

Pupil Attendance Policy

Ensuring Good Attendance is Everyone's Responsibility

Purpose

Alderley Edge Community Primary School recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact of attendance on achievement and attainment.

We aim to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy within which children, staff, parents, governors, the local community and the Attendance and Children Out of School team (ACOOS) can work in partnership. The school will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.

All staff will expect and encourage good attendance. Good attendance is seen as an achievement in its own right and recognised as such by the school. The attendance policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

Abbreviations:

ACOOS - Attendance and Children Out of School team

DFE – Department for Education

FPN – Fixed Penalty Notice

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.

Staff with Responsibility for Managing Attendance

The Head teacher is ultimately responsible for the strategic approach to ensuring good attendance of children at Alderley Edge Community Primary School. They can be contacted via email – admin@aecps.org

However, we recognise that ensuring good attendance is everyone's responsibility.

The headteacher is supported by office administrators, teachers and other staff to ensure good attendance of all our children. A school governor holds the school to account on a regular basis to monitor attendance and reports back to the Full Governing Board.

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 understand 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.

Targets

- To achieve our DfE attendance targets," We strive for a whole school attendance figure of 96%.
- To have an effective means of collecting and monitoring attendance and punctuality information
- To discuss the settings of targets for the school with the School Attendance and Children Out of Education Team (ACOOS) and the School Improvement Partner as appropriate
- To ensure that such data is available and used effectively by the Headteacher and staff in conjunction with the ACOOS.
- To agree specific targets for individuals, families and where and whenever necessary, and target school attendance to improve.
- To reward children for good attendance
- To target resources and implement where most appropriate
- To keep parents, children and governors informed of policy, practice and targets at least annually when the new policy is issued

- To ensure that the school is aware of government targets which may have been set for some vulnerable groups, such as 'Cared For Children'

Informing Stakeholders

Parents/Carers will be advised of our policy on attendance:

- When their children first start school
- Home school contracts
- Through newsletters and the school website
- At parent\carers evenings
- In the school prospectus
- Children's attendance in school is included in school reports at the end of the year

The children:

- In assemblies
- In the classroom
- During appropriate areas of the curriculum

Procedures

In order to maintain good attendance at Alderley Edge Community Primary School and to promote learning, the Headteacher and Administration team lead and manage the following procedures:

- Children are expected to attend all sessions in the academic year (190 days) unless there is an exceptional circumstance justifying the reason for absence. The only standard exception to this is the Reception children who start the academic year with a phased start over a two week period. Parents and carers are expected to provide an explanation if their son or daughter is absent on the first day the absence occurs. Preferably before 9.30 for safeguarding reasons. This can be by letter, email, telephone or personally at the office.
- The Clerical Officer, within the admin team, will contact parents by telephone on the morning of the first day of absence if parents have failed to inform the school of the absence. This is followed by further calls, emails and/or a letter after two days of unexplained absence. If no explanation is given within two weeks then the absence will be classed as unauthorised.
- Class teachers, electronically, take a register twice a day. In addition, the class teacher alerts the Clerical Officer regarding children causing concern re: attendance.
- Children's attendance is recorded using the symbols advised by the DfE and Cheshire East Council.
- All children's attendance is monitored by the Clerical Assistant and informs the Head Teacher of any families causing concern.
- We monitor identified groups of children, for example, 'persistent absentees', children/families who are persistently late and will take appropriate remedial action where necessary.

- The Clerical Officer meets the ACOOS Officer to review whole school attendance, individual's attendance, and specified groups' attendance.
- The Clerical Officer can meet the ACOOS Officer to monitor attendance of individual children causing concern regarding attendance. Intervention strategies and their impact on attendance are implemented, monitored and reviewed for children whose attendance falls below set levels. See procedures later in this policy.
- If a child truants or is persistently late in the morning the parent/carer will be contacted as soon as possible.
- The Clerical Officer issues a termly report for teachers of the attendance for their class.
- Classes with the best attendance each week will be recognised and rewarded in the school's weekly assembly.

Reporting Absence

Parents/carers must report a child's absence on the first day via school communication channels

Email – absence@aecps.org

Phone call – 01625 704512

School App – message school directly via the APP

Absence

- There are two types of absence:
 1. Authorised (when the school approves child absence)
 2. Unauthorised (where the school will not approve absence)

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.

In accordance with DfE and Cheshire East Council guidelines authorised and unauthorised absences are identified and coded (see appendices).

All requests for leave of absence are made to the Headteacher in writing prior to (at least a month) the leave of absence taking place unless in **exceptional circumstances** (eg flight delays). It is school policy not to approve requests for absence except in exceptional circumstances. This policy is included and highlighted in the school prospectus. Guidelines from the DfE and Cheshire East Council have been used to draw up this policy.

