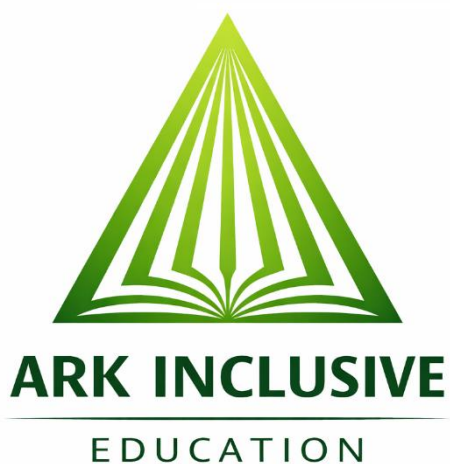




ATTENDANCE POLICY

2026-2027

Group Policy Document

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1.1 At ARK Inclusive Education, we believe that regular attendance is fundamental to enabling our children and young people to achieve their potential and successfully reintegrate into mainstream education or progress to their next placement.

1.2 This policy outlines our approach to promoting and monitoring attendance. It is designed to be supportive and is rooted in a trauma-informed, neurodivergence-affirming practice. We recognise that our students often face significant barriers to attendance, including Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), SEMH needs, and sensory sensitivities. Our primary aim is to work in partnership with students, families, and professionals to understand and overcome these barriers.

1.3 This policy aligns with the statutory guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (August 2024), which emphasises early intervention, collaboration, and a supportive approach to addressing absence.

2.0 OUR ATTENDANCE VISION AND AIMS

2.1 Vision: To create a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where every student feels valued and motivated to attend, thereby maximising their learning and life opportunities.

2.2 Aims:

- To maintain the highest possible attendance and punctuality for every student.
- To proactively identify and remove barriers to attendance, working closely with students and families.
- To create a culture where students are excited to learn and attend regularly.

- To ensure all staff, students, and parents understand the critical importance of attendance.
- To put in place an effective system for monitoring attendance and offering graduated support.
- To establish excellent routines that will support students' future success and emotional well-being.

3.0 LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 All children of compulsory school age have the right to a full-time education, as set out in Section 19 of the Education Act 1996. For children in alternative provision, this should be full-time unless it is in their best interests to have a reduced timetable due to specific needs. Any part-time provision must be reviewed regularly with a plan to increase hours where possible.

3.2 Our Legal Responsibilities:

- We are required to maintain an accurate attendance register, recording every student as present, absent, or engaged in an approved educational activity.
- We must notify the Local Authority of any student who is absent for 15 school days or more, consecutively or cumulatively.
- We have a duty to investigate the underlying reasons for absence, particularly where it falls below 90%.

3.3 Responsibilities:

- Parents/Carers are expected to:
 - Ensure their child attends our provision regularly and on time for both the AM and PM sessions.
 - Notify us by 9:00 AM on the first day of absence, specifying whether the absence is for the AM session, PM session, or the full day.
 - Provide medical evidence for any illness-related absence (e.g., appointment cards, prescription slips).
 - Work in partnership with us to understand and address any barriers to attendance.
 - Ensure no holidays are booked during term time.

- Students are expected to:
 - Attend every day and arrive punctually for both sessions (AM and PM).
 - Inform a member of staff if they are feeling unwell or are worried about something.
 - Catch up on any missed work.
- ARK Staff are expected to:
 - Emphasise the importance of good attendance and punctuality for both sessions.
 - Complete the attendance register accurately at the start of each session (AM and PM).
 - Follow up on unexplained absences promptly, prioritising vulnerable students.
 - Build positive, trusting relationships with students to help identify and reduce barriers.
 - Contact parents/carers to discuss attendance concerns in a supportive manner.
 - Refer cases of persistent absence to the Director for further action.

4.0 SESSION STRUCTURE AND REGISTRATION

4.1 ARK Inclusive Education operates two distinct sessions each day:

- AM SESSION: 9:15 AM – 12:00 PM
- PM SESSION: 12:30 PM – 3:15 PM

4.2 Registration:

- A register will be taken at the start of each session (AM and PM).
- Students are expected to be in their designated learning space and ready to learn by the session start time.
- Students arriving after the session start time will be marked as late.
- Students who are absent for either session will be marked with the appropriate absence code.

4.3 Full Day Attendance: For a student to be recorded as attending for a full day, they must be present for both the AM and PM sessions.

5.0 ATTENDANCE MONITORING AND INTERVENTIONS

5.1 Our approach is supportive and graduated. We will work with families to address attendance concerns early, using a problem-solving approach that gets to the root cause of absence.

5.2 Daily Monitoring:

- Registers are taken twice daily (AM and PM).
- Parents/carers are contacted on the first day of any unexplained absence (for either session or the full day) to check on the student's welfare.
- All absences are coded using the national attendance codes (e.g., for illness, medical appointments, authorised/unauthorised).

5.3 Support Interventions (Graduated Response):

- **CONCERN (ATTENDANCE BELOW 90%):**
 - Action: A letter is sent to parents/carers to inform them of the concern. A meeting may be arranged with the student's keyworker to discuss barriers and agree on an initial support plan.
 - Goal: To offer early support and prevent further deterioration.
- **PERSISTENT ABSENCE (ATTENDANCE BELOW 85%):**
 - Action: Formal invitation to an Attendance Improvement Plan meeting. This meeting will involve the student (where appropriate), parents/carers, keyworker, and Director. The plan will identify barriers, set clear targets (e.g., full attendance in both AM and PM sessions), and agree on actions for the school, family, and student.
 - Goal: To provide intensive, multi-agency support and formally agree on steps to improve attendance.
 - External Agency Involvement: We will work with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Officer (EWO), CAMHS, Social Care, or SEND Officers as appropriate.
- **SEVERE PERSISTENT ABSENCE (ATTENDANCE BELOW 75%):**
 - Action: A formal Attendance Improvement Plan meeting will be convened with senior leaders. This may involve a review of the student's EHCP or placement and consideration of whether our provision remains suitable.
 - Goal: To implement an intensive support plan and, if necessary, involve the LA to consider legal sanctions or alternative placements, though this is always a last resort.

