The American School in London

Attendance Policy

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

Responsible person	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Responsible board committee	Educational Experience
To be ratified by the Educational Experience Committee:	13 November 2026

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1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regard to school attendance, including those laid out in the statutory guidance on 'Working together to improve school attendance' from the Department for Education (DfE). We aim to achieve this through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, which includes:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure students have the support in place to attend school
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on 'Working together to improve school attendance. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended
- The Equality Act 2010

It also refers to the following guidance issued by the DfE:

- 'Complete the School Census'
- 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
- 'Mental health issues affecting a student's attendance: guidance for schools'

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations for all school leaders, staff, students, and parents/carers
- Making sure school leaders fulfill expectations, statutory duties and comply with the law on school attendance

- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for students who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all students, but adapts processes and support to students' individual needs
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Regularly reviewing attendance data at Board meetings, including recent and historical trends and benchmarking against comparator schools locally, regionally and nationally, and paying particular attention to cohorts with historically poor attendance
- Holding the Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Head of School

The Head of School overseeing the Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Board of Trustees
- Supporting staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents/carers through all available channels

3.3 The Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The Designated Safeguarding Lead also serves as Senior Attendance Champion and is a member of the senior leadership team. They are responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with students, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed

- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual students or cohorts who need it most
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting students' needs
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
    - The importance of good attendance
    - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
    - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
    - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate

- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
- Notifying the local authority when a student's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times
- Providing the local authority with the details of students who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days
- Providing the local authority with the details of students who the school believes will miss 15 school days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness
- Working with the parents/carers of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for students with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where students with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a student with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the student's needs

Refer to Appendix 2 for Senior Attendance Officer and contact information.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer in each division is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the Head of School
- Taking calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transferring calls from parents/carers to the divisional administration where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Refer to Appendix 2 for a list of attendance officers and contact information.

3.5 Teachers

Teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis in a timely manner in the lower school and middle school and for each class in the high school using the correct codes and submitting this information to the school office.

Refer to Appendix 1 for codes, expectations and timing.

3.6 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.
- Call or email the school to report their child's absence before the start of school on the day of the absence, and each subsequent day of absence if appropriate, and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child. If the child is in the Early Years Foundation Stage, provide more than 2 emergency contact numbers, where possible.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Review the parent contract signed each year with regard to attendance expectations.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the divisional administration or Senior Attendance Champion.

Refer to Appendix 2 for contact information.

3.7 Students

Students are expected to:

- In the Lower School and Middle School: Attend school every day, on time
- In the High School: Attend every timetabled session, on time

Refer to Appendix 1 for information.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all students on this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session in the Lower School and Middle School and for each timetabled class for High School. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending a place other than school
- Absent
- Absent – unable to attend due to unavoidable causes

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive at school on each school day.

The registration for the AM session will be taken within the first five minutes for LS and MS and within the first five minutes for each HS class. The register for the PM session will be taken by 1pm for LS and MS. Registration will be kept open for 30 minutes for all three

divisions: a student arriving after it closes will be recorded as absent (code U unless a more appropriate code applies).

See Appendix 1 for start and end times for each division.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by the start of school or as soon as practically possible, by contacting the divisional attendance officer.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

We will not routinely request medical evidence. Where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of an illness, or to support a student with prolonged or repeated illness, we will first speak with the parent (and student, where appropriate) and may then ask for reasonable evidence. We will be flexible about its form, which may include a doctor's note, a prescription, evidence of appointments or other appropriate form of evidence.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent has obtained the school's agreement in advance of the appointment.

Where possible, the student should:

- Be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary, and attend school before/after their appointment

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

The student's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. See section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed the student will be marked late after registration closed using the appropriate code (U)

Students' punctuality will be monitored by divisional administration who will communicate any concerns to the student and/or their parents as appropriate.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Contact the student's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may need to contact the police for support.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not
- Record code N where the reason has not been established before the register closes, and enter the correct code as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 school days after the session(s) for which the student was absent. If no reason can be established within 5 school days, the entry will be amended to code O.
- Contact the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Where appropriate, offer support to the student and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the student needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals

4.6 Reporting to parents

Parents are able to monitor their child's attendance on the parent portal as well as reviewing attendance and late arrivals on term report cards.

5. Authorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The divisional administration will only grant a **leave of absence** to a student during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
- Study leave for public examinations (which does not include internal practice/'mock' examinations)
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

Requests must be made in advance by a parent or carer the student normally lives with; leave cannot be granted retrospectively. A leave of absence is granted at the divisional administrator's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a student to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday or family gathering.

5.2 Other reasons for authorised absence

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart for religious observance. Students should attend school on the days surrounding those set apart for religious observance.
- If the student is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

5.3 Absences from the school site (which are not classified as absences)

The divisional administrator will allow students to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. These are not classified as absences. Reasons include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the student is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience

5.4 Unable to attend because of an unavoidable cause

Where a student cannot attend because of an unavoidable cause, such as a lack of access arrangements, unavailable transport, widespread travel disruption or closure of all or part of the school premises, the absence will be recorded using code Q or the relevant Y code. These are recorded as absences but are not counted as possible attendances.

6. Promoting attendance and supporting students with poor attendance

6.1 Promoting good attendance

The school will promote good attendance by communicating high expectations regularly to students and parents through all available channels, helping parents understand why attendance matters to their child's attainment and wellbeing, visibly demonstrating the benefits of good attendance (for example in assemblies and advisory), and, where used sensitively and without discrimination, praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year group, class and individual level. Messages and strategies will be reviewed regularly.

