COLEGIO INTERNACIONAL MERES

A COGNITA SCHOOL

Children Absent from Education and Attendance Policy

including
Attendance Guidance
for Parents

SPAIN

Policy Statement

The school maintains its Admissions Register and Attendance Register.

The school will work in a collaborative way with parents and external agencies, in accordance with any national and/or local legislation.

Whilst the above will always prevail, the school will also consider useful and/or relevant information and advice contained within the UK government guidance:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Working Together to Improve Attendance (2024)
- Children Missing Education (2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the approach taken to:

- Recording attendance information on a daily basis
- Recording information at the point a pupil leaves the school
- Managing a situation when a pupil has unexplained, persistent and/or prolonged absence from education
- Working with authorities where there are safeguarding concerns linked to attendance

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1 Attendance

Introduction

It is important that staff, parents and pupils are familiar with this policy. Regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Promoting consistent and high attendance (and punctuality) is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the school's day to day vision, values, ethos and culture, alongside positive behaviour. Our school has high expectations of attendance and considers good attendance to be that above 96%.

Monitoring and review arrangements

Attendance rates are reported regularly to the Cognita Board. Proprietorial Governors report on pupil attendance, as well as any patterns or trends of persistent absence from school. Representatives of the Proprietor scrutinise Admissions and Attendance Registers for compliance and safeguarding purposes.

Scope

This policy applies to all children in the school, those in Early Years (including registered provision where offered).

The legal framework

The Education Act 2/2006 specifies that basic education is compulsory, comprising 10 years of education provided on a regular basis from the ages of six to sixteen. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient full-time education which is suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs.

Legislation specifies the legal responsibility of parent/carer(s) of statutory school age children to ensure they attend school every day the school is open (term times are regulated by the corresponding regional authority).

The Spanish Constitution recognises freedom of education and while home education is not regulated, it can be considered as covered as a general principle.

Schools must always also consider their obligation under the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

The link between attendance, wellbeing, and achievement

Missing learning time through having unexplained, persistent and/or prolonged absence, leaves children vulnerable to falling behind in their learning and it is well known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement, which reduce longer-term opportunity. Furthermore, poor attendance can also impact on a child's social and emotional development.

Children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

Poor attendance is habitual; therefore, prevention and early intervention is crucial. Absence is a symptom and improving pupil's attendance is part of improving the pupil's overall welfare. Individual pupil's barriers to attendance, however, often go far beyond the school gates. Persistent, prolonged and/or unexplained absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues in a pupil's life, and barriers to attendance are often specific to local contexts.

Attendance, therefore, cannot be seen in isolation and the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils can learn and thrive, plus a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, beginning from the Early Years.

Parent/carer(s) responsibilities are to:

1. Encourage regular and sustained attendance for the child in their care, being fully aware of their legal responsibilities.
2. Ensure that the child in their care arrives at school punctually, prepared for learning.
3. Provide clear reasons for any absence for the child in their care which ensures the school can code the absence properly and accurately
4. Contact the school on the first day of the child in their care's absence as early as possible and preferably before the start of the school day (no later than 9 am).
5. Avoid making arrangements to remove children in their care from school during term time.

6. Respond helpfully and positively to any enquiry made by the school to ascertain the reason for any absence of the child in their care, including any safeguarding matter.
7. Provide the school with at least two emergency contact numbers
8. Update the school with any changes to circumstances/contacts so that the school can amend the Admissions register as required (including rare circumstances where it is agreed that a child is dual -registered)
9. Inform the school of the child's next educational setting and address if they choose to end their contract, especially mid-year, so that the register can be updated. If this is not supplied, the school may need to seek advice from the local authority

Leaving school early during the day

Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by a known parent/carer for a specified reason. If a pupil has to leave the school during the day for illness or a parent is required to collect them for a medical appointment, they must sign out at the School Office. Where there are known medical appointments, parents must notify the school in advance.

Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by staff members (written agreement by the Headteacher) to attend a school visit, an off-site scheduled lesson, or a sporting fixture. This does not extend to schools with non-compulsory lunch time arrangements or schools where Bachillerato/sixth form students have a signing out system.

Requests for absence from parent/carer(s)

Schools, not parents, authorise absence. Requests to the school for granting permission for leave of absence to a pupil during term time must be made in writing in advance directly to the Head. The Head/other nominated staff member in the Head's absence is only able to authorise leave of absence where exceptional circumstances relate to the application. Authorised leave is unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday or leisure activity.

