

Ashford CE Primary School



Attendance Policy

Updated Policy

Approved by FGB: 18.7.2024

Signed: ___P Wells_____

Chair of Governors

Attendance Policy

Our School Vision

We are a caring Christian community where everyone adopts an “I can” attitude; everyone feels valued, safe and loved by God. We celebrate our God-given individuality, achievements and talents and we aspire, with God’s help, to become the best that we can be. We believe that each one of us has the ability to achieve our highest potential, living and learning in the fullness of God.

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

Philippians 4v13

Regular and punctual attendance at school is key to the academic and social development that will improve the life chances of children and young people.

Parents and carers have a duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually in order to get the most benefit from the opportunities.

Why Regular Attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Children and young people who do not attend school regularly are at risk from a whole range of factors that may lead to poor outcomes in terms of their educational achievement, future employment, financial security and citizenship.

Ensuring your child’s regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and if you permit absence from school without a good reason it is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular attendance

Creating a learning environment where all pupils can achieve is everyone’s responsibility. Establishing positive patterns of regular attendance is vital and everyone has a responsibility to help. This includes parents, children and all members of staff.

What we will do

- Keep you up to date with attendance levels in the school through the weekly ACE’s Highlights.
- At parent meetings inform you regularly on your son’s/daughter’s attendance, punctuality and how this relates to their academic progress.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Work with outside agencies such as the Inclusion Officer to visit the school and talk to children and/or parents about the value of good attendance.

- We will keep you updated regularly about the school's progress towards our target and how your child's attendance compares.
- We will share with you the systems in place to monitor and improve attendance.

School targets, projects and initiatives

The school has targets set by government to improve attendance and you and your child have an important part to play in helping us to meet these targets and to aim higher in all aspects of their education. **The school target for attendance is currently 96% or better.** Our aim is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Many children have 100% attendance; they never miss a day of school. This is wonderful but we do understand that, due to illness, it may not be possible for all children every year. However once this percentage begins to drop, it can equate to a substantial amount of time missed that may not be obvious at first glance. For example, 95% is the same as a day off once every four weeks, 90% is the same as a day every two weeks. Anything below 90% is considered persistent absenteeism (see below).

Governors check school attendance data regularly and liaise with the senior leaders about ways of monitoring and improving attendance. Throughout the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in ACE Highlights and/or the school's website and we would ask for your full support.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high level of attendance as possible. If your child's attendance drops we will contact you to discuss how your child's attendance compares to the average and what we might be able to do to help you to improve it.

Understanding Types of Absence and School Procedures

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded and classified with a code by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. **Only the school** can make this decision and record it. This is why information about the cause of any absence **is always** required, preferably in writing.

AUTHORISED absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/ dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

UNAUTHORISED absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which "leave" of absence has not been given. This type of absence can lead to sanctions and /or legal proceedings. The school reserves the right to use penalty notices. Some examples of this include:

- Parents/carers keeping their child away from school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences that have not been properly explained

- Late arrival after the close of registration (morning 9.15am or afternoon 15 minutes after the start of the afternoon session)
- Shopping trips, looking after other children or adults or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed.

Illness

Whilst it is understood that any child can have an illness and be away from school for a given period, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are always best sorted out by the parents/carers contacting school immediately to discuss the issues.

If your child is reluctant to attend:

- Please do not cover up the absence
- Please do not give in to pressure to excuse them from attending

The situation may worsen, become a habit and the causes will be harder to find and resolve.

The school needs to give careful consideration to the authorisation of absence for some pupils.

Where a pupil has frequent absences (for example if their attendance falls below 90%) the school may ask for evidence such as a medical certificate, appointment card, or a label from prescription medication.

Additionally the school may wish to refer to the school nursing service where there are health concerns or if there is a view that illness is being used as an excuse to cover other reasons for absence. The school may also wish to seek the advice of the family GP having first discussed the matter with parents/carers to seek their permission to do this.

Sickness and/or Diarrhoea

In order to prevent the spread of bugs in school we do request that if your child suffers a bout of sickness and/or diarrhoea or contracts a sickness bug that you keep them at home for 48 hours after the last episode of the illness. This will help to contain the spread of infection. If your child has been sick for other reasons you may wish to reduce this to 24 hours. If a child is sick whilst at school we will ring you in order to collect them.

Dental/Medical Appointments

Wherever possible, parents/carers should make every effort to avoid making medical or dental appointments during the school day. It is preferable to try and arrange these during holiday periods or at the beginning or end of the school day. An appointment at the beginning of the school day should not result in a whole day's absence from school.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the **first day** of absence. This will be recorded on the child's record on SIMs. You should then follow this up with a call/email each day of absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. If we are unable to contact you then, in line with our safeguarding children policy, we may make a home visit to check on the welfare of the child.

