

Aldingbourne Primary School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Document Change History.

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IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

There is a huge amount of evidence of the impact excellent attendance has on a child's learning and achievements.

What does good school attendance look like?

0 days of absence = 100% attendance

10 days of absence = below 95% attendance

19+ days of absence = below 90% attendance (known as persistent absence)

Evidence shows that a pupil's progress and attainment are affected if their attendance falls below 95%. Aldingbourne Primary School aims to work together with parents and carers to ensure that all children on roll at our school attend every day and on time unless absence is unavoidable e.g. chronic health issues, exceptional circumstances.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it, the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put simply: absence means missed learning and potentially reduced attainment. It is a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age (term after child turns five) receive fulltime education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Permitting an absence from school without good reason is an offence and irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential. A pupil whose attendance drops to 90% (persistent absence) each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed the equivalent of two whole terms of learning. Absence can also place children at risk and may result in them being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Therefore, staff and governors take the issue of attendance very seriously and will do all possible to consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all of our pupils. All members of the school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness; with the Head teacher having overall responsibility in the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil including those within specific and identified groups such as service families, young carers, PPF, SEND, FSM and CIC.

We aim to create an ethos in which attendance and punctuality are recognised and valued by the whole school. Outstanding attendance by pupils is recognised and celebrated throughout the academic year, with individual recognition at the end of each term through attendance certificates presented during an assembly, busy bee postcards sent home and a mention in the school newsletter.

AIMS

Our attendance policy aims to:



support pupils and their parent(s) in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;



ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;



enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;



ensure parent(s) are aware of their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends Aldingbourne School regularly and punctually as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996

School attendance is subject to various education laws and legislation and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and guidance produced by the Department for Education.

We provide 190 days of school per year recorded as 380 sessions (morning and afternoon sessions), 175 days of the year are available for holidays non term time. We expect pupils to be in school during these sessions and to be well presented, comfortable and ready to learn.

REGISTRATION

Pupils are registered electronically at the start of the school morning (8.40am) and at the start of the school afternoon (1.00pm / 3.15pm dependent on year group)

The register will remain 'open' for 30 minutes from these times, during which, if a pupil arrives 'late' they will be marked as present for the session but by using the 'L' code. Once the registers have closed the school will contact parents if the child is absent and no reason or correspondence has been made.

Parents are expected to;



Ensure their child arrives on time for registration.



Inform the school of any illness. In situations where a recurring illness/medical need significantly affects attendance and access to education across the academic year, parents will be invited to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the situation and the implementation of possible support strategies.



Inform the school of any medical appointments during school time.



Inform the school of any other reason for absence.



Inform the school of any reluctance to come to school so that any problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Once the registers have closed the school will contact parents if the child is absent and no reason or correspondence has been made / given.

TERM TIME LEAVE

The school holiday dates and end of Key Stage Assessment dates are published a year in advance and leave of absence will NOT be authorised during assessment periods. INSET days are published as soon as the school have agreed these, but may be subject to change.

In line with the new Government statutory guidelines holidays during term time will NOT be authorised.

The Headteacher and Governors have determined that:



In exceptional circumstances permission may be granted for a period of leave of absence.



Where parents request leave of absence in term time due to exceptional circumstances they should notify the school well in advance to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. An absence request form must be obtained from the school office and submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, preferably no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date and prior to any booking or monies committed. Notification of absence is essential and enables the Headteacher to make considered decisions when authorising absences. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits and fine judgements will have, on occasions, to be made. Parents will be informed of the Headteacher's decision by return of the completed Absence Request Form marked as authorised / not authorised and the reasons for the decision.



If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, the DFE may be notified and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued. If parents are not satisfied that the fixed penalty notice has been referred appropriately they should discuss the case with the school.

AUTHORISED ABSENCES

The Department for Education has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:



When a child is ill or receiving medical attention;



Days of religious observance notified in advance;



Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as "Approved Sporting Activity" that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised. The specific circumstances potentially encountered by military families, young carers, SEND and children with medical needs will be considered on a case by case basis. We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Unauthorised absences are those where:



No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)



The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above. The following activities are examples of what would be classified as unauthorised:

Holiday

Minding the house

Caring for relatives

Awaiting repair people

Shopping

A birthday or family celebration.

There are clearly some grey areas. The guidance makes it clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised.

Government guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the school via the Headteacher that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised. The Headteacher will make decisions as to whether an absence is authorised or not. It is the Headteacher's prerogative to request that the parent(s) certificate short-term illnesses and to request a doctor's notification in the case of longterm illness.

