



Ayr Academy

Inclusion and Attendance Policy

Information for Parents / Carers & Young People

February 2024

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Foreword

Ayr Academy recognises the vital role that regular attendance plays in the academic success and overall wellbeing of our young people. Our Inclusion and Attendance policy aims to establish a supportive and collaborative approach to address and improve attendance issues within our school community.

Last session in South Ayrshire Secondary schools, nearly 100,000 days (the equivalent of over half a million teaching hours) were lost to unauthorised absence. Poor attendance has been linked to lower levels of attainment, problems with peer relationships, emotional and behavioural difficulties and poorer employment opportunities.

In our commitment to preparing young people for, Further Education, Higher Education and the world of work, Ayr Academy highlights the importance of fostering excellent attendance as an integral part of their educational journey.

Vision Statement

Ayr Academy envisions a school environment where every young person is empowered and supported to participate fully in their education and achieve their truest potential.

Objectives

To ensure academic success and safeguarding of all young people by promoting regular attendance.

To establish a collaborative partnership between Ayr Academy, families, and the community to address challenges surrounding school attendance.

To identify and support young people and families facing barriers to regular attendance.

Responsibilities

Young People:

It is the responsibility of each pupil to attend school regularly and actively engage in their learning whether this is in a classroom or elsewhere.

Pupils should be in Personal Support / Assembly by 8.45am every day and ready for their afternoon class when lunch times ends. Pupils are reminded that if they choose to leave the school grounds for lunch it is their responsibility to make it back for their afternoon classes. If a pupil is late they should report to their timetabled class to be registered.

Between classes pupils should move from one class to the other as quickly as possible. If a pupil is late to class between periods their teacher will record them as late on SEEMIS.

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Pupils feeling unwell and wishing to be sent home should discuss this with their class teacher who will send them to Guidance/the school office as appropriate.

All pupils should note that attendance at school means being in a classroom/area allocated for their learning, simply being in the school building does not count as attendance. Pupils should not be unsupervised during class time.

Times of the School Day:

Monday – Tuesday		Wednesday/ Thursday/ Friday	
Personal Support	08.45am – 08.55am	Personal Support	08.45am – 08.55am
Period 1	08.55am – 09.45am	Period 1	08.55am – 09.45am
Period 2	09.45am – 10.35am	Period 2	09.45am – 10.35am
Interval	10.35am – 10.50am	Interval	10.35am – 10.50am
Period 3	10.50am – 11.40am	Period 3	10.50am – 11.40am
Period 4	11.40am – 12.30pm	Period 4	11.40am – 12.30pm
Period 5	12.30pm – 1.20pm	Lunch	12.30pm – 1.10pm
Lunch	1.20pm – 2.00pm	Period 5	1.20pm – 2.00pm
Period 6	2.00pm – 2.50pm	Period 6	2.00pm – 2.50pm
Period 7	2.50pm – 3.40pm		

Parents/Carers:

Excellent attendance gives your child the best chance of success. Parents and Carers are expected to support their child's attendance, communicate with the school about any challenges and work collaboratively with staff to address attendance issues.

According to The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, (Section 30), it is the legal responsibility of every parent or guardian to provide efficient education for their school-aged child. Enrolling your child at a local education authority school implies a commitment to regular attendance, unless granted permission by the education authority to withdraw the child.

Parents/Carers – Attendance Procedures:

Parents/carers should contact the school office before 9am if their child is going to be absent to explain why.

If a child has a medical/dental appointment, parents/carers should provide their child with a note or email or phone Ayr Academy in advance of the appointment so that it can be recorded.

If a parent/carer forgets to phone the school to explain an absence, they will be alerted to the absence by text message which they can respond to.

When an absence remains unexplained it will be recorded as unauthorised. In these instances, a member of staff may contact the parent/carer to enquire as to the reason for the absence.

Where a pupil is likely to be off school for an extended period of time parents should contact their child's Guidance Teacher to discuss the situation and potential supports if required.

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Please inform the school in advance of any planned holiday during term time but be advised that this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence in accordance with South Ayrshire Council's attendance guidelines.

