



# QMA Attendance Policy

August 2024

Review Date June 2025

## Context

### Key definitions:

*'Attendance, combined with engagement should support children and young people to make progress in their learning and have a positive impact on educational outcomes.'* Education Scotland, 2023

Attendance is defined as **participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school**. Engagement happens when children and young people are actively involved in a learning task. Types of engagement include:

### Our expectations

Our school day begins at 8.45am and our expectation is that of our young people are in school, and ready to learn at the beginning of period one. Further to this, we expect our pupils to arrive promptly to all lessons thereafter in the school day.

If a child is late for school or is unable to attend, it is vital that the school is made aware of the reason for absence and the expected date of return (if known).

## Contacting school

If your child is absent, you should contact us at the earliest opportunity to let us know. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- By telephone 01292 612020
- By email [QMA.Mail@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:QMA.Mail@south-ayrshire.gov.uk)
- By text message to 07860051903 (NB that if you have forgotten to let us know about an absence, you will receive a text message from our school office. You can then reply to this message outlining the reason for absence).
- Using ParentsPortal
- Via the Xpressions app

Please also note that if you need to collect your child up for an appointment, you should let the school know in advance and report to the school office on arrival. Pupils should collect an out of class permission slip from the office in advance.

## Recording absences

There are many reasons why a young person may not attend school. When your child is absent from school this will be recorded as either **authorised** or **unauthorised** using the criteria below:

Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your child is unwell</li><li>• Your child is attending a medical appointment</li><li>• Multi-agency appointments such as Children’s Hearing, Court, LAAC reviews</li><li>• Extra-curricular activities as agreed in advance by the school.</li><li>• Religious ceremony or a family event such as a wedding or funeral.</li><li>• Bereavement</li><li>• Family crisis or exceptions domestic circumstances.</li><li>• Gypsy/Traveller family (school should be aware of plans to return)</li><li>• Family is returning to a country of origin for cultural reasons.</li><li>• School transport is cancelled due to bad weather, breakdown, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any unexplained absence or where a satisfactory explanation hasn’t been given.</li><li>• Most family holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.</li><li>• Truancy, with or without your knowledge.</li><li>• During disputes, such as relating to the return of a pupil after an exclusion.</li><li>• Long-term exceptional domestic circumstances where support has been provided.</li></ul>

## Promoting positive school attendance

At Queen Margaret Academy, we would like, where possible, to engage with **every learner, every day**. If your child does not attend school regularly; is persistently late for school; or is absent without a satisfactory reason, the following procedures are in place to support and challenge parents and carers:

### Short-term Measures

#### Text alerts

- If your child is absent from their period one class without explanation, you will receive a text alert from our school office.
- If your child attends school in the morning but does not return after lunch, a text alert will be sent.
- If your child’s absence is still unauthorised by the end of the day, a further text alert will be sent in the evening.

#### Phonecalls

- If by the next day we have not been notified with a reason for absence, you may receive a phonecall from a member of our clerical team.

- Where there are wider concerns over a child's attendance (e.g. truancy) or persistent latecoming, you may receive a phonecall from a member of the guidance team or year head.

### **Home visits**

- Where we have been unable to contact the family and have concerns over a child's wellbeing, you may receive a visit from your child's guidance teacher, year head or campus police officer.
- For any further concerns following or visit, or where we have still be unable to check on a child's wellbeing, we may contact social work to share these concerns.

### **Medium & long-term measures:**

**Stage 1:** In most instances, you will be informed by letter if your child's unauthorised absence falls below 90%.

**Stage 2:** If there is no improvement within 2 weeks a further letter may be sent offering a supportive discussion with your child's guidance teacher.

**Stage 3:** If there is no improvement within 2 weeks you may be invited to attend a meeting with your child's guidance teacher and/or year head to establish the reasons for the continuing low attendance; and discuss supportive measures that could be put in place. This is known as a Team with the Family meeting (TWF) and may include school partners such as health, social work or educational psychology.

**Stage 4:** Multi-agency approach:

#### Working with partners

When guidance and year heads feel they need some additional help to encourage and facilitate improved school attendance, they may call on support from a range of partner agencies. Examples of these supports would include Welfare Officer, Family First workers, Small Steps to Wellbeing (SSTW), Aberlour, Barnardos.

#### Referrals to the Children's Reporter

Where the school's senior leadership team feels that a parent or carer has been unable or unwilling to engage with the supports available; or if we have significant concerns around a child's welfare, we may refer directly to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA).

#### Further support for parents, carers and families

As outlined above, the school works with a range of partners and can access resources to support school attendance. If a parent or carer is having difficulty getting their young person to school, we would encourage them to contact their child's Guidance teacher or year head to discuss what supportive measure could be put in place.