We ask that parents make contact with the school when a child is going to be absent for ill health (mental or physical) reasons in order that the school can keep records updated and, importantly, so that the school can be kept informed of their progress to full health and anticipated return date. If necessary, the school may ask for medical evidence of any illness (see below). We expect any absence for illness to be evidenced by a note from the parent/carer(s) as soon as possible.

An absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without the permission of the Head /other nominated staff member in the Head's absence, in advance.

Records

The school:

- Keeps accurate and efficient records (electronic) of attendance and registration at school, including attendance at all after school and before school activities. The school's Attendance Register, kept by means of a computer, is backed up in the form of an electronic copy at least once a month.

- Only authorises absences in specific circumstances)- authorisation is to be undertaken by the Headteacher only or an agreed nominated member of staff in their absence.

- Has two emergency contact numbers for each student on their records, and reviews these with parents/carers

- Regularly informs parents about their child's attendance and absence levels.

Oversight of Attendance

All school staff will maintain a positive school culture where monitoring, promoting, and incentivising attendance is seen as **everyone's responsibility**; staff, child and parent/carer.

The school has a nominated **Senior Attendance Champion** (a member of the leadership team) who has responsibility and oversight of attendance matters (supported by other colleagues where required). Their name and contact details are: es Laura Rebón Rodriguez - Colegio Internacional Meres. laura.rebon@cognita.com.

The Senior Attendance Champion has a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance, establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff.

They will:

- monitor and analyse attendance and punctuality patterns and trends on a weekly basis
- use this analysis to implement strategies for promoting improved awareness of attendance such as targeted support for individual children, cohorts, year groups, and/or vulnerable children, as required, and to also provide regular attendance reports to relevant colleagues (Safeguarding, SENCO, Heads of Year, class teachers) in order to facilitate discussions with pupils and their parents where required.
- consider half-termly, termly, and full year data identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance
- use the findings to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies
- benchmark their attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement
- where required, devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- report on patterns of attendance at Governance Meetings to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils

In addition to the Senior Attendance Champion, on a day-to-day basis, parents/carers are able to gain information around attendance from their child's:

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BACH: "Cristina Cuadrado Martínez - Colegio Internacional Meres"
cristina.cuadrado@cognita.com

Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school works alongside and supports the family and wherever possible the person should be kept consistent.

The school day to day:

- Provides parent/carer(s) of children in their care with the timings of the school day and the calendar via the school website and any other usual method(s) such as the school newsletter, in advance.
- Ensures that teachers take a register at the beginning of the morning and at least once during the afternoon session. Registration will be open 15 minutes before families are notified of the absence.
- Ensures that those taking the register mark all children who are not present by the designated time, taking account of absence notes
- Ensures that should any pupil arrives late for school, they sign in at the school office so that school systems remain fully updated in case an evacuation of the school is necessary and in order that we know exactly where every pupil is at all times. Repeated lateness will be discussed with the child's parents/carers to listen and understand the barriers to arrival on time.
- Follows up **un**-notified first day absence with a telephone call to the parent/carer(s) by 9.30am; children who are vulnerable **must and will** be prioritised (safeguarding, medical, and learning needs). If absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made to ensure safeguarding.

Vulnerable students

Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. However, some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil, but additional support may need to be provided.

In cases of both long term physical or mental ill health, school staff cannot and must not diagnose or treat physical or mental health conditions, but they will work together with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for the pupil. Where a pupil's health need means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, the schools will seek medical evidence to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision in line with the statutory guidance in supporting pupils at school with medical conditions or arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future. The school will work alongside pupils and parent/carers to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance, by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible.

Where the pupil has an allocated social worker, the school Child Protection and Wellbeing Coordinator (CPC) will keep them informed and involved in the above processes.

The school will:

- Facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of the pupil who is struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a learning need/disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed.
- Register the child using the relevant code (unable to attend because of illness)
- Consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxious feelings about school attendance. The school can access the many Emotionally Based School Avoidance tools and guidance documents available in these situations and seek the support from the Regional Safeguarding Lead where required.
- In all situations, the school will support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

Part-Time (reduced timetables)

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for the school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a **temporary** part-time timetable to meet their individual needs.

A part-time timetable will have:

- the written agreement of both the school and the parent/carers
- a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan
- regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure the plan is only in place for the shortest time necessary.
- a proposed end date that takes into account the exceptional circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend school on site full-time. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process.