If a child's attendance falls below 95% we will:

- Send a letter home reminding parents/carer about the importance of regular attendance.

If regular attendance continues to be an issue, a meeting will be held between home and school.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they are absent from school for 10% or more sessions across the school year for whatever reason. This means that across the school year the equivalent of 19 days will be missed. The reasons can be both authorised and unauthorised.

There is substantial evidence that absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational achievement and future prospects. We will need the full support and co-operation of all parents to tackle this.

- We will monitor all absence thoroughly.
- If your child's attendance has reached or is in danger of reaching the PA level we will inform you immediately and make the case a priority.
- Parents of PA pupils will be asked to meet with members of the attendance team to discuss ways to improve attendance, this could lead to an attendance contract being drawn up.
- As an outcome of this meeting, parents may be asked to produce medical evidence for any absence on the grounds of illness to be authorised.
- All PA pupils will be made known to the Inclusion Officer.

If you are having problems getting your child into school regularly please contact the school immediately. By working together we will hopefully be able to address the issue and avoid attendance problems in the future.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of every day they can miss work and the opportunity of hearing vital information / news and sharing class time with their friends.

Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. Your child may also be embarrassed by arriving late and may fall into absenteeism in order to avoid the ordeal.

What we will do:

In normal operation, the school gates open at **8.30am**, the register is taken promptly at **8.45am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. At **9.15 am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a late mark that shows them to be on site, but **this will not count as a present mark and means that they will have an unauthorised absence.**

- Regular late gate checks are carried out by the Senior Leadership Team.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team and/or Class Teacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school.

Children Missing From School

If a child is missing from school and the school has not been contacted as to reason for absence the school will:

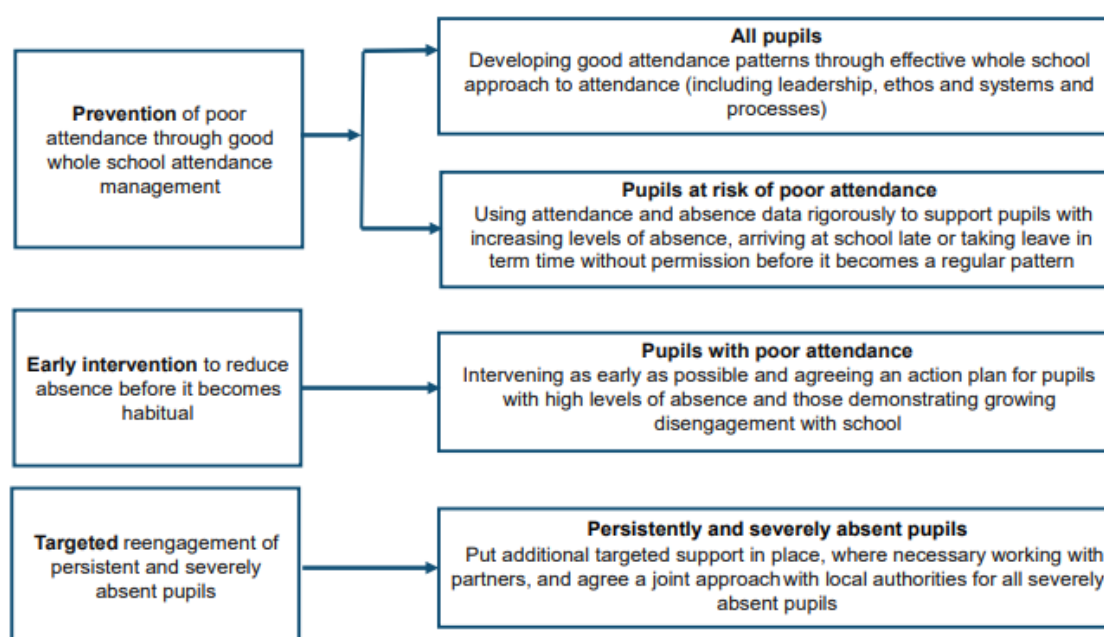
- make on-going attempts, beginning on the first day of any unexplained absence, to contact the pupil's parents either by telephone or email
- make further attempts to contact the parents, either by letter or by home visiting
- advise the Designated Safeguarding Lead that there are concerns about a potentially missing child (see Safeguarding Children Policy)
- contact any other schools where their siblings are known to be pupils
- check with the pupil's peer group to ascertain if they are aware of any change in the pupil's circumstances or place of residency
- contact any relevant agency, for example Children's Services or the police
- notify the local authority regarding the child's ongoing absence

Exceptional Leave of Absence - Holidays in Term time

Family holidays should take place during the school holiday dates that are published up to 2 academic years in advance. **Government guidelines state that no holidays should be taken during term time so the school is unable to authorise any holiday requests.** If your child is going to be missing school for any circumstances other than illness, please complete the "Application for Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances" form available from the school office.