Absence due to Medical Appointments

Following advice and instruction from Cheshire East Council ACOOS Officer which came about as a result of high levels of sickness absence this section of the school policy was updated in November 2016. From this point forward, the Governing Body has adopted the following strategy in relation to medical appointments...

We ask that where possible appointments are made out of school hours for non-urgent medical and dental appointments to reduce the disruption to the class and the individuals learning. Where medical appointments are unavoidable during the school day, we ask that parents provide medical evidence in the form of an appointment card, letter or copy of the prescription? If no medical evidence is provided the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

Taking children out of school for non-urgent routine medical and dental appointments disrupts the whole class and the individual child's own learning. Parents/carers must endeavour to make appointments outside the school day.

Where medical appointments during the school day are unavoidable parents/carers must produce evidence of the appointment (for example appointment card, letter, copy of prescription etc). If no medical evidence is produced then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Unexplained Absence

- First day call to absent child's home. Record call and information given.
- If 1st named individual is uncontactable, calls will be made to all other individuals listed on the child's file
- Clerical Officer will email parent if uncontactable after 72 hours.
- Clerical Officer will provide teacher and/or Headteacher with weekly report of unexplained absences.
- If calls are unreturned and no explanation is given for absence school will contact the ACOOS Officer for advice
- If no reason provided on child's return Clerical Officer will send letter home and contact the ACOOS Officer for further advice if no explanation is given following receipt of the letter.
- Home visits by members of the senior team or ACOOS may be used if non-attendance is not explained and there are potential safeguarding risks.

Intervention Strategies and Rates of Absence

<i>Percentage since the start of the school year</i>	<i>Intervention based on total attendance since start of the year. At the end of each term the following procedures will be followed...</i>
90%-94.9%	Teacher or admin team highlight drop in attendance to Headteacher and consideration given to writing to parents depending on reason for absence
80%-89.9%	Letter sent alerting parents of concern*
<80%	Meeting with parent (and child if appropriate) on a regular basis. Setting of long term and short term targets and production of individual action plan. ACOOS intervention as appropriate.

* School will be aware of the reasons for high levels of absence and be sensitive towards the causes before issuing the sample letter

NB – From September 2015 any absence rate which is less than 90% will be classed as persistent absence and the ACOOS Officer may be informed.

Lateness before school

- School opens the doors for entry at 8.45am and these are closed at 8.50am. Registration is completed by 8.55am so the first lesson can start at 8.55am. All children are expected to be in school for registration before 8.55am. If a child arrives at school after 8.50am then they must enter the school via the front door.
- The register will remain open for a further 20 minutes and finally close at 9.15am. If a child arrives before 9.15am then the child's record will be recorded as late (using the symbol L). If a child arrives after 9.15am then the child's absence will be recorded as late after the register (using the code 'U'). This sort of absence is unauthorised and will show on the child's record as unauthorised absence.
- Children who are consistently late (whether before or after 9.15am) are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others.
- Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action will be taken in line with action outlined to deal with absence.
- With regard to absence there is some room for discretion in granting an attendance where the child has arrived at the first reasonable opportunity (for example after a medical appointment or where there have been genuine transport difficulties).

Intervention Strategies and Rates of Lateness

Percentage	<i>Intervention based on the percentage of lateness since the start of the year. At the end of each term the following procedures will be followed...</i>
90%-94.9%	Teacher or admin team highlight increased lateness to Headteacher and consideration given to writing to parents depending on reason for lateness
80%-89.9%	Late letter sent alerting parents of concern
<80%	Meeting with parent (and child if appropriate) on a regular basis. Setting of long term and short term targets and production of individual action plan. ACOOS intervention as appropriate if lateness is as Late (after register is closed) and categorised on the register a 'U'

NB: a child's registration mark will be marked with an 'L' (Late before register closed) if they arrive within 20 minutes of the end of registration (i.e. after 9.15am)

NB: a child's registration mark will be marked with a 'U' (Late after register closed) if they arrive after 9.30am with an inadequate reason (e.g. slept in) – this is unauthorised absence and will remain on the child's record.

Consequences – Where a child is consistently late for school, and therefore missing their learning time, then consideration will be given to a consequence for this pattern of continual lateness. A number of strategies could be used such as the child making this lost time up in the child's free time e.g.: breaktime or lunchtime.

NB: Lateness can also trigger a Fixed Penalty Notice or referral to ACOOS

Planned Absence during term time

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

- Amendments to the 2006 Regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.
- The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not any grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- The amendments give parents no entitlement to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time.
- The DfE is anticipating that not many absences for leave in term time are authorised by schools.

