Attendance Policy
Ardingly College & Great Walstead School

This policy applies to:

Ardingly College Family of Schools' Staff - Ardingly College, Great Walstead School

Person responsible for the policy:

Senior School Deputy Head (Pastoral and Co-curricular)

Ardingly Prep School Deputy Head

Great Walstead School Deputy Head

Review dates:

Last review June 2026

Next review June 2027

1. Purpose and Scope

- Applies to all pupils (including EYFS) across Ardingly College and Great Walstead School.
- Promotes excellent attendance and punctuality
- Sets out procedures for managing and monitoring attendance and absence.
- Managing absence (authorised and unauthorised)
- Ensures early identification and support for attendance concerns
- Supports safeguarding, wellbeing and academic progress
- Clarifies responsibilities of schools, parents/carers and students
- Responding to students missing from education

2. Principles and Background

The Ardingly Family of Schools share the following principles:

- Every child has the right to full-time education.
- Regular attendance is essential for academic achievement, wellbeing, and future success.
- Attendance is a safeguarding priority.
- Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure regular attendance.
- Schools, families, and pupils share responsibility for promoting attendance and punctuality.
- Early intervention is used where attendance concerns emerge.
- A target of **100% attendance** is promoted across all schools.

3. Definitions

Child Missing in Education

A child of compulsory school age who:

- Is not on a school roll, and
- Is not receiving suitable education elsewhere.
- May be at increased risk of harm, exploitation, or disengagement.

4. Registration and Attendance Recording

- Attendance is recorded twice daily.

Great Walstead Registration

Great Walstead School comprises of Pre-Prep and Prep School, which have different start and finish times. Attendance registers are therefore completed in accordance with the timings established for each section of the school.

In the Prep School, a number of before-school clubs take place during the designated registration period. Pupils attending these clubs are recorded on club registers, which serve as their official morning attendance registration. These registers are shared with the school office to ensure that attendance records accurately reflect pupils' presence on site.

This approach ensures that attendance is monitored effectively across all areas of the school and that every pupil is accounted for from the start of the school day.

Great Walstead registration times therefore follow:

Rec:	08:20 – 08:50 and 12:55 – 13:25
Yr 1 & Yr 2:	08:20 – 08:50 and 12:55 – 13:25
Yr 3 – Yr 8:	08:20 – 08:50 and 12:55 – 13:25

Ardingly College Registration

As a College of over 1000 students, our chosen registration times reflect age and stage (year group sizes also vary), as well as structure of the school day in relation to logistics of lunch times, which is staggered by age. Ardingly Registration times therefore follow:

Yr 9-13	08:00-08:30 and 13:10-13:40
Yr 7-8	08:15-08:30 and 13:10-13:40
Rec-Yr 6	08:15-08:30 and 13:10-13:35

- Attendance is recorded using recognised national attendance codes (Appendix 1).
- Attendance records are maintained as legal records for a minimum of six years.
- Additional attendance checks may take place during lessons, activities.
- Attendance is recorded in the boarding provision.

5. Types of Absence

Authorised absence

Granted at the school's discretion, including:

- Illness
- Medical appointments
- Religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances (e.g. funerals, interviews)

Unauthorised absence:

Includes:

- Term-time holidays without approval.

- Truancy.
- Unexplained absences.
- Non-essential appointments or absences not approved by the school.
- Attendance codes may be amended if new information becomes available.

6. Notification

- Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of absence.
- Notification must include the reason for absence and expected duration.
- **Ardingly College Senior School parents** complete an absence form on the portal.
- **Ardingly College Prep (School House and Farmhouse)** call the prep office.
- **Great Walstead parents** email both Form teacher and the school office.
- Where no contact is received, the school will attempt to contact parents/carers and escalation procedures will be initiated where necessary – see section 12
- Where a child of non-statutory school age is absent and no reason for their absence has been received, the school will make reasonable attempts to contact parents/carers to ascertain the child's whereabouts and wellbeing. Any concerns arising from an unexplained absence will be considered in line with the school's safeguarding procedures.

7. Request for leave of absence

- Headteachers determine whether leave is authorised and its duration.
- Leave during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances
- Family holidays during term time will not normally be authorised.
- Unapproved leave will be recorded as unauthorised absence and managed through the attendance procedures
- Requests must be submitted in advance to the designated school contact.