Parents/carers are encouraged to contact their child's Guidance Teacher where there is an indication that attendance at school is becoming an issue for their child. Early intervention is extremely important in these circumstances and there are many ways Ayr Academy can support your child.

School Staff:

Your child's Guidance Teacher is the first point of call if there are concerns regarding attendance at school. You can call the school office to speak with them or email them directly about any issues. School staff will monitor attendance, inform parents/carers of periods of unexpected absence, identify patterns, and plan supports for young people facing challenges.

If there are concerns about your child's attendance you may receive a visit at home from one of our Education Welfare Officers. The purpose of this visit will be to offer support and advice to assist your child to return to school.

At Ayr Academy we have made significant investment in curriculum strategies aimed at fostering a sense of empowerment among young people in their educational pursuits. Our commitment extends to ensuring their inclusion in the school community and facilitating unimpeded access to all areas of the school curriculum:

School of Sport/Music – Additional Time for Young People in BGE: Allocation of additional time within the Broad General Education (BGE) phase for young people to pursue specialised interests in Physical Education (PE) or Music through programs like the School of Sport/School of Music.

Support for School Trips Where Required: Financial and logistical support for school trips to ensure that all young people can participate, promoting experiential learning opportunities.

Pupil Support Provision: Deployment of School Assistant support in classrooms and small groups, along with the Pupil Support Base to cater to the diverse needs of young people with a range of Additional Support Needs (ASN).

Wider Achievement Initiatives: Implementation of Wider Achievement initiatives to provide additional opportunities for students to experience success beyond traditional academic measures.

PE Inclusion Charter: Commitment to the PE Inclusion Charter to actively promote the inclusion of all, including LGBT young people in sports, fostering a diverse and supportive environment.

DYW Curricular Options for Young People in S3-S6: Integration of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) curricular options for students in S3-S6, fostering a connection between education and future career opportunities.

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Work Experience Opportunities for Young People in Senior Phase: Implementation of work experience programs for young people in the Senior Phase to enhance their exposure to real-world scenarios and career pathways.

Introduction of Level 5 Courses to Improve Employability and Attainment: Introduction of Level 5 courses (same level as National 5 on SCQF framework) aimed at enhancing employability skills and academic attainment among young people.

Participation in Consortium Arrangements for Higher/Advanced Higher Levels: Collaboration with consortium arrangements to provide opportunities for students to study at Higher/Advanced Higher levels, enriching their educational experience and academic achievement.

Supported Study/Master Classes/Easter School for Senior Phase: Provision of targeted support through supported study sessions, master classes, and Easter school programs to aid Senior Phase pupils in academic progress.

Learning and Teaching Framework: Significant resources have gone into establishing the Ayr Academy lesson to ensure consistency and quality of approach in supporting young people's learning.

Meeting Learners Needs: All staff are well-versed in Staged Intervention procedures for young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN) and are equipped to apply effective strategies in their respective roles.

Preventative Measures and Support

In our commitment to promoting regular attendance and fostering an inclusive learning environment, Ayr Academy has implemented a range of preventative measures and support initiatives. These supports are designed to address various factors that may impact upon a young person's ability to attend school consistently. The following measures are integral components of our attendance policy:

Free Breakfast Club for All Pupils: The provision of a free breakfast club ensures that all pupils are able to start their day nourished and ready for learning.

Free Uniform, Including Tights/Leggings/Jackets/Bags: Access to free uniforms aims to alleviate financial burdens and contribute to a sense of equality among students.

Free Sports Clothes/Casual Clothes/Shoes: Ensuring that young people have access to free sports clothes and shoes promotes their participation in physical activities without financial constraints.

Free Hygiene Packs: Distribution of free hygiene packs supports the overall wellbeing and self-esteem of young people.

Food Parcels: Support to access food parcels assists families experiencing financial difficulties and alleviates some of the challenge surrounding access to food.

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Free Prom Dresses/Suits/Shoes/Accessories – Sustainable Fashion: Promoting sustainable fashion, the school offers free prom attire and accessories, ensuring that financial considerations do not hinder participation in the senior prom.

Support to Access Free Christmas Presents: Assistance is provided to families to ensure that all young people have access to Christmas presents, promoting inclusivity.

