

Ashwood Park Primary School

Attendance Policy

March 2018

Responsibility	KB/SLT/Governors
To be reviewed	March 2019

1 Introduction

Regular attendance at school is crucial in raising standards of education and in ensuring every child can meet their full potential. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Good attendance at school establishes a positive working ethos early in life.

Ashwood Park Primary school strongly believes that attendance and punctuality are vital for a child to maximise their potential and create a feeling of belonging in their class/school community. In promoting the belief that attendance and punctuality are important values we will be helping to ensure our children benefit fully from the educational opportunities available to them, to equip them for life and potentially impacting upon their futures as citizens, employees and employers.

Ashwood Park Primary school believes that;

- Repeated and consistent lateness is an unsettling start to the school day, for both the child and the school.
- Prolonged and consistent absence, in any year group, affects access to the curriculum ultimately impacting on progress.
- Unnecessary absence should be challenged and both school and parents/carers held responsible for the impact this may have on any pupils attendance.

We are required to monitor and manage all attendance and absence in accordance with the Pupil Registration Regulations, to follow the Department for Education (DfE) guidelines in relation to attendance and absence and expect all parents/carers to work with us to ensure all pupils maintain an attendance figure of at least 96% throughout the academic year.

The Government has identified that when any child's attendance falls **below 90%** they are classed as a '**Persistent Absentee**'. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement.

Government expects schools and local authorities to;

- Reduce absence including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address any patterns of absence

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age, who are registered at a school, attend regularly.

2 School Responsibilities

2.1 School Attendance Registers are 'legal documents' and as such must be kept in accordance with Pupil Registration Regulations. Head teachers are responsible for ensuring that the Attendance Register is accurate and up to date.

Attendance Registers can and are viewed by school staff, parents/carers (for their own child/ren), Governors, Local Authority Officers, Ofsted and the Magistrates Court.

All pupils must be registered twice every day, once at the beginning of school in the morning and once in the afternoon. Every half-day registration mark must show if the pupil was present or absent. All absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED in accordance with the DfE Guidelines.

2.2 Registers will be taken twice daily – once in the morning at 8.50 and again in the afternoon at the end of lunch. Any child arriving after the close of the registration period will be recorded as "late" for that session.

2.3 Teachers will complete registers in accordance with guidance given by the Head teacher. Registers will be regularly monitored in order to ensure that they are being satisfactorily maintained and to identify any potential attendance problems at an early stage.

2.4 Should a class teacher have any concerns about a child's attendance and punctuality, the Head teacher must be informed.

2.5 Should a child be absent, the class teacher will enter the appropriate code in the register. Should no explanation have been received, the class teacher will inform the school office who will endeavour to make contact with the parent/carer.

2.6 All absence notes from parents/carers should be stored with the class teacher. Only notes regarding absences where there are concerns need be brought to the attention of the Head teacher, who may then choose to speak to the parents/carers.

2.7 The school will regularly collect attendance data and use this during meetings with the Senior Leadership Team and Head teacher. These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify tasks and follow-up actions. Other agencies, such as Children's Services, may also be involved.

2.8 Amendments have been made to the 2007 Regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments, as described below, came into

force on 1 September 2013. The regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent/carer who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents/carers must pay £60 if they pay within 21 days; or £120 if they pay within 28 days.

2.9 Ashwood Park Primary School will employ a number of strategies to promote regular attendance, including: publishing clear attendance information in the school's prospectus and weekly newsletter; appropriate personal encouragement for particular children, teachers at parents/carers evening will discuss attendance issues twice a year face to face with parents/carers.

3 Parental/Carer Responsibilities

3.1 Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis. The Department for Education is clear that when section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 refers to a pupil attending school 'regularly', that means attending on every occasion when the pupil is required to attend.

This is consistent with the dictionary definition of the word 'regularly'. 'Regular' does not mean 'frequent' or 'sufficient'; it means 'recurring or repeated at fixed times'. Parents/carers are required to secure their children's full-time education 'by regular attendance' at school.

3.2 Parents/carers should ensure that, if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as illness, they should contact the school on the first morning of absence. This may be done by phone, by letter or in person.

