Attendance Policy

(Alternative Provision)

ABA Pathways

This policy is reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are statutory, regulatory, commissioning or operational changes.

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Contents

- 1. Aims
- 2. Legislation and statutory guidance
- 3. Scope and responsibilities
- 4. Attendance expectations and placement schedules
- 5. Recording attendance
- 6. Reporting attendance to schools and local authorities
- 7. Absence and first-day response
- 8. Safeguarding and children missing education
- 9. SEND, reasonable adjustments and barriers to attendance
- 10. Persistent and severe absence
- 11. Part-time and bespoke timetables
- 12. Punctuality and early collection
- 13. Remote or off-site activity
- 14. Working with parents and carers
- 15. Multi-agency working and escalation
- 16. Records, confidentiality and data protection
- 17. Quality assurance and monitoring
- 18. Links with other policies

1. Aims

ABA Pathways is committed to promoting regular attendance within its alternative provision. Attendance is both an educational and safeguarding matter. Our approach is supportive and person-centred, recognising that children and young people accessing alternative provision may have significant SEND, health, emotional, sensory, communication or contextual barriers affecting attendance.

- Promote good attendance and punctuality as essential to safeguarding, learning, wellbeing, progress and successful reintegration.
- Maintain accurate records of each child or young person's expected and actual attendance at ABA Pathways alternative provision.
- Identify absence, patterns of non-attendance and barriers to attendance early and respond in a supportive, proportionate and child-centred way.
- Ensure attendance information is communicated promptly to the school and/or local authority responsible for overseeing or commissioning the placement.
- Work collaboratively with children and young people, families, schools, local authorities and other professionals to improve access to education.

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy has regard to the current legal and statutory framework in England, including:

- Education Act 1996
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, where applicable to the commissioning school
- Working together to improve school attendance (Department for Education, updated July 2026)
- Alternative Provision statutory guidance (Department for Education, updated February 2025)
- Children Missing Education statutory guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- UK data protection legislation

ABA Pathways is an alternative provision provider and may not itself hold the statutory school attendance register for a child. The commissioning school and/or local authority retains the statutory duties that apply to it. ABA Pathways will provide timely, accurate attendance information so that the responsible body can fulfil those duties.

3. Scope and responsibilities

This policy applies to children and young people attending ABA Pathways alternative education provision, whether the placement is commissioned by a school, local authority or another responsible body.

- Directors ensure appropriate attendance systems, safeguarding arrangements, staff training and oversight are in place.

- The designated attendance lead or nominated senior staff member oversees attendance patterns, communication and escalation.
- Practitioners record attendance accurately and promptly and report unexplained absence or safeguarding concerns without delay.
- The commissioning school/local authority remains responsible for its own statutory registration, coding, attendance and safeguarding duties.

4. Attendance expectations and placement schedules

Each placement will have an agreed attendance pattern, including expected days, sessions and hours. This will be recorded within placement documentation and shared with relevant staff, the family and the commissioner. Attendance expectations will reflect the commissioned package, the child or young person's needs and any agreed transition or reintegration plan.

- Children and young people are expected to attend all sessions included in their agreed placement timetable unless absence has been agreed or is unavoidable.
- Changes to the commissioned timetable must be agreed through the appropriate placement review process rather than informally becoming a reduced entitlement.

5. Recording attendance

ABA Pathways will maintain an electronic attendance record for each child or young person attending its alternative provision. Attendance will be logged for every expected session and will distinguish, as appropriate, between present, absent, late, not expected to attend, and other locally agreed categories.

- Attendance is recorded as close as practicable to the start of each expected session.
- Staff record relevant contextual information, including reasons for absence where known, late arrival, early collection and actions taken.
- Where the commissioning school requires information for use of national attendance and absence codes, ABA Pathways will provide the factual attendance information needed; the school remains responsible for applying its statutory register codes.
- Records will be sufficiently clear to identify patterns, missed education and changes from the agreed attendance pattern.

6. Reporting attendance to schools and local authorities

Attendance at ABA Pathways will be logged and shared with the school and/or local authority overseeing or commissioning the placement. The frequency and method of routine reporting will be agreed at the start of the placement and may include daily, weekly, half-termly or other reporting according to the commissioner's requirements.

- Unexplained or unexpected absence will not wait for the routine report where prompt notification is required.
- Significant patterns of absence, repeated lateness, reduced engagement or concerns that the agreed provision is not being accessed will be raised with the responsible school/local authority.
- ABA Pathways will provide attendance summaries and evidence for placement reviews, EHCP reviews and safeguarding or commissioning meetings where relevant.

- Information will be shared securely and only with those who have a legitimate need to receive it.

7. Absence and first-day response

Parents/carers should notify ABA Pathways as soon as possible when a child or young person will not attend an expected session and provide the reason where possible. When an expected learner does not arrive and no explanation has been received, staff will follow the agreed first-day absence procedure.

- Check available messages and information to establish whether the absence has already been explained.
- Contact the parent/carer or agreed contact promptly where appropriate.
- Notify the commissioning school/local authority in accordance with the placement agreement and immediately where safeguarding concerns require this.
- Record the absence, reason where known, contact attempts, information received and any action taken.
- Escalate concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where the child cannot be located, contact cannot be established, the explanation raises concern, or there is any other safeguarding indicator.