5.4 Partial Attendance (Attending only one session):

- We understand that some students may initially only be able to attend one session per day due to anxiety or sensory overload.
- In such cases, a reduced timetable plan (see Section 8.0) will be agreed upon, with clear goals to build up to attending both sessions.
- This will be reviewed regularly, and progress will be celebrated.

5.5 Celebrating Good Attendance:

We will celebrate and reward excellent attendance and significant improvement to motivate students and reinforce positive behaviour.

6.0 PUNCTUALITY

6.1 Good punctuality is essential for a positive start to each session and sets the tone for learning. It also supports the development of important life skills.

6.2 Expectation: All students are expected to arrive by the designated start times:

- AM SESSION: 9:15 AM
- PM SESSION: 12:30 PM

6.3 Late Arrival:

- Students arriving after the session start time will be marked with a 'L' code for that session.
- Repeated lateness will be recorded and followed up with parents/carers.
- Consistent lateness will be treated as an attendance concern and will be addressed through our graduated response, as consistent lateness can be a sign of underlying barriers.

7.0 SHARING ATTENDANCE DATA WITH SCHOOLS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

7.1 We recognise the importance of transparent and timely communication regarding student attendance with both the student's registered school and the relevant Local Authority. This ensures continuity of support and fulfils our statutory duties.

7.2 Sharing with the Student's Registered School (Where the student is on roll):

- WEEKLY ATTENDANCE REPORTS: A summary of the student's attendance for both AM and PM sessions will be shared with the registered school on a weekly basis via email.

- **PERSISTENT ABSENCE NOTIFICATION:** If a student's attendance falls below 90%, we will notify the registered school in writing immediately and invite them to participate in any Attendance Improvement Plan meetings.
- **REINTEGRATION MEETINGS:** Attendance data will form a key part of the agenda in all reintegration review meetings held with the registered school.
- **END OF PLACEMENT REPORT:** At the point of reintegration or transition, a full attendance summary for the entire period of the student's placement at ARK Inclusive Education will be provided to the registered school.

7.3 Sharing with the Local Authority (Where the student is NOT formally on roll at a school):

- Where a student is placed at ARK Inclusive Education directly by the Local Authority and is not formally on roll at a mainstream school, we will take on the responsibility for reporting attendance data in accordance with statutory guidance.
- **ATTENDANCE REPORTS:** A summary of the student's attendance for both AM and PM sessions will be shared with the commissioning Local Authority on a fortnightly basis via the designated contact.
- **PERSISTENT ABSENCE NOTIFICATION:** If a student's attendance falls below 90%, we will notify the Local Authority in writing immediately. This will trigger a joint intervention with the LA to assess the student's situation and determine next steps.
- **STATUTORY NOTIFICATIONS:** We will formally notify the Local Authority of any student who is absent for 15 school days or more, consecutively or cumulatively, in line with our statutory duty.
- **EHCP REVIEWS:** Attendance data will be shared as part of the annual review process for any student with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

7.4 Consent and Data Protection:

- All attendance data shared will be anonymised to the extent necessary and will only be shared on a legitimate need-to-know basis.
- Information sharing will be conducted in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and our Data Protection Policy.

8.0 REDUCED TIMETABLES AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

8.1 A reduced timetable is a formal arrangement where a student attends for fewer hours or sessions than the full-time expectation. It is used only when it is in the best interests of the student and as a short-term, time-limited intervention to support reintegration.

8.2 Process:

- A reduced timetable will only be considered after a thorough assessment of the student's needs and barriers.
- A formal plan will be created in consultation with the student, parents/carers, and the referring school/LA. This will include the reason, the modified timetable (e.g., attending only the AM session), a review date, and a plan for increasing attendance.
- The plan must be risk-assessed and formally agreed with parents/carers, who must provide written consent.
- The plan will be reviewed regularly, and the aim will always be to move the student towards full attendance (both AM and PM sessions) as soon as possible.

9.0 MEDICAL ABSENCE

9.1 Students with ongoing medical or mental health conditions may need additional support. We will work with families and healthcare professionals to ensure they can access their education wherever possible, in line with the guidance on *Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions*.

9.2 Process:

- Parents/carers must inform us of any medical condition that may affect attendance for one or both sessions.
- We will support the student's reintegration after an illness, which may involve a phased return, starting with one session per day.

10.0 RECORDS AND DATA PROTECTION

10.1 We will maintain accurate, up-to-date records of attendance and punctuality for both AM and PM sessions. Attendance data will be shared with parents/carers regularly.

10.2 All data will be stored securely and in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and our Data Protection Policy.

11.0 COMPLAINTS

11.1 If a parent/carer is dissatisfied with any aspect of this policy or its application, they may raise a concern through the Ark Inclusive Education Complaints Policy in the first instance.

12.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

12.1 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Director and updated to reflect changes in legislation, guidance, or best practice.

12.2 The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through the analysis of attendance data (including session-by-session attendance), feedback from families and students, and the outcomes of student reintegration plans.

End of Policy Document