



**ALDERLEY EDGE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
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Dear Parents and Carers,

As it is the start of a new school year, the Governing Body would like to remind all families of the guidelines and expectations regarding attendance and inform you of some important changes about school attendance that could affect you if you choose to take your child out of school during term time.

The attendance policy can be found on the school website - <https://www.aecps.org/page/school-policies/113813>

As the guidance for parents' states, "It is vital that children and young people return to school and college, for their educational progress, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development. School attendance is mandatory. This means that it is your legal duty as a parent to send your child (if they are of compulsory school age) to school regularly."

The Department of Education published Working Together to Improve School Attendance, in February 2024. This document outlines the changes for school and parents and also explains the changes to issuing penalty notices which will come into effect from the 19th August 2024. It is therefore crucial that you are aware of the potential consequences before taking leave in term time.

## **Attendance**

It is well known that poor attendance will impact on children's learning as well as their sense of well-being, sense of belonging and establish life-long habits for good attendance in general. The following figures show clearly how time lost cannot be regained:

- 98% attendance means that your child has missed 4 days in the school year
- 95% attendance means that your child has missed 10 days in the school year
- 90% attendance means that your child has missed 19 days in the school year
- 80% attendance means that your child has missed 38 days in the school year
- 5 minutes late each day means three whole days lost each year
- 17 days missed from school each year equates to a whole GCSE grade
- Attendance affects learning, future earning, wellbeing and a sense of belonging

The legislation does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child out of school during term time. Unfortunately, family celebrations (such as weddings and anniversaries), birthdays, siblings' school holidays not coinciding, reduced costs and parental work commitments do not constitute as reasons to have time away from school.

Please note the school holiday dates that are published on the school website prior to booking any holidays. These have been shared previously and are available on the school website <https://www.aecps.org/page/holiday-dates/113946>



## **Lateness**

Children who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own learning 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.

## **Fixed Penalty Notices**

The advice is clear and unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 school days) or more should result in a fixed penalty notice. These do not have to be consecutive days i.e. it could be 5 days over two consecutive half-term periods.

We have also been advised that even if the child has had outstanding attendance during the previous year that this must not be taken into consideration and that the decision to authorise or not should be purely based on the circumstance relating to the application.

Any attendance penalty notices issued after the 19th August 2024 will be issued in the line with the new regulations. The new penalty notice regulations are:

- Each parent will be issued a separate penalty notice, for each child that is absent. For example, 2 parents and 2 children would result in each parent receiving 2 separate fines.
- The first penalty notice for leave in term time will be £160 per parent per child but may be reduced to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days.
- If a second penalty notice is issued within three years of the first penalty notice, then this will be at a fixed rate of £160 per parent per child, with no reduction for early payment.
- The third time an offence occurs within the three-year period, this will be presented to Magistrate's court with no penalty notice issued.

If you book a holiday the absence will be dealt with when the actual unauthorised leave from school occurs, not the date of the booking/informing the school.

To clarify, in terms of the three-year period, all penalty notices issued for unauthorised absences after the 19th August 2024 will be counted in the three-year period. This will include fines issued for term time leave, as well as irregular attendance. Term time leave does not just include holidays. Where a child is absent during term time without a valid reason, schools will be expected to carry out a home visit and see the child on the 3rd school day of absence.

With regards to irregular attendance, where a child has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 school days) or more in any 10-week period, the local authority can issue a penalty notice before the threshold is met if parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold or for repeated absences for birthdays or other family events.

It is therefore important to complete a Term Time Leave form if you are requesting leave for your child and this **MUST** be authorised by the headteacher. You should also notify the school every day that your child is absent due to an illness; providing a reason, and where appropriate evidence of medical appointments or prescribed medication. Here is the NHS guidance <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/> Should we have reason to believe

that the explanation for absence is not the real reason e.g. illness is being used for a holiday in term time, then we will issue a 'Reason to Believe' letter that will remain on file.

As a school, we are mandated, in every case, to notify the local authority of all unauthorised leave in term time that meets the threshold of 5 school days. This could be 3 school days and 4 instances of lateness, where a valid reason is not given.

What YOU must do:

- Try to telephone the school before 8.30am each day of your child's absence or leave a note on School Spider
- Tell the school in advance, of any medical appointments and bring in appointment cards/letters
- If you are not sure whether your child is well enough to attend school, send them in anyway as they often perk up on arrival
- Have a backup plan for if you have transport issues, call on a family member, neighbour or friend
- Complete a term time leave request form prior to finalising arrangements for a planned absence
- If you and your child are experiencing difficulties with school attendance then talk to us as a first step so we can help

What WE will do:

- Check your child's attendance every day
- Phone home to discuss your child's attendance with you
- Issue letters to inform you of your child's attendance if we have concerns
- Invite you into school for attendance meetings if we are concerned
- If we cannot establish a reason for absence, then we may make a welfare home visit

As a school, we understand that many families are currently faced with financial challenges, therefore, it is imperative that you are aware of the changes being made by the Government to reduce term time holidays and low attendance.

More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Thank you for understanding this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Walsh', with a horizontal line underneath.

Lindsey Walsh  
Headteacher