In some limited cases, a pupil with a long-term physical/mental health condition may require a part-time timetable for a prolonged period. Medical evidence will be needed, and external specialist intervention will need to be in place to support the child during this period.

In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record the absence accordingly.

2. Children Absent/ Missing from Education

Children Missing in Education are:

'Children who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing from education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.' Children 'missing' in education are therefore different to those who are 'absent' from education.

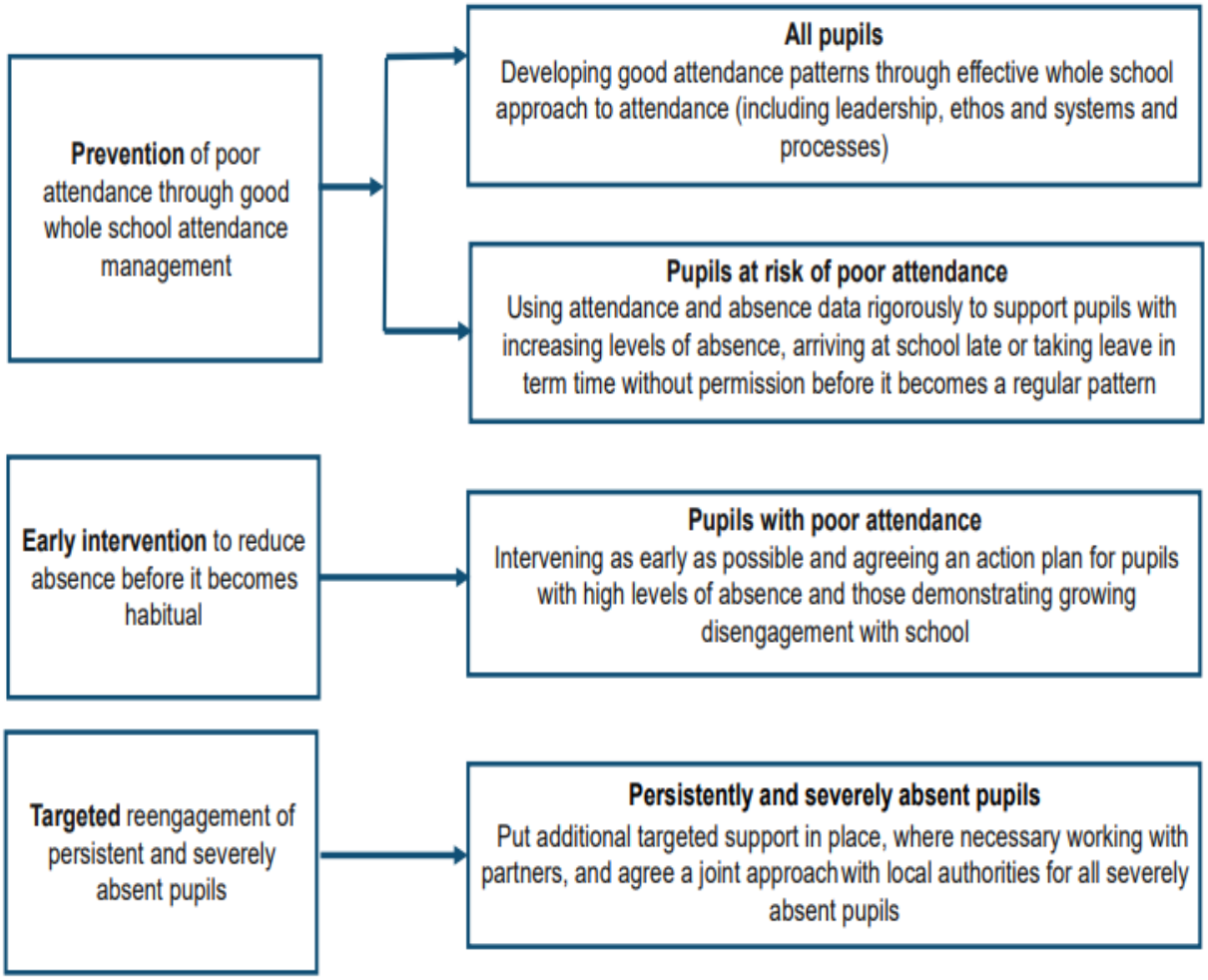
Children Absent from Education

Often children can be persistently absent from school or have prolonged absences. Of course, there may be a satisfactory reason for their absence, most often medical, for why this is needed, for example, the child is having operations/treatments. In these situations, the school will offer work to be completed at home/involve the child with their class remotely on MS Teams, only where appropriate, and in collaboration with the family and children, No work will be sent home if this is thought to have the potential to place additional pressure on any child. Any arrangement will be short-term and reviewed regularly.

