



BCA School Attendance Policy

Statement of Intent

Regular school attendance is essential for children's educational development and achievement.

Unexplained or persistent absence will raise safeguarding and wellbeing concerns over a child.

This policy sets out expectations, procedures, and consequences for non-attendance in alignment with statutory requirements for all schools in Andorra that ensure compulsory schooling at both primary and secondary levels, for children between the ages of 6 and 16.

These legal requirements constitute a 'duty of care' and align with those in the UK, as set out in the Education Act 1996.

Application of Policy

The policy applies to all pupils of the school, whether of compulsory school age (age 6-16), or below (younger than 6) or above (older than 16).

The Policy must be followed by all employees with responsibility for ensuring, monitoring, recording and reporting on pupil's school attendance.

The contents of the policy must also be known by parents.

Exceptional Situations of Health or Disability: pupils with chronic illnesses or disabilities may be eligible for attendance accommodations

Lateness to individual classes during the school day is addressed through the BCA Behaviour Policy.

Policy development, legislature, guidelines and other sources

This policy has been developed in alignment with the school's Guiding Statements, and the legislature, guidance and related policies listed below:

- Govern d'Andorra, "*Decret del 20-03-2019 pel qual es regula la prevenció i tractament de l'absentisme escolar als centres educatius del Principat d'Andorra*"- regulates the prevention and treatment of school absenteeism.

References to the above legislation are included in the policy statement below, and shown thus (example): (art. 14)

- Àrea d'Inspecció i Avaluació Educativa del Ministeri de Relacions Institucionals, Educació i Universitats del Govern d'Andorra, "*Nota informativa relativa a l'aplicació del Decret de modificació del Decret de prevenció i tractament de l'absentisme escolar als centres educatius del Principat d'Andorra*", 07-11-2023.
- British Schools Overseas (BSO) standards, managed by the UK Department for Education, and adopted by the National Association for British Schools in Spain (NABSS), which is the appointed inspection agency. These standards include specific requirements regarding school attendance (Registration and Records; Monitoring Attendance; Parental Communication)
- Department for Education (DfE), August 2024, "*Working together to improve school attendance: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities*".
- Department for Education (DfE), September 2024, "*Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges*".
- BCA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Definitions

School absenteeism is defined as:

"The lack of punctuality, total or partial and unexcused absence within the school hours of the child of compulsory schooling age at the educational centre where they are enrolled". (art. 3, app. 1).

Publication Information

This policy is for Internal and External publication (website and Parent Portal)

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Approved by: Principal

Policy Statement

1. Attendance Expectations

1.1 Regular Attendance: Pupils must attend school every day during term time unless there is a valid reason for absence.

1.2 Punctuality: Pupils are expected to arrive at school and lessons on time to avoid disruption.

1.3 Parental Responsibility: Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child's regular attendance and punctuality at school.

2. Types of Absences

2.1 Authorised Absences:

- Illness or medical appointments (evidence may be required).
- Administrative procedures (evidence may be required).
- Religious observances (pre-approved by the school).
- Exceptional circumstances (e.g., bereavement or immediate family emergencies).
- Approved educational activities (e.g., university open days or interviews).

"An excused absence is understood to mean that which occurs for reasons of the child's health, for inexcusable compliance, for representation of the country and all those reasons of force majeure or which due to their gravity prevent the child from attending school ". (art. 14)

2.2 Unauthorised Absences:

- Family holidays during term time.
- Absences without explanation or legitimate reason.

2.3 Partial absenteeism due to lack of punctuality (i.e. lateness, defined as arrival in the classroom after 09:00), or departure before the end of the school day. These may be recorded as authorised or unauthorised, following the criteria and examples listed above.

3. Persistent Absenteeism:

3.1 The school adopts the categories provided by the Govern d'Andorra. These are based on the number of unexcused absences per month made by a student, and are used to determine the school's response:

- Moderate absence: from two days, or four half days, per month
- Severe absenteeism: from five days, or ten half days, per month, or due to accumulation of moderate absenteeism
- Chronic absenteeism: when a student does not attend school in a continuous manner.

3.2 In respect of the above, 'a month' is taken as a rolling four week period rather than a calendar month.

4. Reporting and Recording Absences

4.1 Parent/Carer Responsibility:

4.1.1 Notify the school by 09:00 on the first day of absence, and provide a reason.

4.1.2 Submit a written explanation or medical evidence (if required) within three days of the child's return to school.

"The father, mother or legal representative must always notify the school of any absence of the student in writing, and the reasons must be made known and justified. In the case of an unexpected or last-minute absence, the family or legal representative must notify the school and justify the reason, first by phone and then in writing. Otherwise, it is considered an unexcused absence." (art. 11).

4.2 School Responsibility:

4.2.1 Monitor attendance daily, urgently notify parents as soon as reasonably possible of any unexplained absences, and provide support or interventions as needed.