3.3 Parents/carers should, wherever possible, provide sufficient supporting evidence to enable the school to authorise the absence.

3.4 Parents/carers should ensure that, if their child needs to attend a medical appointment, they should, wherever possible make the appointment out of school hours. Absences may be authorised for a medical appointment in school time, BUT, school may ask parents/carers to ensure their child attends registration, is collected from school and then returned after the appointment in order for the absence to be authorised. The timing of and venue of the appointment may need to be evidenced and discussed with school to agree arrangements.

In the case of emergency parents/carers should negotiate with the Head teacher on an individual basis. Parents/carers will be advised on the amount of absence that the Head teacher can agree to authorise in each instance. Any extension to the original agreement may not be authorised.

3.5 Parents/carers may not authorise their child's absence – only the school can do this, on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents/carers. Should parents/carers fail to provide a satisfactory reason; the school will record such absences as unauthorised. In some cases, this may be retrospective and authorisation may be withdrawn should circumstances arise leading the school to decide that the original reason for authorisation requires further explanation and/or no longer applies. If this occurs, this will be discussed with the parent/carer.

3.6 Parents/carers should ensure that their child arrives on time for the start of registration at 8.50 am. Children arriving after this time should report to the school office with their parent/carer to sign in as the classrooms doors will be closed.

3.7 Parents/carers should avoid booking family holidays during term-time. Such holidays will not be authorised. (see Leave of Absence/Section 6)

4 Definitions

4.1 Authorised absence

Any half day absence from school for which the parent/carer of a child has;

- a) Provided the Head teacher (in advance) with a reason for that absence that can be accepted and/or is allowed for the purposes of authorisation and,
- b) That the Head teacher agrees the pupil should not be in school for that half day session.

If the reason you have provided can allow the Head teacher to authorise the absence no further action can or will be taken.

ATTENDANCE and ILLNESS

Unfortunately, and from time to time, children do suffer from illness. When this happens, as parents/carers, we need to make a judgement as to if that illness means the child is prevented from or is unable to attend school. It is very well known that many children can be 'a little under the weather' first thing in the morning and parents/carers may decide to keep them at home only for them to recover almost immediately or a little later in the day. If the child has been unwell in the morning and shows signs of recovery school encourages parents/carers to return their child to school later in the morning or after lunch.

Parents/carers decide if their child should stay at home but they must advise school before 9.00 am of the circumstances and explain the reason for the absence to avoid that absence being recorded as unauthorised.

We encourage parents/carers to make their decisions, knowing that if they bring their child to school and advise us that they may be a little unwell, we are happy to monitor their condition. If they deteriorate school will call the parent/carer to let them know and contact parents/carers to collect them where necessary. The absence for that half day session will be authorised by the Head teacher and no further action will be taken. Reasons provided for any absence and the frequency of previous absence/illness can and will determine if that absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. If a child is absent and no reason is provided before 9.00 am, a member of school staff will attempt to contact parent/carer. If there is no response to this contact or if the contact details are out of date the absence will be recorded as Unauthorised. It is the responsibility of parent/carer to keep contact details up to date.

Medication

We would want parent/carers to know that in the case of a child being prescribed medicines that this does not automatically mean that the child should be absent from school or that the absence will be authorised. The school's medical policy allows us to administer prescribed medicines, with written consent, which may result in there being no reason or necessity for any absence.

4.2 Unauthorised absence

Any half day absence from school for which the parent/carer of the child has;

- a) Not provided the Head teacher (in advance) with a reason for that absence,
- b) Provided a reason but that reason is not, or cannot be accepted for the purpose of authorisation and,
- c) The Head teacher is unable to agree that the pupil should not be in school for that half day session.

If no reason for an absence has been provided and/or if the reason provided is not or cannot be accepted for the purposes of authorisation further action can or will be taken.

Note

Late arrival in the classroom for registration, both in the morning and afternoon can be recorded as late and/or unauthorised absence for that half day session.

4.3 The school will contact the parent/carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents/carers will be written to again informing them that a referral is being made to the Education Investigation Service (EIS).

4.4 The school will follow the guidelines from EIS.

4.5 The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any Parents/carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

REGISTRATION and REGISTERS

Registration happens IN THE CLASSROOM. That a child has arrived on school premises, is on their way to the classroom or has a sibling who has been marked present at registration cannot be accepted for the registration 'on time' of a child.