Where children are absent due to mental health reasons, such as anxiety, a co-constructed plan will be put in place for their return (see above and Safeguarding Policy).

However, on other occasions, the child is frequently absent but there does not appear to be an explanation or a satisfactory reason. This is different from a child being a 'child missing in education' (as described above) but it is still a concern. If a child's absence continues, despite interventions to listen, identify and address the underlying cause(s)/barriers to attendance with both the child and parents/carers, then consideration may be given to seeking the advice of Social Services.

3 Effective management of child absence and procedures



Step 1- Prevention

The Senior Attendance Champion, alongside the CPC and all staff will work together to identify patterns/changes in all pupil's attendance at an early stage to prevent any further absence, including addressing unexplained, persistent, or prolonged absence (deemed as attendance below 90%). Schools must address all attendance concerns with both parents/carers and child as soon as challenges emerge

School staff will listen to children and their parents/carers to understand any 'in school' /external barriers to the child's good attendance, working jointly with families to remove those barriers wherever possible.They will agree actions and interventions, such as referrals to services or organisations that can support. These actions will be regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families. Where interventions are failing, all parties will work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach. If the attendance does not improve, then then next step will be taken.

Step 2- Early Intervention

Where absence intensifies, so will the support provided, which may require the school to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners. Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment. The CPC and/or Senior Attendance Champion should seek advice from the Regional Safeguarding Lead where needed at this stage.

Step 3-Targeted Support

Where engagement in support is proving challenging, the school will continue to hold formal conversations with the parents (and pupil where they are old enough to understand). This meeting is likely to be led by the school's Senior Attendance Champion, the CPC, and *may* include the school's point of contact in the local authority School Attendance Support Team.

These above meetings will clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future but will also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences. If a particular form of support is refused or does not work initially, schools and partners are expected to provide further opportunities to engage in that support, try something else or ultimately take legal action if support is not appropriate.

Step 4 – Legal action by the local authority

The local authority may, in accordance with regulations, decide to implement plans for the prevention, detection and monitoring of cases of children missing education

Reasonable enquires to locate a suspected child missing education

If a new pupil fails to attend at the beginning of first day of the agreed or notified admissions date, the school should undertake *reasonable enquiries* to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. The type of enquiries may include the school/local authority checking with relatives, neighbours, landlords – private or social housing providers – and other local stakeholders who are involved.

Where an existing pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the school may seek advice from the local education inspectorate or Social Services depending on its assessment of the circumstances (see below for safeguarding concerns). The school will make a written record that they have completed these procedures on their safeguarding systems.

No home visits must be undertaken by the school without first seeking advice from the RSL.

4. Safeguarding

Ensuring that attendance improvement is prioritised and strategies and action plans are put in place for pupils with persistent and severe absence is crucial to safeguarding and improving pupils' overall welfare in both the short and long term.

The school has a safeguarding duty in respect of its pupils, and as part of this will investigate any unexplained, persistent, and/or prolonged absences. Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions (including truanting) can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, and/or child sexual and/or child criminal exploitation.

It is important that the school's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, neglect and/or exploitation and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging, but also where children are already known to Social Services and have

an allocated Social Worker where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

Where there are safeguarding concerns about any child's absence, whether this be persistent, prolonged or unexplained, absence, the school will always talk to the child and parents/carers about their concerns, in order to understand the barriers to attendance as soon as problems begin to emerge (see above). They will also follow its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Where children are absent for a period of time and there are safeguarding concerns, the school will arrange to have twice weekly check-ins with the child via online methods e.g. MS Teams. The school has a duty to know where children are and have visibility of them.

Seeking advice from the authorities

If the parent/s carers of the child do not agree to the above request, or do not respond to any such request, consideration will be given to seeking advice from/making a referral to Social Services.

Where there are existing/potential safeguarding concerns around a child, and the parent/carer unexpectedly removes their child to home educate them, a referral to children's Social Care must be made.

If there is reason to believe a child who is absent from school is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, whether there has been communication from parents/carers or not, a referral must and will be made to Social Services (and the Police).