Free Extracurricular Clubs at Lunchtime and After School: Offering free extracurricular clubs during lunchtime and after school provides additional opportunities for young people's engagement and personal development.

Strong Partnerships for Outdoor Learning, Wider Achievement Opportunities: Strategic partnerships with external organisations facilitate outdoor learning and wider achievement opportunities such as skiing, Dolphin House, Duke of Edinburgh (DofE), and John Muir. These opportunities are provided at no cost to parents or young people.

Redistribution of Leftover Lunches to Young People/Families: The school actively redistributes leftover lunches to young people and families, minimising food waste.

Support to Access Benefits via Information Advice Centre: Assistance is offered to guide young people and their families in accessing relevant benefits through SAC Information Advice Centre.

Support to Access Wallacetown Project: The school provides support to facilitate access to the Wallacetown Project, further enhancing the support network available to families.

Champions Board Weekly Group for Care Experienced Young People: We acknowledge the unique needs of Care Experienced young people and is committed to facilitating a Champions Board Weekly Group to provide a dedicated platform for their voices and concerns. This initiative aims to ensure their holistic development and successful integration into the school community.

Young Carers Group and Weekly Breakfast: Recognising the valuable contribution of young carers and their distinct challenges Ayr Academy established a Young Carers Group, complemented by a weekly breakfast program. This initiative aims to create a supportive space, fostering a sense of community among young carers while addressing their specific needs.

BGE Group – Literacy/Numeracy Support: This group is specifically designed for young people significantly behind their peers in literacy and numeracy, aiming to provide targeted supports and fewer periods of transition, ensuring a focused, effective and nurturing learning environment.

Primary Transition: We implement a transition and enhanced transition programme to support young people move from primary into secondary school.

Free Stationery in Each Classroom: Equipping each classroom with free stationery contributes to a conducive learning environment and ensures that young people have the necessary tools for academic success.

Fidgets in Each Classroom: Inclusion of fidget tools in each classroom acknowledges and supports diverse learning styles and needs.

No Cost for Schoolbooks/Stationery/Home Economics etc: Removal of financial barriers across the curriculum to promote equal access to educational resources.

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Support for Pupils

At Ayr Academy we encourage young people to live our values of Kindness, Ambition, Success, Honesty and Respect. We have policies to support an inclusive, supportive school culture that encourages young people to feel valued and engaged. There are numerous supports available to our young people:

- **Guidance Teacher.** All young people have identified Guidance Teacher who can provide support. Guidance should be the first point of contact for a young person and their family if there is a concern.
- **School counselling service.** Confidential provision available for all young people. Referral process required to access this support. Young people can self-refer.
- **Educational Welfare Officers.** EWO's work with young people/families following decisions made at Inclusion Team meetings. Support often geared to improving attendance.
- **Pupil Support Staff / Base.** Young people with ASN receive appropriate support.
- **Pupil Groups** eg LGBT/Rights Respecting Schools/ Eco/ School of Sport/School of Music / Chess, sports clubs. Young people can increase their sense of belonging by joining a school club.
- **Mental Health Ambassadors** -Trained senior pupils offer mentoring and drop-in support.
- **Mentors:** S4 pupils can be allocated a mentor to support them through the SQA process by offering advice, sharing encouragement and goal setting.
- **Senior Leadership Team.** Year Heads provide support to young people in a range of areas.

Nurture

At Ayr Academy we actively promote Nurture, a focus on wellbeing and relationships to support the behaviour, wellbeing, attainment and achievement of our young people. Our approach is designed to foster a culture of inclusion and support which can help to remove barriers that may hinder attendance.

Universal Nurturing Approaches:

Whole Staff Training: All staff members undergo training to foster a common understanding and implementation of nurturing approaches throughout the school.

Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Classes - Broad General Education (BGE): HWB classes for BGE pupils provide enhanced support regarding wellbeing.

Policies: Ayr Academy's Positive Relationship Policy is rooted in the principles of Pivotal, emphasising positive relationships as fundamental to the learning environment.

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RRR Provision – Regulate, Reflect, Restore: Implementing the RRR principles to address and manage behaviour issues positively and proactively.

Circle Resource: A strategic plan to develop and introduce Circle resources, further enhancing the implementation of nurturing approaches across the school community.

