



## Attendance Policy

| <b>Approval</b> | <b>Next review</b> | <b>Responsible Person</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| May 2022        | May 2025           | Assistant Headteacher     |

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## **Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Ashdene Primary school fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

**A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.**

## **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

### **Through this Policy we aim to:**

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception-aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Attendance and Children out of School team (ACOOS) so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

### **We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:**

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

### **Definitions**

#### **Authorised absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer; for example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

#### **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- An absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent, or where it is believed that the reason provided for absence is inaccurate. In this instance, validating proof may be requested by the school before the absence is authorised.

### **Procedures**

#### **Our school will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:**

- To maintain appropriate registration and transfer processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality.

- To refer to the Attendance and Children out of School team (ACOOS) any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Cheshire East LA and the DfE where requested, including referral for accrued unauthorised absences which reach the notification threshold.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Senior Leadership Team member with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers.
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences where necessary.
- Discussing attendance issues at parents' evenings where necessary.

### **Learning Mentor, supported by the Assistant Headteacher:**

The Assistant Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Identifying trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the Attendance and Children out of School team (ACOOS).
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's liaison officer.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

### **Administration staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Absence/Late data is uploaded into SIMS.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Assistant Headteacher.

## **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time.
- Providing, where requested by the school, medical evidence to support illness/ medical appointments. This may be necessary for an absence to be authorised.
- Making applications for authorised absence to the Headteacher where this is required. The application must be made in advance and the Headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

## **The School Day**

### **Registration**

External school doors are opened at 8.45am and each designated entry point is supervised by a member of staff. These doors and the playground gates are locked at 8.55am. Any children arriving after the doors are locked will be required to come through the school office.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by **9.00am** for the morning session and by **1.15pm** (Foundation Stage and KS1), **1.30pm** (LKS2) and **1.45pm** (UKS2) for the afternoon session.

Registers are completed using SIMS. Should SIMS be unavailable for any reason, a paper copy will be provided for staff to complete and return to the office as soon as possible after registration closes.

All attendance records are documented using SIMS software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

### **Lateness**

Any pupil who comes into the school office **after 9am** will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school **later than 9.20am** will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on each day that their child is absent. Notification of absence should be made by telephone on **01625 917 335** or by email to [admin@ashdene.cheshire.sch.uk](mailto:admin@ashdene.cheshire.sch.uk). Class email accounts must not be used for this purpose - absences are to be notified to the school office - but can be copied in on notifications should you wish.

When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence, it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence and an expected return to school date. Stating that your child is unwell is not sufficient: parents/carers must provide school with details of the illness.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where the school have concerns regarding safeguarding and attendance, these procedures will not always be followed and we will immediately refer to our safeguarding procedures.

## **Absence procedures**

1. **Attendance letter sent to parents by Assistant Head** where attendance is below 95% or a child has 5 or more late marks within a term. Attendance below 95% will be monitored by the school's attendance team for half a term. Where attendance has not improved, we will move to step 2. If low attendance is due to illness, school will offer meetings with the Learning Mentor to discuss the health of the child.
2. **Attendance meeting with Learning Mentor** if an improvement is not seen within 2 weeks of receiving the attendance letter.

3. **Attendance meeting with Assistant Head** if an improvement is not seen in the 2 weeks following meeting with Learning Mentor.
4. **Attendance meeting with Headteacher** – The Headteacher will speak to parents/carers if there is still no improvement and actions will be put in place. One week to show improvements.
5. **Attendance Liaison Officer to give the school consent not to authorise the absences.**

N.B. ACOOS/Attendance Liaison support might be sought at any point deemed necessary by the school.

### **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, we initiate a first day contact process. Administration staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis to identify those pupils who are absent. If, on completing these checks, we are unaware of the reason for absence, we will contact the parent to seek this information.

1. **Phone call** to parents/carers enquiring why a child is not in school.
2. **Letter** sent to parents/carers after one week if still no reason for absence provided. Parents/Carers have one week to reply. If the school does not receive a reply, the absence will be marked on the register as unauthorised and another letter sent informing parents that the absence is unauthorised.

Where we are concerned about a child in the event of an unexplained extended absence, this will be managed in line with our safeguarding policy and may include a staff visit to the home address and/or a referral to local safeguarding services.

### **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home so that they can keep up with their school work, if the child is well enough to do so.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the Medical Needs Service to seek support for the child.