This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds (and medical evidence) to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause. If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed, whether this relates to a child's absence or not, the school will inform the Police immediately.

Severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools and agencies but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute **neglect.** In these situations, Social Services will be involved and make decisions around the child/family.

5. Elective Home Education

Home education is not regulated in Spain.

The Education Act 2006 covers compulsory schooling in state-approved centres only. However, the Spanish constitution recognizes the fundamental right of parents to decide the education they want for their children in accordance with their own convictions and values, according to Article 27.3

Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove their child from school with a view to educating them at home, the school will coordinate a meeting with parents/carers to explore why they are considering this option. Schools will explore keeping the child in school whilst respecting parental choice.

If the parents continue with their wish to home educate their child, the school will seek guidance from their local education inspectorate.

Appendix 1 – Attendance Guidance for Parents

Introduction
Regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Missing learning time leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and it is well-known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, beginning from the early years.

The legal framework
The Education Act 2/2006 specifies that basic education is compulsory, comprising 10 years of education provided on a regular basis from the ages of six to sixteen.
Legislation specifies the legal responsibility of parent/carer(s) of statutory school age children to ensure they attend school every day the school is open (term times are regulated by the corresponding regional authority).
The regulations require the school to have an Admissions Register and an Attendance Register, and to place all children on both registers.

Parent/carer(s) have responsibility to :
- Be fully aware of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their child attends school every day
- Ensure that the child in their care arrives at school punctually, prepared for learning
- Provide clear reasons to the school for any absence which ensures the school can code the child's absence properly and accurately
- Contact the school on the first day of the child's absence as early as possible (according to school arrangements)
- Avoid making arrangements to remove children from school during term time as this will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances
- Respond helpfully and positively to any enquiry made by the school to ascertain the reason for any absence related to the child in their care, including any safeguarding related matter.
- Adhere to any co-constructed reintegration plan where the child in their care has been absent from school for a longer period.

School has the responsibility to:
- Promote pupils' good attendance and reduce absence
- Work to ensure every pupil has good attendance so theycan access the education to which they are entitled
- Act early with parents/carers and children to address patterns of absence by listening and understanding any barriers to attendance
- Encourage parents to ensure their child attends all learning opportunities regularly and punctually
- Keep accurate and efficient records of attendance and registration at school, including attendance at all after school and before school activities

Late arrival
If a pupil arrives late, they must sign in at the school office so that our systems remain fully updated in case an evacuation of the school is necessary and in order that we know exactly where every pupil is at all times.

Leaving school early during the day
Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by a member of staff or their known parent/carer; or to attend a school visit, an off-site scheduled lesson, or a sporting fixture.

If a pupil has to leave the school during the day for illness or a parent is required to collect them for a medical appointment, they must sign out at the school office. Where there are known medical appointments, parents must notify the school in advance and provide evidence.

Requests for absence from parent/carer(s)
Schools, not parents, authorise absence. Requests to the school for granting permission for leave of absence to a pupil during term time must be made in writing in advance directly to the Head. The Head/other nominated staff member in their absence is only able to authorise leave of absence where exceptional circumstances relate to the application. Authorised leave is unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday.

We ask that parents/carers make contact with the school when a child is going to be absent for ill health reasons in order that the school can keep records updated and importantly, so that the school can be kept informed of their progress to full health and anticipated return date. If necessary, the school may ask for medical evidence of any illness. We expect any absence for illness to be evidenced by a medical note from the parent/carer(s) as soon as possible.

An absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without the permission of the Head/other nominated staff member in their absence in advance.

Good attendance
Our school considers good attendance to be above 96%. The school will contact the parent/carer(s) of the child if there are emerging attendance concerns. If attendance does not improve, the school will contact the local authority in accordance with local authority procedures (see policy).

Ownership and consultation	
Document Sponsor	European Director of Education
Document Author / Reviewer	Regional Safeguarding Lead –Europe and North America (RSL) RSL reviewed June 2024 RSL reviewed July 2025 Head of Compliance (Spain) July 2025
Consultation & Specialist Advice	DLA Piper July 2025
Document application and publication	
England	No
Wales	No
Spain	Yes
Switzerland	No
Italy	No
USA	No
Greece	No
Version control	

Current Review Date	July 2025
Next Review Date	June 2027
Related documentation	
Related documentation	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Applications and Admissions Policy