Summary of effective attendance management, taken from 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' published by the Department for Education and in effect from 19th August 2024.

Effective school attendance improvement and management



Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution when they have failed to ensure that their child regularly attends school. Prior to issuing any Penalty Notices for irregular attendance, a Notice to Improve will usually be given to parents to give a final chance to engage in support. If the Notice to Improve does not result in any changes then Penalty Notices will be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued:

- To address pupil's poor attendance by demonstrating that parental failure to ensure children attend school regularly will not be tolerated and;
- To deter parents from taking children out of school during term time without the authorisation of the school

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances". The Headteacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

New guidance issued by the Department of Education comes into effect on 19th August 2024 makes changes to how and when penalty notices are issued, please see the information below for further information. This is also summarised as a flow chart and included as appendix 2.

1. First instance

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. This is reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Irregular attendance will be considered when there have been 10 sessions (the same as 5 days) of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.

2. Second instance (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days. No reduced rate will be offered.

3. Third instance (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed for term time leave or irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case could be presented straight to the Magistrates Court.

Magistrates fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on a Parents future DBS certificate, due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

Surrey Inclusion Team

We work closely with the School Attendance Support Team in Surrey. We have a named officer who works with us to monitor the attendance of all children. Further information about the Surrey Inclusion Team can be found on their website.

Telephone Numbers/Contact Details

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers in an emergency and about other things including absence from school. We must have **two** contact telephone numbers and parent/carer details.

We need your help in ensuring that you have provided us with up to date telephone numbers and contact details – without these, something important may be missed.

We will make regular checks on telephone numbers and contact details throughout the year.

If your child is regularly collected from school by a child minder or other adult, please can you ensure the school also has their contact details along with your consent for your child to be collected by this person; sent to the office via email.

Appendix 1 – Ashford CE Processes for Managing Attendance

Green	Amber	Red
<p>Attendance above 95%</p> <p>Attendance celebrated through class rewards</p> <p>Certificate for achieving attendance of 96% or better</p>	<p>Attendance between 90% and 95%</p> <p>Phone call from class teacher to discuss absences</p> <p>Under 95% letter sent to parents</p> <p>Under 93% Letter to invite parents to school for an attendance meeting with class teacher.</p> <p>Rewards and recognition of improvements</p>	<p>Attendance below 90%</p> <p>Attendance letter requiring medical evidence for absence</p> <p>Invite into school for attendance meeting—school attendance agreement drawn up</p> <p>2nd attendance meeting—Attendance agreement reviewed.</p> <p>If no improvement—possible Interview Under Caution / Fixed Penalty Notice</p>

Recognition for improved or good attendance



Appendix 2 – Penalty Notice Fines

PENALTY NOTICE FINES FOR SCHOOLS ARE CHANGING



FIRST OFFENCE

1

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:
£160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days
 reduced to **£80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days**

SECOND OFFENCE

2

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:
£160 per parent per child to be paid within 28 days. No reduced rate offered.

The following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19th August 2024

THIRD OFFENCE AND ANY FURTHER OFFENCES (WITHIN 3 YEARS)

3

The third time an offence is committed for term time leave or irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates Court. Magistrates fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on a parents future DBS certificate, due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

10 SESSIONS (5 DAY S) OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE IN A 10 WEEK PERIOD

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period.


Please follow the link for the publication that will start from 19th August 2024.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8ecd38f7/>

Working together to improve school attendance applies from 19 August 2024 .pdf

Appendix 3 – Ashford CE Attendance Monitoring Ladder

Ashford CE Attendance Monitoring Ladder

Child's Name		See Cpoms for record of actions		
Class:				
Class teacher:				
Level	Action	Responsible	Actioned?	
			Initials	Date
Attendance between 90 and 95 %	Phone call from class teacher to discuss absence	Class teacher		
	Under 95% letter sent to parents	Attendance officer		
	Under 93% Letter to invite parents to school for an attendance meeting with class teacher.	Attendance officer		
	Attendance meeting held	Class teacher and attendance officer		
Attendance below 90%	Attendance letter requiring medical evidence for absence	Attendance officer		
	Invite into school for attendance meeting	Attendance team		
	Attendance agreement drawn up and signed by parent	Attendance team		
	Parents invited to second attendance meeting after 3 weeks of monitoring.			
	Attendance agreement reviewed	Attendance team		
If no improvement possible interview under caution /Fixed Penalty notice	Attendance team Inclusion officer			