Where, over the course of an academic year, a child has had repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each subsequent period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

### **Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013, headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied **exceptional circumstances** exist.

Parents/guardians are asked to submit any request for leave during term time by writing in advance to the Headteacher, whose decision will be final. The school may request additional information/documentation from parents to support their request such as flight booking details or any other relevant information. Parents may also be asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss their request.

If the school does not authorise a leave of absence but parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence will be unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If parents/carers did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence **must** be recorded as unauthorised.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a parent to fail to secure their child's attendance at the school at which they are registered, where that absence is not authorised by the school. Fixed Penalty Notices are one of the sanctions available for this offence and offer a means of swift intervention, which can be used to combat non-attendance issues before they become entrenched.

### **Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN)**

A Fixed Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.

In cases where there is more than one poorly-attending pupil in a family, notices may be issued for more than one child.

Fixed Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- At least ten sessions (five school days equivalent) lost due to unauthorised absence (O code) in any two consecutive half terms
- Persistent late arrival at school, for example after the register has closed, in any two consecutive half terms

### **Payment of Fixed Penalty Notices**

Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice discharges the parent's liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Fixed Penalty Notice.

In accordance with The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, Statutory Instrument No. 757, if the Fixed Penalty Notice is paid:

- within 21 days the penalty payable is £60 or
- within 28 days the penalty payable is £120.

Payments will not be accepted from parents after the 28 days.

Penalty Notices cannot be paid either in part or by instalments. Late payments will not be accepted.

Cheshire East Council will retain any revenue from the Fixed Penalty Notices, hold it separately and use it to cover enforcement costs, for example, costs associated with the issue, collection or prosecution, in the event of non-payment, of Fixed Penalty Notices.

Non-payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice may result in prosecution for the period covered by the Fixed Penalty Notice under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

There is no right of appeal, but where a parent contests the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice they can submit any complaints in writing to the Education Welfare Service and/or opt to face proceedings in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444, where all of the issues relating to their Fixed Penalty Notice can be fully debated.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is pursued the fines issued are listed below:

| <b>Penalties for unauthorised absence</b> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Timeline</b>                           | <b>One child</b>   | <b>Two Children</b>  |
| Paid within 21 days                       | £60 <b>per parent</b>  | £60 per child = £120 <b>per parent</b>   |
| After 21 days and before 28 days          | £120 <b>per parent</b>   | 60 per child = £120 <b>per parent</b>  |
| After 28 days                             | You will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds you have failed to secure your child's regular attendance. | You will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds you have failed to secure your child's regular attendance. |

Once issued, a Penalty Notice can only be withdrawn if the Education Welfare Service is satisfied that:

- the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person
- the use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to this Code of Conduct
- the Penalty Notice was delivered to the wrong address
- the evidence demonstrates that the Penalty Notice should not have been issued, for example medical evidence
- The circumstances of the case warrant its withdrawal

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

"To achieve our DfE attendance targets," We strive for a whole school attendance figure of 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school, we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially, concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time, the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Attendance and Children out of School team (ACOOS).

The Attendance and Children out of School team (ACOOS) can issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to ACOOS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

Our administration staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Assistant Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

### **COVID-19**

In instances where a child is unable to attend school due to COVID-19, this will be managed and recorded directly in line with government and Local Authority guidance. Where a period of isolation is recommended/mandated by the guidance, these absences will be recorded as illness (code I), with a sub-code I01 allocated, which denotes the illness as being related to COVID.

While this will still impact attendance statistics and may result in the issuance of a notification letter in line with the procedures above, the situation, like all instances of illness, will be taken into consideration in the escalation of any attendance concerns.

### **Attendance Awards**

As school attendance is often beyond the control of the child, we do not offer standardised

rewards for school attendance. This also helps to normalise the expectation of punctuality and attendance for all learners.

On a case by case basis we may, however, allocate merits in line with the school reward system and/or make use of individualised tracking and rewards where it will positively impact a child's school attendance to do so.

### **Contact details**

**Absence notifications:** School office 01625 917 335 [admin@ashdene.cheshire.sch.uk](mailto:admin@ashdene.cheshire.sch.uk)

**Attendance queries/ concerns:** Assistant Headteacher (Mrs K Smith) via school office

**Requests for authorised absence:** Headteacher (Mrs C Mather) in writing via school office

### **External Links**

[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ews](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ews)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school-attendance/attendance-and-children-out-of-education.aspx>