FIXED PENALTY NOTICE/PROSECUTION (FPN)

The Education Act 1996 places a legal duty upon parents to ensure if their child is on roll at a school, they attend the school as required. Failure to do so amounts to an offence under S.444 Education Act 1996. One way of addressing this offence is to offer the parents a time limited opportunity (28 days) in which to accept their liability/guilt for this offence by way of paying a FPN.

Please note, there is no right of appeal to a FPN, and it remains a parent's decision whether to accept the offer and pay the FPN or not. Unpaid FPNs may lead to court action being instigated at the Magistrates Court.

National Threshold - The government has advised schools and Local Authority's FPNs can be considered to address offences under S.444 Education Act 1996 when there is at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a 10 school week period (each school day is made up of 2 sessions). This period can straddle both school holiday periods and academic years. The absence does not need to be consecutive.

The Government has also directed FPNs can be issued for less than this threshold should circumstance direct, offering details of when this would occur. For example, a parent taking steps to avoid the use of FPN

by taking their child out of school for 9 sessions as this would mean the threshold would not be met. In addition, a FPN can be offered if a pupil who is suspended or excluded from school is seen in public during school hours and there is no reasonable justification to do so. In these circumstances there is no threshold level. It remains the decision of the Local Authority whether a FPN is offered or not.

Escalation process and Cost of FPNs -The Government's aim is to reduce the number of unauthorised absences from school as attendance at school has been shown to improve educational outcomes. As such an escalation process has been implemented along with an increase in the cost of a FPN.



First Referral - the first time unauthorised absence is referred and leads to a FPN being issued, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.



Second Referral - the second time unauthorised absence is referred and leads to a FPN being issued the amount will be for £160 per parent, per child, with no reduction offered for early payment.



Third Referral - the third time unauthorised absence is referred a FPN will not be issued and instead either result in the:

Matter being presented directly to the Magistrates Court. A prosecution can result in the parent receiving a criminal record and fines of up to £2,500.

Matter being addressed via an alternative pathway with an Investigating Officer being allocated.

Please note, for repeat offences of holidays in term time court action will be the likely outcome. In addition, absences in respect of 15 school days or more for the purposes of a holiday/travel abroad a FPN will not be offered and instead the matter will be referred directly to the Courts.

A new Code of Conduct has been published, linked to Penalty Notices to Address unauthorised absences and this can be found on the WSCC website.

SCHOOL MONITORING ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

IF A CHILD'S ATTENDANCE FALLS BELOW 95%



Attendance will be recorded on termly reports so parents are able to monitor their child's attendance.



The Headteacher will write to the parent(s) to inform them that their child(ren)'s attendance has fallen below 95%.



If attendance does not improve the Headteacher will invite parent(s) to a meeting to discuss the situation and ways in which the school can help and support the family in getting the child(ren) to school every day.



If the child(ren) continue to be absent (unauthorised) during the monitoring period and fail to reach 90%+ attendance, the Headteacher may refer the family to WSCC and this may result in a FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) and/or prosecution.

After the set monitoring period, attendance will still be carefully monitored and referral could be made if required due to;



8 unauthorised sessions over an 8 week period



90% and below mostly unauthorised over a longer period



At least 3 consecutive school days unauthorised over a 4 week period due to term time leave.

ADMISSIONS/LEAVERS - CHANGING SCHOOLS

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school or do Elective Home Education (EHE) that they inform Aldingbourne Primary School as soon as possible and complete a request for removal/deletion from the school roll. A pupil will not be removed/deleted from the school roll until the following has been received/confirmed dependant on the situation;

The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next

The address of the new school

A new home address if appropriate

Attendance at the new school

Written confirmation of intent to pursue EHE A pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school or EHE reporting procedures will be followed as appropriate. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information and/or the admission process to a new school does not proceed adequately, the family will be referred to the Child Missing in Education (CME) investigation. This may well include seeking assistance from Health, Social Care and Police colleagues or liaison with other external agencies. New admissions notified to the school will be added to the school roll once the place has been accepted by the parent(s) and the child has actually started. Places offered but not accepted or where a pupil does not start will be investigated and if required a CME referral made.

ATTENDANCE, ABSENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE CODES

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting data/statistics through the School Census System and reporting to the DfE. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence.

Present at School

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

**Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed
(9.10am registers close)**

Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an education nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site education activity are as follows:

Code B: Off-site educational activity

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved the school.

Authorised Absence from School

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the legitimacy of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller - Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups. To help ensure

continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Administrative Codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or

The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or

A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody

that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: Pupil on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

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