inform the teacher that their classroom is unattended.
3. The same nominated student should then go directly to the high school office and speak to either the attendance officer, the high school administrative assistant or any of the administration team to notify them of the teacher's absence.