



‘Building Resilience for Future Success’

Ancora House School Attendance Policy

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Ancora House School Attendance Policy:

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1.Context

Ancora House School is based on two sites. Ancora House School, Countess of Chester, is a short stay hospital education provision providing education and support to young people who are admitted to Ancora House. Ancora House is the Northwest Tier 4 Psychiatric in-patient service for young people from the age of 13 up to their 18th birthday. Access to the school provision is directly because of admission to hospital. The team of teachers, teaching assistants, transition staff and administration staff work closely with home schools and colleges so that young people remain engaged with their learning despite their admission to hospital.

Ancora House School, Castle Park is a short stay provision commissioned to provide education for children and young people at Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 in the Cheshire West and Chester locality by the Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority. This element of the school operates from Castle House, Castle Park, Frodsham.

Referral to the community provision is via the local authority through three different routes. Route one is through the Education Access Team who commission places for young people with medical needs of statutory school age. Route two is through the Virtual School, who commission places for Looked After Children of statutory school age. Route three is through the SEND Team who commission Post-16 places for young people with an EHCP. The young people who are commissioned through routes 1 and 2 are dual registered with their home school. The Castle Park site has close working partnerships with all of the Secondary Schools throughout Cheshire West and Chester.

2.Aims

Ancora House School aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting positive engagement and good attendance
- Ensuring every learner has access to a full-time or suitable education in line with their entitlement
- Acting early to identify patterns of absence and potential barriers
- Implementing interventions to reduce persistent absence and improve engagement

Children and young people are expected to engage with education or training up until the age of 18 years old.

Ancora House School meets the needs of learners who cannot attend their main school due to a physical or mental health condition, SEND and associated SEMH needs; as such this group of learners is highly vulnerable and have greater needs than their peers.

Our learners often have a chequered attendance profile with prolonged periods of absence; the primary goal of our school is to re-engage our learners with learning so that they can return to fulltime education in their main setting.

Learners arrive with a range of barriers including:

- Mental ill health
- Physical ill health
- Social isolation
- Low self-esteem
- Gaps in learning
- Learning difficulties
- SEND

Ancora House School maintains a holistic approach with every learner; work is undertaken to ensure all barriers are identified and addressed and we work in partnership with agencies, parents, carers, and health to secure sustainable recovery and return to their main school setting.

Robust communication between all parties and regular review of progress including attendance, contributes to positive outcomes for learners.

Attendance is monitored daily and information shared as appropriate with families, originator schools, and agencies. Data is collected and RAG rated weekly to inform team meetings; all learners' attendance is reviewed and according to the rating, interventions are implemented and monitored.

3.Legislation and guidance

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

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Learner Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Learner Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Learner Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Learner Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Learner Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

For the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a 'parent' and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not

- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a stepparent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

4. School procedures

4.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all learners are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all learners must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every learner is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

The school follows up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system as a priority and returned to the school office in a timely manner. This is used to download data to the School Census.
- Consider early identification, assessment, intervention, and support processes that may need to be implemented.

The register should be marked using the codes as advised by the Department for Education (DfE) 'Working together to improve School Attendance Guidance' (for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities) [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073616/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073616/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf)) (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073616/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) (See appendix 1)

4.2 Unplanned absence

Parents/ carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – as soon as possible.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance. School should be notified in the event of any absence.

We will provide parents / carers with information about Emotionally Based School Non-attendance to discuss needs and strategies to support their child, as appropriate.

4.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Advance notice is required for authorising these absences. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the learner should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. School should be notified in advance of a medical or dental appointment.

As a school we recognise that building respectful relationships with families and working in collaboration is essential to ensuring the best outcomes for children / young people. We are committed to ensuring that systems and processes are in place with regards to promoting attendance and would encourage parents to make contact if they have concerns about their child.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

Ancora House School promotes good attendance and punctuality. We will ensure registers are completed accurately and on time, twice per day, in accordance with the timings set out below. This will indicate which pupils are absent from or are late for school.

- Lessons start at 10am.
- Young people who attend at 10 am will be marked as present.
- Registers close at 10:30am. Young people who arrive to school after 10:00 am but before 10:30 will be marked as late and will receive the **L code**.
- If the child arrives after 10:30 am and the absence is due to physical or mental health, they may be coded I.
- Afternoon registers will be taken at 2pm and close at 2:30 at the hospital site, and starts at 1:30 and close at 2pm at the Community Site. Young people who arrive to school after 1:30 am but before 2:00 at the community site will be marked as late and will receive the **L code**.
- Some young people have different agreed start times linked to their part-time timetables, they will be marked C2 if they are not expected to be on site at the time of school registration.

In accordance with the 'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006', if your child arrives after the registers close, they will receive a mark, code U, that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that for dual registered young people you could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action from **the home school** if the problem persists.

4.5 Following up absence & lateness

Community Provision - Learners who arrive late will be marked with an L, an explanation from the parent/carer /learner must be given to confirm why the learner is late. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to contact school on the first morning of the child's/ young person's absence. This can be done by leaving a message on the office answering machine or phoning when the office opens at 8.00am. In any case a parent/carer should contact prior to the learners start time/taxi collection

time. If this contact is not made school will contact the parent/carer by telephone or, if the parent is unobtainable, send a text or email and/or write a letter requesting information.

