



Attendance Policy

Approval	Next review	Responsible Person
September 2024	September 2027 (or in light of new guidance)	Assistant Headteacher

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Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Good attendance allows pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Ashdene Primary school fully recognises its responsibility to ensure pupils are in school on time, every day, and that missed learning opportunities are kept to an absolute minimum.

Children who are frequently absent from school develop large gaps in their learning which impacts on their progress and 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.

This policy applies to all children registered at our school and is made available to all parents/carers of pupils 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 Senior Leadership Team 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.

Aims and Objectives

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on 'working together to improve school attendance', through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance,

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for **all** children (including children not yet of statutory school age), apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm in all year groups and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness to parents, carers and pupils of the importance of good attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- 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.
- Set out a plan for monitoring attendance and adapting expectations where special circumstances apply, e.g chronic health conditions.
- Recognise the key role of all parties 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 effective procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Definitions of key terms

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.

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.

The Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

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 with parents, most notably at parents' evenings.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

The Assistant Headteacher, supported by the Learning Mentor, is responsible for:

- Leading , championing and improving attendance across the school
- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Having an oversight of data analysis and devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Working with the Attendance and Children out of School team (ACOOS).
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence and implementing support as appropriate.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

- Working alongside the attendance link governor.
- Regularly updating staff on 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 every day and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Ensuring that routine medical and dentist appointments are scheduled outside of school hours wherever possible.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence and providing updates each day for the duration of their child's illness.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time.
- 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.

Procedures

Our school will do the following to support good attendance:

- Maintain appropriate registration and transfer processes.
- Maintain appropriate attendance data, making use of analysis to implement targeted actions as needed for individuals/key pupil groups.
- Communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- Have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- Work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality, including referral to wider agencies if required
- 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.
- Report attendance statistics to Cheshire East LA and the DfE where requested, including referral for accrued unauthorised absences which reach the notification threshold.
- Ensure all staff are aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Senior Leadership Team member with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

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 **3.15pm** 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 and this can have a significant impact on a child's progress and attainment.

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 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 **before 9am**. 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 parents 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.

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. **A termly attendance letter will be sent to parents by the Assistant Head** where attendance is below 90%, or if a child has 5 or more late marks within a term. An attendance letter may also be sent if the senior leadership team have concerns around the nature of a child's attendance, for example if a child is regularly absent on Friday.
Any child's attendance which is below 95% will be monitored closely by the school's attendance team and parents/ carers may be contacted if there are concerns around the nature of a child's attendance.
2. Where attendance is not showing improvements after receiving a letter, the school will move to step 2, which is where parents will be contacted for an **attendance discussion with the Learning Mentor**. Attendance will subsequently be closely monitored for that individual child.
3. If attendance is still not showing improvements after an attendance discussion with the learning mentor, **a meeting will be organised with the Assistant Head Teacher**.
4. Finally, if there are still no improvements after meeting the Assistant Head Teacher, **the final step is an attendance meeting with the Headteacher**, where clear actions will be put in place.

N.B. In some particular circumstances, where the school have concerns regarding attendance, these procedures may not always be followed and parents may be contacted or invited in for a meeting earlier.

ACOOS/Attendance Liaison support might also be sought at any point deemed necessary by the school. Support from other agencies may be sought if the school deem it beneficial to the situation.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, the school will 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 will be 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 request 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 the parent 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/carers 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.

Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty Notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution

- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Please see the appendix for a one page breakdown from Cheshire East on Penalty Notice Fines.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Missed work/lessons/activities

- If a parent or carer chooses to take their child out of school for reasons other than illness, the school will not provide work to complete during their absence, nor will the child be given opportunities to catch up on missed lessons or activities.

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.

Attendance data is collated on a half-termly basis. This data is used to monitor attendance against national figures, to identify potential whole school patterns around attendance, to identify individuals who have attendance issues and to inform strategic planning around attendance.

Attendance Awards

As school attendance is often beyond the control of the child, therefore 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

Attendance queries/ concerns: Assistant Headteacher (Mr Alex Gill) or Learning Mentor (Rebecca Ford) via the school office.

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

External Links

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ews

[School attendance and absence: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

PENALTY NOTICE FINES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ARE CHANGING !

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force on 19 August 2024.

Penalty Notices will be issued for

Term time leave: Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days.

10 Sessions of Unauthorised absence in a rolling 10 week period: A Penalty Notices may be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absences in a 10 week period.

However, we retain the discretion to issue a Penalty Notice before the threshold is met. For example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below the above thresholds.

Per Parent/Per Child

Penalty Notice fines will continue to be issued per parent per child. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular school attendance the fine will be charged at:

£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days of the issue, reducing to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

(Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)

Second Offence

Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first penalty notice, for either term time leave or irregular attendance the second penalty notice will be charged at:

£160 if paid within 28 days. (Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)

Third Offence

On the third time that an offence is committed within 3 years of the first penalty notice for either a term time leave or irregular attendance a penalty notice will not be issued. The case may proceed to Parental Prosecution under the Single Justice Procedure. If found guilty of the offence of 'Failure to send a child to school' the Magistrates can impose a fine up to £1000 or legal proceedings under Section 444 (1a) can include a fine of up to £2500.