Nicola Burns (nicola.burns@ardingly.com) for Senior school students.

Laura Lamont (laura.lamont@ardingly.com) for Ardingly Prep students.

Will Fuller (will.fuller@greatwalstead.co.uk) for students at Great Walstead School.

8. Monitoring

Monitoring occurs at multiple levels:

- Daily absence checks
- Weekly or half-termly attendance reviews by senior staff
- Additional monitoring of UKVI Sponsored students (See appendix 2)
- Identification of emerging patterns and emerging concerns
- Safeguarding review where appropriate
- Monitoring of persistent Lateness (missing registration), persistent absence and truancy

9. Procedures

Persistent lateness:

- Parents can expect the relevant member of staff to communicate with either a phone call or email to discuss reasons for lateness
- Supportive measures will be agreed to improve punctuality.

Persistent absence:

Where a student's attendance rate is consistently **below 90%,**

- Relevant staff will contact parents to invite them to discuss further methods of support
- If no improvement is seen and the family does not engage in the recommended support measures, the matter will be escalated to the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Further absence may trigger meetings, support plans, or external referrals (See Appendix 3 for the School Non-Attendance Framework)

Prolonged Illness:

- The Local Authority will be notified when a pupil accumulates 15 school days of illness absence within an academic year, in line with statutory requirements, known as **Sickness return.**
- This includes the student's name, address and absence details.

10. Advice for Parents

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers, and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from not attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher/HoMM and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons - difficulties with schoolwork, friendship issues, or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance and work together to tackle the problem.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time in the morning. Ensure that you leave home in plenty of time, with all their belongings for the school day, including a water bottle for prep students.

Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education - be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch! For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school, other than when transferring to another school, parents are asked to give the school comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of the move, new address and telephone numbers, details of their child's new school and the start date when this is known. A form is available in the school office.

If children leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By providing us with all the above information these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the head teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance license and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the head teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the head teacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the head teacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association provides an education tutor as part of their coaching. Where permission is granted, please get in contact with their tutor/HoMM (Ardingly College) or Form Tutor (at Great Walstead) so that we can work out how best to support them so that their academic progress is not harmed and that coming back in to school is not stressful.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

Senior Leaders / Deputy Heads / Attendance Officer

- Oversee attendance systems and enforcement
- Escalate concerns and liaise with external agencies
- Ensure consistency across the school

Teaching Staff / Tutors / HoMM (Ardingly College)

- Maintain accurate registers
- Investigate unexplained absence promptly
- Raise concerns early

Parents / Carers

- Ensure regular attendance
- Inform school promptly of absence

- Avoid non-essential absence

Students

- Attend all lessons and activities
- Arrive punctually
- Engage fully in school life

12. Response to Unexplained Absence

- Immediate checks are carried out (registers, timetables, support departments)
- School office initiates absence procedures (See section 6)
- Parents are contacted
- Senior staff are informed
- If unresolved, escalation may include police involvement

13. Safeguarding

A missing student is treated as a **potential safeguarding emergency**.
Core principles:

- Act **immediately and proportionately**
- Follow the Missing Student Policy
- Communicate clearly
- Escalate without delay if unresolved
- Record all actions and outcomes

All incidents of missing students must be recorded on safeguarding systems (CPOMS). Where appropriate, schools will liaise with:

- Local Authorities
- Police
- Children's Services

14. Legal Framework

This policy aligns with:

- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Pupil Registration Regulations
- DfE Attendance Guidance

APPENDIX 1 – Absence Codes

Present Codes	
/ \	present during registration
B	educated off site and for taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority under Section 19 of the EA 1996
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed
P	participation in a sporting activity with prior agreement from school
V	educational visit or trip supervised by a member of the school staff
W	attending work experience under arrangements by the school or local authority
Absent Codes	
Authorised Absences	
C	absence due to exceptional circumstances, agreed by the headteacher
C1	in a regulated performance / undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	absent due to a part-time timetable, agreed by the headteacher and parents(s)/carer(s)
D	dual registered
E	suspended or permanently excluded, and no alternative provision made
I	illness (both physical and mental health related; not medical or dental appointments)
J1	job/school/college interview
M	medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only one day allowed; any more coded as C if agreed)
S	study leave
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being unexpectedly closed
Y4	unable to attend due to unexpected whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
Unauthorised Absences	
G	holiday or absence for leisure-related purposes (not agreed by the headteacher)
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within five days)
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	late after register has closed
Administrative Codes	
Z	prospective pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (e.g., holidays, insets and polling station days)