Ancora House School will continue trying to contact the parent/carer to obtain a reason for the absence. The school's Headteacher may be informed, and the parent/carer may be invited to school for a meeting. The meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the learner from attending school.

Ancora House Mental Health Unit is an acute inpatient psychiatric unit with 26 beds available.

Ancora House School is a central part of the daily structure for all patients.

All patients follow our daily timetable that takes account of both their current health needs and their educational needs. All patients are expected to attend school, however due to the severity of their mental health needs this can be challenging at times. It is the responsibility of all Ancora staff to encourage attendance at school. If a young person feels unable to attend a lesson the following procedures are in place:

- Identified staff will try to encourage young people to attend education
- The subject teacher/ Teaching Assistant may go and speak to the young person to ascertain what is preventing them from attending.
- If a young person is still unable to attend the lesson the nursing team will be alerted and asked to encourage or explore what is preventing them from attending. The education team will then meet to plan an intervention to support the young person to attend education.

There are times when a young person is too unwell to attend group or 1-1 sessions in the school area. If possible, they will be taught in the ward classroom. All decisions about education input for this group of young people is made in consultation with Senior Medical Staff.

4.6 Absence Monitoring

School will report learners' attendance and unauthorised absences to the learners' home school in accordance with legal requirements.

School robustly monitor and analyse attendance data to promptly identify and address concerns and allow for early interventions to support the child/family's underlying needs.

This will include –

- Weekly attendance code analysis
- individual monitoring for all students
- Monitoring of lesson attendance across all subjects
- Ongoing monitoring of young people that have been absent or are struggling to attend school to check wellbeing and ensure that barriers to attendance are addressed and a return to school reintegration meeting will be held

4.7 Missing persons

If a learner from our community site does not arrive at their specified teaching location and we are unable to contact their parent or other named contact, we may need to report them to the police as a missing person.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

It is acknowledged that due to individual needs of learners at Ancora House School, the Headteacher may apply special consideration to requests for compassionate leave in exceptional circumstances. This decision will be made in conjunction with the learners' home school. It may be

necessary for the school to ask the parent/carer to provide the school with written evidence of the reason for absence e.g. medical certificate or a letter from the GP. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion. If parents/carers need to request Exceptional Leave of Absence, they must complete an 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form available from their home school. It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of a consecutive 5 or more unauthorised days, the home school may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carer.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the learner's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller learners travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English, and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers), and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the learner is attending educational provision.

5.2 Legal Sanction

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

- i.no reason for absence has been given
- ii.medical evidence is not received when requested
- iii.a request for a leave of absence has been unauthorised

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice rests with the Headteacher of the home school, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may consider:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission exceeding 5 days
- Where an excluded learner is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

6. Attendance monitoring

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a learner's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the learner will be classified as a persistent absentee.

A child is classed as severely absent when they are absent for more than 50% of sessions they are allocated to attend.

Learner-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

1. All statutory attendance is recorded on Arbor.
2. All absent learners will be contacted on the first day of their absence if no contact has been made by the parent/carer.
3. Absence notification made by text will be checked if there is any doubt about authenticity.
4. If staff are concerned about the reasons given for a learner's absence, then the Head teacher and Safeguarding Lead will be informed of any concerns and the home school will be contacted.
5. On the first day of absence, the access officer within the education access team and a named contact for the home school is contacted to alert them of the absence.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The Management Committee

The Management Committee is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis; they also hold the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Head Teacher

The Head teacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the committee. The head teacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual learners.

7.3 The Attendance Officer

The administrator with responsibility for attendance:

- Maintain a record of learner attendance on the school's computer system.
- Telephone learners' homes as necessary re attendance
- Pass on information re attendance to the relevant staff.
- Keep records and inform outside agencies as necessary to comply with local and national policy and procedures

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Head Teacher.

At every review, the policy will be shared with the Management Committee.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Safeguarding Policy and our Positive Relationships and Behaviour Policy

Appendix 1 - Absence Codes: According to the DfE guidance the following codes are used on the register. **New Attendance Codes from 19th August 2024**

Attending a place other than the school.

These codes are classified for statistical purposes as attending an approved educational activity.

Code K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
Code V	Attending an educational visit or trip
Code P	Participating in a sporting activity
Code W	Attending work experience
Code B	Attending any other approved educational activity
Code D	Dual registered at another school (this code is classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance)

Absent leave of absence - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

Code C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
Code M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
Code J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
Code S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
Code X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Code C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
Code C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

Absent - other authorised reasons - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

Code T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
Code R	Religious observance
Code I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
Code E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause. - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance

Code Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Code Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Code Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Code Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Code Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Code Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Code Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Code Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Absent - unauthorised absence - These codes are classified for statistical purposes as unauthorised absence.

Code G	Leave of absence not granted by the school
Code N	Reason for absence not yet established

Code O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
Code U	Arrived in school after registration closed