



Policy Document

Policy Document	
Subject	Attendance
Approval Date January 2021	Review Date January 2023
Signed by:	Written by: School
Name:	S.England
Role:	Headteacher

Attendance Policy

Aim

To maximise attendance in order to ensure that all pupils have access to the full education offered by our school.

Statutory Framework

A pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone call from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. An absence will only be authorised if the school is satisfied with the explanation offered.

This policy is written in line with the local authority policy on school attendance.

Responsibilities

The Headteacher will have overall responsibility for attendance at Ashwell. However, improving attendance is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – parents, pupils and all staff. Specific responsibilities are as follows:

Parents will:

- ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify the school as soon as possible if their child is absent or late, by phone call to the school office or in writing
- avoid making medical, dental or other appointments within school hours whenever possible
- avoid taking days out of school for reasons not seen as exceptional
- avoid taking holidays in term time

Pupils will:

- attend school regularly and punctually

Teaching Staff will:

- complete registers correctly and keep them up-to-date at all times
- inform the Headteacher if they notice any low attendance or deterioration in attendance
- inform parents early if they notice any low or deterioration in attendance
- liaise with parents and children directly in supporting attendance if necessary

** Registers are legal documents and MUST be completed fully and kept up-to-date. They must be marked twice a day at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.*

The School Office will:

- maintain attendance and absence records electronically
- send out requests for explanations for absence if none have been forthcoming
- maintain a register of children who have regular absences in order to aid monitoring by the Headteacher and Attendance Improvement Officer (HCC)
- contact parents on the first day of absence for any child with an unexplained absence
- call on the first day of any absence, any child who is on the regular absence list
- notify the Headteacher when children on this register are absent
- prepare attendance reports termly for the Governing Body
- provide information to the Headteacher to identify poor and good attenders and prepare certificates for celebrating 100% attendance termly, and best class half-termly attendance

The Headteacher will:

- liaise with the Attendance Improvement Officer in taking action for any child whose attendance is causing concern
- work with parents and children directly in supporting attendance
- consider authorisation for holiday requests where there is an exceptional circumstance

Attendance Improvement Officer will:

- monitor the attendance of each child each term
- meet with the head teacher to discuss any necessary action
- complete monitoring forms each term indicating actions to be taken
- liaise with the school if the child remains an open case to the AIO or where any legal action is being taken
- advise the school on strategies for improving attendance
- assist the school in identifying persistent absentees and ensuring plans of action are in place

Registration

Registers should be marked promptly at 9.00am and at 12:45pm. They must be marked in accordance with the list of symbols set out and recorded via SIMS.

Registers close at 9.10am and at 12:55pm. If a pupil does not arrive before the register is closed, he /she will be marked as "absent". Pupils who arrive after the register has closed should report to the school office to be signed in. The office will then amend the register to read "late". If a pupil is persistently late a letter will be sent to parents as a reminder to be punctual. Should lateness persist the Headteacher will contact parents.

Notifying us of a child's absence

If your child is absent from school please:

1. Telephone the school office immediately
2. Telephone the office at the beginning of each day or as advised by office team during your initial call
3. You are required to give a reason explaining your child's absence. Please do not be offended if you are asked for specific details regarding the absence as this is a requirement

* Please note that the office deals with explanations for absence. If you telephone the office direct as above, there will be no need to follow up with a letter. However, a verbal explanation to the class teacher is not enough, and must be followed up with a letter.

If there is no explanation:

1. The school will contact you by telephone.
2. If no response the school will send a letter requesting an explanation
3. If there is still no satisfactory explanation the school may discuss the case with the Attendance Improvement Officer and the child's absence will be unauthorised

Authorised/Unauthorised Absences

Staff should adhere to the following criteria when deciding if an absence should be authorised or not. These are based on the guidance in "School Attendance: Policy and Practice on categorisation of Absence".

Absence can be authorised if:

- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause and a written letter of explanation has been received/ or the parent notified the school office by telephone and passed this information to the class teacher
- the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belongs
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions as stated in para. 47 of the guidance are met

- there is an immediate family bereavement
 - the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special tuition
 - the pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion (eg., a wedding of a close relative)
- *note only 1 day will be authorised for a wedding**
- the school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home; and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following: the child's transport to and from school; boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school; enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home
 - leave of absence should be granted to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance licence where absence is required without the written permission of the Headteacher
 - the pupil was absent with leave granted by the Headteacher

Absence should be unauthorised if:

- no explanation is forthcoming
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the pupil stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings
- the pupil is shopping
- the pupil is away for unexceptional occasions (eg., a birthday)
- the pupil is away for an agreed special circumstance which exceeds the time negotiated with school
- the pupil is on a family holiday without permission

Low Attendance – A cause for concern

This is classed as any child that has attendance lower than 95%.