Appendix 2: UKVI Sponsored Students

UKVI sponsored students: It is expected that sponsored student's attendance will not drop below 80% or miss 10 consecutive days of unauthorised absence. If any of the above occurs the school/college will assess the reasons behind this and if necessary, the school/college will report this on the SMS as per the sponsor guidance.

Absent students who are attending Ardingly College through a sponsored visa: We are required to ensure that sponsored students engage with their studies. We will use information about their attendance to monitor this, which will be collected by the college. This will be done on a monthly basis and will include information about attendance, submission of work, exam attendance, tutorials, or contact with their tutor or other staff, as well as their engagement with any additional online learning resources. The information we use will usually relate to the standard attendance requirements of your course.

If we have any concerns about a student's level of engagement with their studies, they will be asked to meet with your HoMM/Class tutor to discuss any problems. This process is designed to be supportive of the students and their studies. We will assist them in obtaining the relevant support as necessary.

If our concerns are not addressed, or a student does not engage, or they have missed too much to continue the course, there may be implications for the student's visa status. In certain cases, we may be required by UKVI to withdraw sponsorship of their visa if we cannot satisfy ourselves that they are appropriately engaged with their study. We are also required to report to UKVI any changes in your circumstances as outlined in the previous section. Some of these changes mean a student's visa will be curtailed (cancelled). We are required to report within 10 days of the change; we will usually email parents 24 hours before making the report.

Appendix 3: School Non-Attendance

1. What is school non-attendance?

Emotional Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. The impact of EBSNA on young people and schools is far reaching. Outcomes for young people who display EBSNA include poor academic attainment, reduced social opportunities and limited employment opportunities. EBSNA is also associated with poor adult mental health.

Research from the Children's Commissioner found that in the 2022/23 academic year, 22.3% of all pupils were persistently absent from school. In 2018/19, that figure was 10.9%, meaning that rates of persistent absence have more than doubled since the coronavirus pandemic.

We know that the earlier difficulties are identified and support put in place the more successful we are at developing children and young people's ability to cope with their anxiety and develop their resilience to cope with life's challenges resulting in improved attendance and ongoing life opportunities.

Worrying or anxiety is a normal feeling that we all experience from time to time. It can even keep us safe from harm or help us perform in difficult situations. However, sometimes anxiety or excessive worrying can become a problem especially when it stops people doing what they want or need to do.

Many children and young people worry about school. This is normal. Anxieties are part of life and learning to deal with them is part of growing up. However sometimes a child's worries may lead to difficulties attending school. If your child has high levels of anxiety and does not want to attend school, they may be experiencing Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA).

2. What is the cause?

There is no single cause for EBSNA and there are likely to be various contributing factors for why a young person may be finding it difficult to attend school. It is well recognised in the research literature that EBSNA is often underpinned by several complex and interlinked factors, including the young person, the family and the school environment (Thambirajah et al, 2008).

However, Kearney and Silberman's (1990) review of the literature indicates that there tends to be four main reasons for school avoidance:

- To avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school, such as feelings of anxiety or low mood.
- To avoid situations that might be stressful, such as academic demands, social pressures and/or aspects of the school environment.
- To reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant others, such as parents or other family members.
- To pursue tangible reinforces outside of school, such as going shopping or playing computer games during school time.

According to this model, the avoidance of uncomfortable feelings or situations described in the first two points could be viewed as negatively reinforcing the EBSNA, whereas in the second two points, the EBSNA could be seen as being positively reinforced by factors outside of school (Kearney & Spear, 2012).

3. What will we do to support a child struggling with Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance?

As each student is an individual, it is important to recognise that a one size fits all policy is unlikely to be successful and as such a tailored approach will be required to support children in these cases. As such the college should complete the following:

- Listen carefully to you and your child. Acknowledging the challenges faced by your child and you as their parent.
- Maintain close contact with you and your child, even during extended periods of non-attendance. An agreed member of staff should be named as a link person.
- Work in partnership with you and your child to find out what difficulties your child is experiencing and find ways of making school a happier place and improve their attendance.
- Hold meetings to devise a plan in conjunction with you and your child. The plan should include what the next steps will be.