The current law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Except in absolutely exceptional circumstance holidays in term time will be unauthorised.

Parents can be fined for taking their child out of school during term time without consent from school.

Procedure for requesting term time absence

- Parents must complete a leave of absence form. This can be collected from the school office. The completed form must be sent to the Headteacher one month in advance of the absence. If the absence is to be authorised then the Headteacher will sign the return slip at the base of the leave of absence form and this will be returned to the parent/carer. Sometimes a letter will be sent with the form depending on the reason for the absence.
- An appointment to see the Headteacher may be required.

The law states that the Headteacher can only grant leave in **exceptional circumstances**. It is impossible to determine in advance all such exceptional circumstances and therefore the question of what circumstances are exceptional are left to the Headteacher's judgement.

A major determining factor will be whether the proposed absence could have been avoided with some planning or forethought.

If no reason is provided within two weeks (10 school days) of the absence then the absence will automatically be recorded as unauthorised.

Exceptional circumstances – the following reasons were offered to explain absence during previous school years ...

- The cost of holidays
- Not reading the school calendar properly
- Going on long haul flights in a one-week break
- The need to travel long distances for a weekend away
- Planning to return late from holiday the night before a school day
- Taking their child to a concert or football match the night before a school day and the child being too tired to come to school
- Family celebrations

All of these are **NOT** exceptional circumstances as families could and should plan more effectively for these breaks to avoid unacceptable results and further absence.

Absence due to Religious Observance

We acknowledge and welcome the multi-faith nature of our community and recognise that some families' important religious festivals may fall outside school holidays.

Government guidance says a pupil can be absent "on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs".

But, attending school regularly and on time is also important and is a parent's legal responsibility. Good attendance leads to better attainment and progress in school. It also helps children's social relationships from being disrupted.

Please note that no more than one day in any term will be authorised for an individual occasion of religious observance and no more than three days in any academic year.

At Alderley Edge Community Primary School we ask that parents:

- Inform school about your family's beliefs when joining the school community
- Consider carefully whether your child really needs to miss school for religious reasons

- Inform school as early as possible in writing for the day you would like your child to have off. *Please note all genuine religious absences are classed as an authorised absence, the document is a formal record for the attendance register. The approved day of absence is given an 'R' code, referring to religious observance.*
- Discuss with your child's teacher if there is any work that they may miss and need to catch up with supported by the parent.

False Claims - Previously there have been occasions where parents have lied as to the reason for their child's absence. For example phoning school to explain that their child is ill when, in actual fact, the family are on holiday. A dim view is taken of this and creates great difficulty and, at times, anxiety for the child on their return to school. The school policy is to check if there is any suspicion of such an occurrence. It will be challenged by telephone or by a member of staff checking in person.

Parents are expected to anticipate minor travel delays and the like and to build in sufficient margin of time to ensure that their child attends school as required.

Where leave of absence is granted the child's absence will be recorded as **authorised**. The Headteacher, depending on the reason for the absence, may write to the parents informing them of the decision whilst highlighting the need for the parents to try and ensure future requests for leave of absence are limited.

Where leave of absence is not granted the child's absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**. The Headteacher will write to the parents informing them of the decision including making it clear that consideration will be given to whether a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) should be issued. You may get a penalty notice warning letter if your child is absent for 10 or more unauthorised sessions (a session is a half day), within a term or two consecutive half terms.

Appeal against a judgement - Where the Headteacher declines to authorise a leave of absence the parent/carer may appeal to the Chair of the Governing Body. Such an appeal must be made in writing and must set out the reasons that the leave of absence is sought and why these circumstances are exceptional. The written appeal must be received by the Chair promptly but in any event, within 7 days of the Headteacher declining the leave of absence.

Upon receipt of a written appeal, the Chair will form a panel to consider the appeal. This panel will be made up of the Chair and any two other Governors appointed by the Chair. The panel will consider the appeal and determine the outcome promptly, but in any event within 7 days from its receipt by the Chair.

The panel will either uphold the Headteacher's decision or direct the Headteacher to grant a leave of absence and change the absence mark from unauthorised to authorised.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Fixed Penalty Notices are fines that can be imposed on parents. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. They can only be issued by the Local Authority at the request of the Headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head authorised by the Headteacher), a local authority officer or the police. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence.

Penalties can be issued where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school. Penalties 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 five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

Penalties for unauthorised absence		
Timeline	One child	Two children
Paid within 21 days	£60 per parent*	£60 per child = £120 per parent*
After 21 days and before 28 days	£120 per parent*	£120 per child = £240 per parent*
After 28 days	The parents will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds that the parents have failed to secure their child's regular attendance	The parents will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds that the parents have failed to secure their children's regular attendance

*Correct at the time the policy was written

Penalty notices will be administered and managed by Cheshire East Council and the monies retained by them.