8. Safeguarding and children missing education

Attendance is a safeguarding issue. Repeated, prolonged or unexplained absence can be an important indicator of abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental or physical ill-health, unmet SEND, family difficulty or other harm. Staff must maintain professional curiosity and must not assume that absence is explained solely by a child's disability or known needs.

- Concerns will be considered alongside the child's wider safeguarding context and reported to the DSL.
- ABA Pathways will work with the commissioning school/local authority to ensure children who are missing education or at risk of doing so are identified and appropriate statutory procedures are followed.
- Where there is an immediate concern for a child's safety, safeguarding procedures take priority over routine attendance processes.

9. SEND, reasonable adjustments and barriers to attendance

Many learners accessing ABA Pathways have SEND and may experience barriers to attendance including anxiety, sensory needs, communication differences, medical needs, transport difficulties, previous school-based distress or difficulty managing transitions. Absence will therefore be explored with curiosity and support rather than treated simply as non-compliance.

- Seek the child or young person's views using their preferred communication methods.
- Work with families and professionals to identify barriers and reasonable adjustments.
- Consider environmental adaptations, predictable routines, transition support, communication support, graded increases in attendance and other individualised strategies where appropriate.
- Review whether the current placement, timetable and support remain suitable when attendance difficulties persist.

10. Persistent and severe absence

ABA Pathways will monitor attendance patterns rather than considering each absence in isolation. Where attendance reduces significantly or there is a pattern of persistent or severe absence, the concern will be shared with the commissioning school/local authority and discussed with the family and relevant professionals.

- The response should seek to understand and remove barriers, agree actions and identify who is responsible for each action.
- Where an attendance support plan is appropriate, it should include clear review arrangements and remain aligned with the child's EHCP, risk assessments, healthcare plans and safeguarding needs.
- ABA Pathways will not use punitive approaches that disregard disability, health or other legitimate barriers to attendance.

11. Part-time and bespoke timetables

The majority of placements at ABA Pathways are intentionally part-time because the child also attends another provision or because the commissioned package specifies particular sessions. The planned attendance pattern will be clearly documented.

- Where a reduced or phased timetable is being used as a temporary support measure, it should have a clear rationale, intended outcomes and regular review by the responsible school/local authority.
- A reduced timetable must not become an unreviewed long-term arrangement that unnecessarily limits access to suitable education.
- ABA Pathways will report the learner's actual attendance against the sessions they are expected to attend with us.

12. Punctuality and early collection

Punctual arrival supports predictability, access to learning and safe staffing arrangements. Late arrival and early collection will be recorded where they affect the planned session. Repeated patterns will be discussed with the family and shared with the commissioner where appropriate, with a focus on understanding and addressing barriers.

13. Remote or off-site activity

Where an agreed ABA Pathways session takes place in the community, at another approved location or through an agreed remote arrangement, staff will record participation in accordance with the placement plan. The factual information will be shared with the commissioning body so that it can determine the appropriate statutory attendance recording where required.

14. Working with parents and carers

Parents and carers are key partners in supporting attendance. ABA Pathways will communicate respectfully and seek to understand the circumstances behind absence.

- Families will be told how and when to report absence and whom to contact.
- Attendance concerns will be raised early rather than allowed to become entrenched.
- Families will be involved in identifying practical, communication, sensory, emotional, health or transport barriers and in agreeing support where appropriate.
- Attendance information and concerns will be shared transparently, subject to safeguarding and confidentiality requirements.

15. Multi-agency working and escalation

Where attendance concerns cannot be resolved through routine support, ABA Pathways will liaise with the school, local authority and other relevant professionals. Depending on the child's needs, this may include the SENCO, attendance lead, social worker, Virtual School, SEND team, health professionals, CAMHS or other services.

- ABA Pathways will contribute attendance evidence to professional meetings and reviews.
- Concerns that a placement is no longer suitable, safe or sufficient will be escalated to the commissioner rather than managed through attendance monitoring alone.
- Statutory enforcement decisions remain the responsibility of the school/local authority with the relevant legal power and will not be made by ABA Pathways.

16. Records, confidentiality and data protection

Attendance records, reasons for absence, contact attempts and related safeguarding or placement information will be recorded accurately and stored securely. Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis in accordance with safeguarding duties, commissioning arrangements and UK data protection law. Attendance information will be retained in line with ABA Pathways' records retention arrangements.

17. Quality assurance and monitoring

ABA Pathways will monitor implementation of this policy and use attendance information as part of wider quality assurance and safeguarding oversight.

- Regular review of attendance records and reporting arrangements
- Identification of individual and service-level patterns
- Review of unexplained, persistent or severe absence and actions taken
- Checks that commissioners are receiving agreed attendance information
- Review of safeguarding themes and barriers affecting attendance
- Feedback from children, young people, families, staff and commissioners
- Action plans where weaknesses or gaps are identified

The directors will ensure identified weaknesses are addressed promptly. This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, commissioning requirements or service delivery.

18. Links with other policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Restrictive Physical Intervention / Restraint Policy
- Children Missing Education procedures
- Complaints Policy
- Equality Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid and Medication procedures
- Data Protection / Confidentiality procedures