- Respond to any school-based needs, such as academic support, dealing with bullying or support with social relationships.
- Consider the support your child might require upon arrival at school. This might include meeting with a friend at a specific place and time, using a quiet space to settle before school starts, engaging in a preferred activity or being given a responsibility such as a monitor role.
- If difficulties persist the school should consider requesting involvement from other professionals.
- The school should refer to the West Sussex EBSA Guidance Document.

4. How will this look to a student struggling with Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA?

Stage 1

- The Tutor/Form Teacher or HOMM will inform parents if a child's attendance falls below college expectations – see section 9
- Parents/carers may also initiate this process by notifying the school of attendance refusal or decline.
- Early intervention will focus on finding a quick, simple solution where possible (e.g. resolving a recent friendship issue or concerns about incomplete homework).
- If needed, restorative conversations will take place between students.
- Relevant information may also be shared with staff to raise awareness of any concerns.
- If no resolution within 10 working days, this matter could be escalated to Stage 2.

Stage 2

- A senior staff member is allocated as the student's key adult.
- Hold a session in school or via home visit to explore anxieties.
- Use the West Sussex EBSA toolkit for evidence gathering and decisions.
- Meet with parents to discuss student anxieties and outline actions the school is taking.
- Formulate a documented, regularly reviewed plan based on student voice.
- Evaluate a Reduced Timetable (or any other reasonable adjustment) as an exceptional, short-term measure only.
- Include a documented strategy to rebuild the student back to full-time hours.
- Key adult coordinates support with Learning Support, Safeguarding, and the School Nurse.
- Consider referrals to the Designated Schools Team, Fair Access, Senat, or Social Care.
- Mark attendance as authorised while the student participates in the EBSNA pathway. If student fails to participate, attendance is likely to be unauthorised.
- Monitor Stage 2 progress regularly, preferably every two weeks.
- Could progress the matter up to Stage 3 if no progress occurs within a 8-week period.

Stage 3

- Key adult to present the case to a member of the College Executive team.
- Consideration of next steps which could include long term reduction of time in college, dropping of a subject or exploration if setting is correct for the student's needs.
- Consult with Pupil Entitlement team at West Sussex to discuss attendance and steps taken.

- Key adult to continue regular check in with the student and family, continuing to seek a resolution to the issues.
- Consider a SPOA referral to support with students' mental health.
- Absence recording to be reviewed, without medical evidence, absence may be marked unauthorised

5. What can parents do to help their child?

One of the most important ways you can support your child is to calmly listen to them and acknowledge that their fears are real to them. Remind them how important it is to attend school and reassure them that you and the school will work with them to make school a happier place for them. Tell the school there is a problem as soon as possible and work in partnership with the school to address the issue. A plan should be made with the school to help your child.

Towards the beginning of initiating the plan your child may show more unhappiness, and you should prepare yourself for this. It is important that all adults both at home and school, work together to agree a firm and consistent approach. Any concerns about the plan should not be shared with your child and a positive 'united front' is recommended. It is likely that there may be difficulties implementing the plan and these should be anticipated and solutions found. You should try to keep an optimistic approach, if your child fails to attend school on one day, start again the next day. It is also important to remember there is likely to be more difficulty after a school holiday, period of illness or after the weekend. You may feel tempted to change schools, however research tells us that often difficulties will re-emerge in the new school and whenever possible it is normally better to try to resolve the issue in the current school.

Finally, as a parent it can be difficult to see your child unhappy. Make sure that you have someone to talk to too

6. Where to seek support:

Youngminds

A charity championing the wellbeing and mental health of young people. They publish a range of information for parents. They also have a parent helpline. Calls are free Mon-Fri from 9:30am to 4pm 0808 802 5544

Website: https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following additional College policies and DfE guidance:

- **Anti-Bullying**
- **Cyber-Bullying**
- **Restrictive Interventions Policy**
- **West Sussex guidance on Emotionally Based School Avoidance**: **https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483**