Governing Body

The Governing Body's Teaching and Learning Committee will monitor attendance termly and the Strategic Review Committee will review this policy annually. They will also communicate to parents and staff annually with regard to attendance.

Date of review: September 2023

Date of next review: July 2024

Attendance policy Addendum
Attendance During 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.

Appendix 1

Roles and Responsibilities

Local Authority (Cheshire East)

- The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that a child is receiving a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- The Attendance and Children Out of School Team (ACOOS) is often responsible for carrying out the Local Authority's duties.
- ACOOS Officers should build effective working relationships with schools, parents and other services to resolve attendance problems.

Governors

The Governors are responsible for:

- Reviewing the attendance policy
- Setting whole school attendance target
- Monitoring whole school attendance against school and national targets
- Monitoring what the school is doing to improve attendance and challenge persistence absence and lateness

Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Implementing the attendance policy.
- 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 ACOOS school's liaison officer.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

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.

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 Headteacher.

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence and updating if absence extends over 72 hours
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time and providing evidence

REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

The 2013 regulation amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence (holiday) during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The amendments give parents no entitlement to take their child out of school for a holiday in term time. The headteacher and the Governing Body will determine what exceptional circumstances are.

FOR COMPLETION BY PARENT/CARER

You have requested the school’s permission for leave of absence to be taken during term time. Before such authorisation is considered please complete the form below and return to the School Office. Completion of the form does not guarantee the leave of absence will be authorised.

Child’s Name: Class/Year Group:

Dates of Leave of Absence: From: To: Total:

IMPORTANT

Taking your child out of school without the school’s authorisation may result in the school requesting the local authority to issue a fixed penalty notice (which could ultimately lead to a prosecution) to each parent/carer for each child

Please think carefully before completing this form – Is the absence from school necessary?

Penalties for unauthorised absence		
Timeline	One child	Two children
Paid within 21 days	£60 per parent	£60 per child = £120 per parent
After 21 days and before 28 days	£120 per parent	£120 per child = £240 per parent
After 28 days	The parents will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrates’ Court on the grounds that the parents have failed to secure their child’s regular attendance	The parents will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrates’ Court on the grounds that the parents have failed to secure their children’s regular attendance

FOR COMPLETION BY PARENT/CARER

Child's Name: Class/Year Group:

Dates of Leave of Absence: From: To: Total:

Parent to complete

Please give full reason(s) for asking for leave of absence in term time (attach any additional information to support your reason e.g.: original flight details in the case of delayed flights)

.....
.....
.....

Signed: (Parent/Carer) Date:

It is important to have read and understood the school's policy on attendance which can be found on the school's website

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Leave of Absence (to be completed by the Headteacher)

Child's Name :

Class :

Dates : From: To: Total:

I confirm that the above absence will be regarded as 'authorised' / 'unauthorised' (delete as appropriate)

Depending on the circumstances, if the absence is unauthorised, a separate letter explaining the reason/s why the absence has been declined might be attached to this reply slip.

..... Date:

L. Walsh [Headteacher]

Copy to: Parent and Pupil File

Sample Absence letter for absence less than 90%

XX Xxxxx 20XX

Mr & Mrs X Xxxxxx
Xxxx Xxxxx
XXXX XXXX
XXXXXXXX
Cheshire SK9 XXX

Dear Mr & Mrs Xxxxxxx

Pupil Absence

I enclose herewith a breakdown of attendance for Xxxxxx and you will notice that their attendance since last September is less than 90%.

Xxxxxx's attendance has now fallen below the 90% attendance bracket and following the school policy on attendance I am writing to draw your attention to this figure.

Illness of course cannot be avoided but in order to offer Xxxxx the best opportunities for his/her future education would you please make every effort to avoid taking them out of school for any other reason.

Please make an appointment to see me as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

L Walsh
Headteacher

Sample late letter where lateness is less than 90%

XX Xxxxx 20XX

Mr and Mrs X
XX Xxxxxx Road
Alderley Edge
Cheshire
SKx XXX

Dear Mr and Mrs X

Pupil Lateness

An attendance report has highlighted the fact that Xxxxxxxx has had a high level of late arrivals to school in the morning (see attached attendance and punctuality record).

This is something that must be addressed. Please try and ensure that Xxxxxx arrives in school before 8.45am and is in school by 8.50am when the doors are closed. After this time you must sign in at the main office.

Please make an appointment to see me as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

L Walsh
Headteacher