Targeted Nurturing Approaches:

Nurture Groups: Nurture groups provide targeted support for students requiring additional assistance in emotional and social development. Access to this provision is offered following Boxall assessment.

Enhanced Emotional Check-in: Offered to a targeted cohort to address the specific emotional and social needs.

Lunch Time 'Serene Scene' Nurturing Provision: Introduction of a 'Serene Scene' during lunchtime to offer a nurturing environment for targeted students, promoting positive social interactions.

Nurture Transition Activities: Development of specific transition Nurture programme to support young people transition from primary to secondary school.

Morning PS Check-In/Soft Start for Identified Pupils: Implementation of a morning check-in and soft start routine for identified pupils, providing a supportive and positive beginning to their school day.

Inclusion Team

The Inclusion Team at Ayr Academy is committed to maintaining a relentless focus on understanding the reasons behind young people's disengagement in learning. Our approach is rooted in a no-blame, problem-solving ethos, aiming to identify and address barriers to learning effectively. The goal is to provide the right support at the right time to ensure every young person's success.

Targeted Supports and Interventions: To complement Pupil Support interventions, the school employs 24 targeted supports. These include, but are not limited to, Education Welfare Officer (EWO) input to support young people and their families, Youth Worker sessions, engagement with groups affiliated with Ayrshire College, participation in Thriving Communities groups, and collaboration with our Community Police Officer (CPO). These initiatives are designed to address the variety of and contribute to a holistic support network.

Inclusion Team Weekly Meetings: The Inclusion Team conducts weekly meetings to assess the needs of young people and review the impact of implemented interventions. Robust processes are in place to track and monitor interventions.

Emotional-Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Provision: In addressing Emotional-Based School Avoidance, our Educational Psychologist leads a comprehensive provision.

Pupil Group: A dedicated pupil group is formed to provide specialised support for those experiencing emotional-based school avoidance.

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Parental Group: An inclusive parental group is established to offer guidance, support, and a collaborative approach to addressing emotional barriers hindering their child's engagement in school.

Universal Parental Input via Wellbeing Evening: The school conducts Wellbeing Evenings, providing universal parental input to enhance awareness and understanding of emotional wellbeing, fostering a supportive school-home partnership.

Absence Procedures

Authorised Absence

When your child is absent from school this can be recorded by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. As long as you have informed Ayr Academy of a valid reason why your child is off this is recorded as an authorised absence. **However, these days off will still contribute to their overall attendance percentage.**

Absence is authorised in the following circumstances:

- Your child is ill
- Your child is attending a doctor or hospital appointment
- A meeting about a Children's Hearing or court, or attending a Children's Hearing, care review or court
- Participation in sports, musical or drama activities as long as this is agreed in advance by the school
- Attending a religious ceremony or a wedding or funeral of someone very close to them
- Someone close to your child has died
- There is a crisis or serious difficulty at home or in your family
- You are a Gypsy/Traveller family and your child's school is aware of your plans to travel and return
- Your family is returning to a country of origin for cultural reasons or to care for a relative
- The school transport your child uses is cancelled due to bad weather, breakdown, etc.

Unauthorised Absence

South Ayrshire schools will not authorise absences in the following circumstances:

- Any unexplained absence unless you later provide a satisfactory explanation
- Most family holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances
- Truancy, with or without your knowledge

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Period Truancy

When a young person is in the school building but not in their timetabled class or learning session, for example walking the corridors, in the toilets without permission or other unsupervised areas of the school we refer to this as period truancy. Period truancy can negatively impact upon a young person's academic performance, as they miss valuable teaching and learning time.

Action to Deal with Period Truancy

If period truancy is identified the following steps will be taken:

Step 1

Parents / carers receive a text to inform them that their child has left class without permission or is now not in class when they have been in school earlier in the day.

SLT and Campus Police Officer are informed of the absence. Where appropriate efforts are made to speak with young people and identify reasons for truancy, these concerns are addressed /shared with PT Guidance. Young people are encouraged back to class.