Registration for all children opens at 8.50 am and closes at 9.00 am. Registers remain open until 9.20 am. Pupils must be in the classroom between 8.50 am and 9.00 am to receive a '/' present mark, if they arrive after 9.00 am and before 9.20 am they will be marked 'L'. Any child arriving after Registers are closed at 9.20 am will be marked 'U' (unauthorised absence) Registration in the afternoon is taken straight after lunch.

LATENESS

If a child is not IN THE CLASSROOM before 9.00 am or the end of lunch, they will be LATE for registration AND the start of lessons.

UNAUTHORISED LATE

The 'U' mark counts the same as an 'O' mark and is an UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE on a child's registration/attendance record for that half day session.

Pupils arriving at school after 8.50am will enter via the main doors by the school office and be signed in by the adult accompanying them to school.

If your child arrives LATE more than 5 times in any school year the 'privilege' of school marking this 'L' late will be withdrawn and if your child is not in the classroom before 9.00 am they will be marked as 'U' unauthorised late

Unauthorised Lateness 'U' and/or Unauthorised Absence 'O' can lead to parents/carers being referred to the Education Investigation Service and parents/carers being liable to Penalty Notices (a fine of up to £120) and/or Magistrate Court proceedings against them (a fine of up to £2,500 plus costs and/or 3 months imprisonment)

Safeguarding

In some cases of absence and/or lack of contact with parents/carers we may need to make contact with other Agencies (i.e. Social Care, the Police, etc.,) to meet our 'Safeguarding Children' responsibilities.

6 Requests for leave of absence

6.1 A leave of absence request can be submitted to the Head teacher

6.2 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to maximise their educational opportunities. Interruptions in school attendance disrupt continuity of learning and have a negative impact on attainment. It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. We can only do this if children attend regularly. There is a direct correlation between achievement and attendance.

6.3 The Law says that Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance (at least 2 weeks) and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If the school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents/carers still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If parents/carers do not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

6.4 Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance. Parents/carers who take their children on holiday in term time without school's permission or are late returning from an extended holiday, may receive a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent/carer per child, which must be paid within 28 days. If payment is made after 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty is increased to £120. Where a fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter will be referred to the Borough Solicitor, who will consider instigating criminal proceedings.

7 School Closures

7.1 The academic year is 190 days. Schools also have to have an additional 5 days that they can use for staff training; often called INSET (In Service Training) Days. These days are not part of the 190 days which is every child's free entitlement.

7.2 The Head teacher will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, the school may have to close. The Head teacher must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person who uses the school site, pupils, staff, parents/carers, volunteers and visitors. If at any point, to use the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Head teacher must close part or all of the school. Such events may be:

- Not enough staff to safely supervise the pupils and ensure the safe running of the school
- Lack of fresh running water and/or toilet facilities
- Lack of appropriate lighting and/or heating
- Damage to the structure of the building e.g. fire, water or weather damage.
- Instruction to close due to a local emergency
- Severe weather - In the event that severe weather is forecast, or is developing, the Head teacher, will consider either closing the school in advance of the school day, closing the school early, or opening the school later than usual. The action taken will always result from consideration of pupils, parents/carers and staff facing 'significant risk of serious injury' in school or whilst travelling to or from school. Once a decision is made, the Head teacher will endeavour to inform parents/carers of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place. Parents/carers should always assume that the school will remain open during term time unless they hear otherwise. If the Head teacher decides to close the school, then the register is closed for the day and coded as an enforced school closure. This does not affect a child's attendance record.

8 Removal of a Child from the School Roll

8.1 Parents/carers need to be aware that their child can be removed from the school register. This may occur:

- Following a permanent exclusion
- If, following a period of agreed absence, the child fails to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date.
- Have been taken out of school by their parents/carers and are being 'home-educated'
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school to which they have been registered.

9 Monitoring and Review

9.1 It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the head teacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy,

and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

9.2 The rates of attendance will be reported in the regular newsletters to parents/carers

9.3 Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Head teacher who will contact the parents/carers.

9.4 This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.