4.2.2 Record attendance-absence accurately using the school management information system (iSAMS). This system also permits the recording of a partial absence during the school day, and for explanatory notes to be added to an absence event.

4.2.3 Based on the types of absenteeism detected, implement the appropriate remedial measures, and address any safeguarding and child protection issues.

4.2.4 Report upon a child's attendance in the mid-year and end of year formal pupil reports, published to parents.

4.2.5 Provide the Ministry of Education with the school attendance data, including all unjustified absences of all students, on an annual basis.

5. Term-Time Holidays

5.1 Parents must avoid taking holidays during term time. Requests for leave of absence must be submitted in writing to the Principal and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances (see Appendix 1)

5.2 Note that, under the definitions above (Section 3), a one-week term time holiday would already classify as severe absenteeism.

6. Attendance and Safeguarding

6.1 School attendance is directly linked to broader safeguarding practices because regular attendance allows schools to monitor the wellbeing and safety of their pupils.

6.2 Persistent or unexplained absences may signal safeguarding concerns.

6.3 If attendance concerns arise, schools must act by contacting parents, offering support, or escalating concerns to child protection services if necessary.

6.4 Children from affluent families may miss school for reasons such as extended vacations, the demands of a parent's career, social obligations or participation in any other activities prioritised over education. Such absences might be overlooked due to assumptions about their privileged background, potentially masking deeper issues of neglect.

7. Consequences for absenteeism.

7.1. Moderate absenteeism or partial absenteeism: Parents will be contacted to discuss reasons for absence and support needs. The situation is monitored for a two week period (10 days).

7.2 Serious absenteeism and chronic absenteeism: Parents will be required to attend a further meeting with school staff to discuss the reasons for absence and support needs. The educational inspectorate is notified.

7.2.1 The notification to the educational inspectorate, in the case of serious or chronic partial absence, may entail calling the family to a meeting at the offices of the Ministry of Education in order to make the agreements that will allow the resolution of the absenteeism situation.

7.2.2. As per Section 5.2, above, a one-week term time holiday would already classify as severe absenteeism. In this case, the school will exercise its discretion in notifying the case to the educational inspectorate (although the monthly attendance statistics will nonetheless include it). In the case of repeated term-holidays, however, it is likely that the step described in 7.2 will be taken.

7.2.3 In the event that there is no return to attendance, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Civil Service will intervene, at first, and the Ministry of the Interior and Justice if the situation is not resolved.

8. Children not of compulsory school age.

8.1 Schooling is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 16. For practical considerations, and for consistency between children in the same class, BCA regards Years 2 through to Year 11 as the year groups for whom schooling is compulsory.

8.2 Nonetheless, the same considerations around ensuring the continuity of children's educational development and achievement, and monitoring their wellbeing, also apply to the year groups at BCA where schooling is not compulsory (Nursery, Reception, Year 1, Year 12 and Year 13). For these children, their attendance is still expected to follow the rules of

the school, in support of the home-school partnership, even though there is no legal obligation to do so.

8.3 In Nursery, Reception and Year 1, all absences will be recorded as authorised.

8.4 In Year 12 and Year 13, the unauthorised absence category will be used (as per Sections 2.2 and 2.3), even though the students are no longer of compulsory school age, and may even no longer be classed as minors. This distinction is necessary to protect a student's graduation status, may be needed in support of university references, and to ensure that specified minimum instructional hours set out by the IB are fulfilled.

9. Make-Up Work

9.1 Authorised absence: teachers will support pupils in catching up on missed work. If appropriate, and if the child's health permits, specific learning activities and materials for the child to complete, during their absence, will be provided.

9.2 Unauthorised absence: specific learning activities and materials for the child to complete are not provided by the class or subject teacher, although at their discretion and if time is available they may offer some suggestions.

10. Rewards and Recognition

10.1 BCA does not operate a system of rewards and recognition to encourage good attendance: children attend school because it is the right thing to do, and because of the legal obligations upon their parents.

10.2 The natural and intrinsic consequences of good attendance will be the enhancement of academic, social and emotional learning.

Appendix 1: Sample text in response to request for unauthorised absence.

“Thank you for your email. This is to confirm we have registered the absence and, based on the information provided, have classified it as unauthorised.

We ask parents to limit their child's absences from school to the BCA vacation schedule. Full time attendance at school is a legal requirement for children aged 6 to 16 years old, and for students aged 16-18 the attendance record is relevant to the academic transcript and IB graduation status.

Exceptions are made for study-related absence, participation in significant sports events (letter from organising authority required), or compassionate grounds.

All other absences are duly recorded upon request, but marked as unauthorised. In these cases, specific learning activities and materials for the child to complete during their unauthorised absence are not provided by the class or subject teacher, although at their discretion and if time is available they may offer some suggestions.

If there are special circumstances, parents should write a letter of request to the Principal.”