You may have followed the procedures for notifying the school of a child's absence, however the school will;

1. Notify you by letter where attendance is lower than 95% - Termly
2. Where no improvements are made a second letter will be sent informing you that attendance will be unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided
3. Should no improvement be made at this point please refer to the information regarding a Penalty Notice
4. Where there is an ongoing medical problem the school will liaise with the family to offer support as necessary and work in partnership

Holidays

Changes to legislation, which came into force in September 2013, made clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers NO LONGER have the discretion to allow up to 10 school days in a school year for a family holiday or to agree to extended leave for parents to visit their country of origin.

If there are exceptional circumstances behind your request, you should discuss these with the Headteacher. If your child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed this will be classified as an unauthorised absence and you may be fined or legal action taken against you.

Penalty Notices

1. Should your child reach 4-6 unauthorised sessions in the current and or previous term we will send a Penalty Notice warning letter to parents with parental responsibility.
2. Should your child reach 15 unauthorised sessions in the current and or previous term a Penalty Notice order will be applied for by the school.

The local authority issues penalty notices on behalf of Hertfordshire schools to ensure consistency and in the event that a prosecution may need to be brought against the parent(s).

Should you receive a fine for persistent and/or unauthorised absence details are below:

£60 per child per parent (if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice)

£120 per child per parent (if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice)

If the penalty notice is not paid fully by the end of the 28 day period the local authority must prosecute for the offence under section 444 of the education act 1996 or withdraw the notice.

Strategies for Promoting Good Attendance

- ensuring the implementation of the “respect for all” ethos, so that pupils feel valued and welcome
- ensuring an interesting and flexible curriculum which meets pupils needs
- regular monitoring of attendance and analysis of data takes place to help identify actions for improvement
- termly – certificates for children with 100% attendance
- certificates for children with 100% attendance for the year.
- parents of pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern (less than 95%) will be notified by letter as a reminder. Where no improvement is made a further letter requesting a meeting with a member of the leadership team will be sent
- parents are regularly reminded of the importance of good attendance via newsletters, parents evenings, prospectus, induction meetings, etc.
- pupils who are absent through sickness for an extended period will have access to partner services to support during absence and be re-integrated into school upon their return
- the Headteacher reports to the Governing Body on attendance termly
- the Headteacher liaises with other agencies where possible for pupils experiencing absenteeism
- the Headteacher holds termly meetings with the Attendance Improvement Officer in order to identify and support those with attendance difficulties
- discussions with secondary schools to support the transfer process
- all members of staff are clear about their responsibilities
- where there has been long term absence the Headteacher will work with the family and other services to integrate the child back into school
- school attendance figures are published half termly in newsletters
- poster promoting good attendance are displayed around the school (see appendix I)
- where a child’s attendance is improved this is celebrated with pupil and parents
- school office contacts parents where there is persistent lateness
- distribution of school attendance policy at start of each academic year

Appendix I

Good attendance means...

Being in school for at least 96% of the time. This means a maximum of 8 days off a year.

		175 non-school days a year! All this time for holidays and appointments!					
365 days in the calendar year	190 days in a school year	0 days Absence	8 days Absence	19 days Absence	29 days Absence	38 days Absence	47 days Absence
		190 days of education a year	182 days of education a year	171 days of education a year	161 days of education a year	152 days of education a year	143 days of education a year
		100% Attendance	96% Attendance	90% Attendance	85% Attendance	80% Attendance	75% Attendance
		<p>Good</p> <p>A child has the best start to their schooling and has the best chance of reaching their potential and having success Good progress made.</p>		<p>Worrying</p> <p>Below 90% is considered persistent absenteeism and the local authority may become involved and take action. Absence is greatly affecting progress and attainment. Less chance of success.</p>		<p>Serious Concern</p> <p>A serious impact on education, a child will find it extremely difficult to keep up and achieve their best. Results in referral to Attendance improvement officer and the local authority will take action against parents and carers.</p>	