6.2 Supporting students with poor attendance

Our approach is support first. Where a pattern of absence emerges, we will listen to and understand the barriers the student or family is experiencing and work in partnership to remove them, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches. Where absence

intensifies, support will intensify, working with the local authority and other partners. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis, and the school will apply this policy fairly and consistently while considering the individual needs of students and families, including its duties under the Equality Act 2010 (such as reasonable adjustments for disabled students).

6.3 Formal support and legal intervention

Where voluntary support has not worked or has not been engaged with, the school will work with Westminster Council's School Attendance Support Team to formalise support. This could take the form of an attendance contract or an education supervision order. As an independent school, ASL cannot itself enter into attendance contracts or issue penalty notices; these are arranged or issued by the local authority.

7. Supporting students who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Students absent due to complex barriers to attendance

If a student has an education, health and care (EHC) plan, the school will communicate with the local authority where the student's attendance falls or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the student's needs. We will consider in-school support and reasonable adjustments for all students facing complex barriers..

The school will meet with the family to discuss the attendance issue and what support can be put into place.

7.2 Students absent due to mental or physical ill health

If a student is out due to mental or physical ill health for an extended period of time, the divisional administration and safeguarding team will meet with parents and possibly students to discuss a plan that may include a reduced timetable, modification of schedule, support in and out of school, and collaboration with the medical team.

7.3 Students returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Students returning to school will meet with the divisional administrator, parents and other trusted adults to create a transition plan. Regular check-in will occur as well as communication with parents.

7.4 Young carers

Where a student's caring responsibilities may be contributing to absence, we will work with the student and their parents to understand the barriers and put appropriate support in place, working with the local authority to access early help where needs extend beyond school.

7.5 Prolonged absence for children in the EYFS

In cases of prolonged absence, or when a child is absent without notification, we will contact the child's parents and alternative emergency contacts.

When deciding whether a child's absence should be considered prolonged, we will consider the:

- Patterns and trends in the child's absences and their personal circumstances
- Vulnerability of the child and their parents, as well as the circumstances of their home life

We will also implement our safeguarding procedures (see our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy) and refer any concerns to local children's social care and/or request a police welfare check.

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data bi-weekly across the school and at an individual student, year group and cohort level.

Specific student information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Attendance data will be shared with Westminster Council in accordance with their requirements.

8.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify students whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of quarterly,and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual students, via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the students we have identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

In line with DfE guidance, persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of students who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
  - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
  - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
  - Explain the help that is available
  - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
  - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these students. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by the DSL. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full Board of Trustees. The policy will be published on the school website, sent to parents when their child joins the school, and parents will be reminded of it at the start of each school year and whenever it is updated.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Supporting students with medical conditions
- EYFS policy

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	student arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	student is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	student is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	student is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	student is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	student is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	student is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	student has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination

X	Not required to be in school	student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	student is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	student is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	student is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	student is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	student has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	student is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	student is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	student is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	student is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every student absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	student is unable to attend as they are: ● In police detention

		• Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	student's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	student is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	student has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective student not on admission register	student has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 2: Contact and divisional information

Designated Safeguarding Lead/Senior Attendance Champion	Patrick Lee patrick_lee@asl.org 0204 449 1328

Information	Lower School	Middle School	High School
Attendance Officer And Reporting Procedures Parents/Guardians must contact the	Sarah Ong lsattendance@asl.org 0207 4491218 Attendance is taken twice daily (AM and	JJ Jokinen msattendance@asl.org 0207 4491291 Attendance is taken twice daily (AM and	Shahira Moola Kristie Toothman hsattendance@asl.org O207 4491208 Or submit via the

appropriate divisional office before the start of school on the day of absence.	PM)	PM)	Parent Portal Students may not self-report absences Attendance is taken period by period for all assigned classes and advisory.
School Arrival Guidelines	Grades 1-4 in class by 8:05 am K1 and K2 in class by 8:20 am Building opens at 7:53 am for students to enter	Grades 5-8 in advisory class by 8:05 am If students arrive before 7:53 am, they are to sit in the MS Office	In class or advisory on time according to individual class schedules
Late Arrivals	Sign-in at the LS Office.	Sign-in at the MS Office to get a pass to enter class late	Sign-in at class with the teacher.
School Departure Restrictions	Closed campus; parents/guardians must sign students in/out	Closed campus; students must sign in/out at MS office with written parent permission to msattendance@asl.org	Open campus privileges apply during free periods/lunch for eligible grades Leaving early requires parent request by 9:00 am
Prearranged Absences and Early Departures			
Medical Appointments	Parents/Guardians must submit an email to the divisional attendance officer. LS students must be signed in and out by a parent/guardian MS students sign in and out at the MS office with written parent permission. HS students with closed campus sign in and out of the HS attendance with written parent permission		
Prearranged Absence	Parents/Guardians must submit an email in advance to the divisional attendance officer. ASL strongly discourages extending holidays or taking travel leave on scheduled school days. These are marked unauthorized. MS will assign a prearranged absence form to help students collect work from classes they miss.		
Makeup Work Guidelines	Coordinate directly with homeroom and specialist teachers	Check in with individual teachers and work made up in a timely manner	Check in with individual teachers and work made up in a timely manner
Co-curricular and Event Eligibility	Students must attend at least the second half of the day to participate in	Students must attend at least the second half of the day to participate in	Absent students may not participate in extra-curricular groups,

	after-school courses	after-school events, tutoring, athletics or socials. Students must participate in PE lesson activities to participate in athletic events.	tutoring, athletics, or socials.