Step 2

If there are repeated instances of period truancy contact with home will be made by PT Guidance / DHT and an attendance card issued (S1-S4), S5/6 post 16 letters by PT Guidance. Attendance card decision will be dependent on circumstance agreed by PTG/DHT. Efforts will be made to resolve any issues leading to truancy.

Step 3

Lunchtime detention may be issued by PT Guidance / DHT if period truancy continues.

Step 4

If period truancy continues, a meeting with parent/carer with agreed action minutes will take place. The purpose of this meeting will be to identify barriers, offer / request appropriate supports to help the young person engage in class learning. These supports may be sought from our internal Inclusion Team or external agencies.

Regular reviews of the process will take place to discuss the impact of any supports for young person to return to class.

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Action to Deal with Persistent Non-attendance

If you are concerned that your child is developing an attendance issue please contact us. There are lots of supports Ayr Academy can put in place to assist you and your child with attendance concerns.

If your child does not attend school regularly without a satisfactory explanation being provided, Ayr Academy will take a staged approach to try to support you and your child.

Stage 1

We want all young people to thrive in school and have attendance of over 90%. Parents/carers are informed by letter if your child's unauthorised absence falls below an acceptable level.

Stage 2

If there is no improvement with your child's attendance within 2 weeks further contact will be made with you by your child's Guidance Teacher to discuss attendance concerns via phone call or letter. This aims to be positive and to support you and your child to make improvements in attendance. It may be decided that your child would benefit from being supported by our PTG Attendance.

Stage 3

If there is no improvement within 2 weeks after this you will be invited to attend a meeting with your child's Guidance Teacher and Year Head to establish the reasons for the continuing low attendance and how to address these. This may take the form of a TWF (Team with the Family) meeting. The aim of these meetings is to be supportive and may involve requesting intervention from targeted supports within school or support from partner agencies.

Stage 4

If there is no improvement within 2 weeks after this your child's case will be referred to SLT / their Year Head and there may be a referral to the Children's Reporter.

Dedicated PTG Attendance

As part of our commitment to fostering improved attendance, a dedicated Principal Teacher of Guidance (PTG) Attendance role has been established. This role entails full pastoral responsibility for an identified cohort where there is currently no multi-agency involvement.

Rigorous Focus on Attendance Improvement: The PTG Attendance role is characterised by a relentless focus on enhancing attendance rates of an identified cohort. This involves a thorough understanding of the underlying issues contributing to absenteeism and active collaboration with young people and their families to develop effective solutions that promote consistent attendance.

Information Sharing with Staff: The PTG Attendance is responsible for sharing comprehensive attendance information with staff on a weekly basis. This ensures that the broader school community remains informed and engaged in the collective effort to improve attendance within the identified cohort.

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Building Discussions and Attendance Plans: The PTG Attendance actively engages in discussions with staff members regarding attendance plans. These discussions involve exploring potential next steps to support individual young people in their journey toward improved attendance. The PTG Attendance collaborates with staff to devise personalised strategies that address the unique circumstances of each student.

This role within our attendance policy reflects our proactive approach to addressing attendance challenges. By assigning dedicated responsibility to a PTG Attendance, we aim to instigate positive changes in attendance patterns through collaborative problem-solving, data-driven strategies, and consistent communication with both students and staff.

Review and Evaluation:

We commit to regularly reviewing attendance data, assessing the effectiveness of strategies, and making the necessary adjustments to continually improve attendance rates.

By collectively embracing the values outlined in this Inclusion and Attendance Policy, we aim to create a school environment that fosters positive attendance habits, supports our young people and cultivates a culture of continuous improvement. Together, we can overcome attendance challenges and provide every young person with the opportunity to succeed.

Contact Us

Please contact us via the following methods:

Phone: (01292) 612 028

Email: ayr.mail@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

Guidance Teachers:

Carrick House – Mr Robertson, Thomas.Robertson@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

Galloway House – S1, S4 & 6G – [Miss Higgins - Rhona.Higgins@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:Miss.Higgins-Rhona.Higgins@south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

Galloway House - S2, S3 & 5G – [Miss Alexander - Sarah.Alexander@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:Miss.Alexander-Sarah.Alexander@south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

Kyle House - Mrs Byers, Ann.Byers@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

PTG Attendance – Mr McGuigan, Terry.McGuigan@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

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