



# Ashbrook School Attendance Policy

Date	<u>Reviewed By</u>	Review Date
February 2024	Toni Cole (DSL) Jamie Ainscow (Headteacher)	January 2025
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## Attendance Policy

### *Principles*

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence on the part of the parent that can result in legal action.

High levels of attendance are crucial for so many areas of development and gives your child the best opportunities to achieve and progress to their maximum potential. It promotes not only their learning and educational abilities, but provides many life skills and long-term positive work ethics. Children who have good levels of attendance are more likely to be able to progress socially, have enhanced self-esteem and confidence, develop time management skills, have a good understanding of expectations for future life and develop a respect for the importance of punctuality and attendance.

Importantly, the more time they are in school the more time they have for learning.

Even a child with 90% attendance equals ½ day missed every week and over a school year that would equate to one month out of school, that means they are missing 100 lessons.

Any child can at times feel unhappy about attending school. Families may be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties, are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter; it may even make things worse.

### Aims

At Ashbrook (part of IftL), we are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- › Promoting good attendance
- › Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- › Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- › Acting early to address patterns of absence
- › Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons

### Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- › Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- › Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- › Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- › [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- › [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## Definitions

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. Any information about the cause of each absence is always required, if possible in writing, evidence will be required to support some absences.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or other unavoidable causes.

**Unauthorised absences** are those that the staff at school do not consider reasonable, or for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence on the part of the parent and include:

- › Keeping children off school without a good reason
- › Truancy from a whole session
- › Absences that have never been clearly explained
- › Children arriving at school too late to get a mark
- › Taking holidays during term-time, this includes attending a family wedding.

## Roles and responsibilities

### The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- › Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- › Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- › Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- › Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- › Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- › Holding the head of school/headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### The Head of School /Headteacher

The Head of School/Headteacher is responsible for:

- › Implementation of this policy at the school
- › Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- › Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

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- › Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- › Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- › Leading attendance across the school
- › Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- › Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
  - Having an oversight of data analysis
  - Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- › Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- › Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- › Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- › Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The designated senior leader is Toni Cole.

### **The attendance team**

The school attendance team is responsible for:

- › Checking daily attendance registers and following up any absences
- › Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- › Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

The attendance team are Marina Moore and Carly Stephenson (first response) and Toni Cole (attendance officer).

### **Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information on BromCom to the attendance team.

### **Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- › Make sure their child attends every day on time
- › Contact the school on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence. Please advise when they are expected to return, informing them of the reason for absence. This needs to be done before the registration period of 8.30am.
- › Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- › Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### **Attendance register**

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once at the start of the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- › Present
- › Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- › Absent
- › Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We use the DfE attendance codes when completing registers. Details of codes and their meanings can be found via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

We will also record:

- › Whether the absence is authorised or not
- › The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- › The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### Punctuality

It is imperative that children learn the importance of punctuality in order to fulfill their own role in society as they grow into young adults. This role modelling of good practice begins in primary school.

- › Children are expected to arrive at school between 8.30 am and 8.40 am to ensure the children are settled and ready to start their learning and receive their registration mark. Learning activities and some intervention groups occur during this time.
- › The registration period runs until 8:45am and registers are closed to enable lessons to start promptly by 8:50am.
- › A late mark is given to any child arriving after 8:45am.
- › If a child arrives after 9.00 am, they will be given an unauthorised mark.

### Procedures if your child is absent

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

#### First day absence

Parent/carers must contact the school **on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence**. Please advise when they are expected to return, informing them of the reason for absence. This needs to be done before the school gates open at 8.30am. Parent/carers are required to contact the school reception or leave a message on the school's answerphone. Parents can also inform the school via MCAS of their child's absence. **Please do not use email.**

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness or the child is on attendance watch. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the child is on attendance watch, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance. If the school is not contacted, a call home will be made to ensure all children are accounted for.

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## Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and provides proof of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section titled 'authorised and unauthorised' to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## Lateness and punctuality

It is imperative that children learn the importance of punctuality in order to fulfill their own role in society as they grow into young adults. This role modelling of good practice begins in primary school.

The DfE now state that a school register can only be open for a maximum of 30 minutes from the start of the school day. School gates open at 8.30 and close at 8.40, any child arriving after 8.45 will be marked as Late (L code present).

Any child arriving after the registers close at 9am will be marked as late after the register ( U code which is unauthorised absence).

The same criteria will apply as with unauthorised leave i.e. – 10 unauthorised absences over 10 school weeks can result in a Notice to Improve and if no further improvement after 6 weeks a Penalty Notice can be issued.

It should be noted the Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued where there is a combination of codes, so lateness after the register, unauthorised absence or unauthorised term time leave.

## Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- conduct a home visit to check the child is safe if parents and carers have not contacted the school. If we are concerned for the child's safety, a referral will be made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or the police may be called.

- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not

- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

- If the school are concerned about a 'Child Absent in Education' the procedures stated within Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

## Authorised and unauthorised absence

### Approval for term-time absence

Schools are no longer allowed to authorise requests for children to be taken out of school in term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances". The DfE state that anything to do with "relaxation and leisure" is not exceptional circumstances. This will include visiting relatives, or a holiday due to mental or physical illness issues unless supported by medical evidence.

You should complete a leave of absence request for term time leave. However, if not approved by the Headteacher, fines can now be issued if there are 10 unauthorised sessions in 10 school weeks (as above) the time taken doesn't need to be consecutive as was previously the case.

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, but must be in line with the expectational circumstance listed below, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as visiting a new school, a recognised religious festival, a recognised sporting event, a funeral or taking an external exam. Since September 2013, it has no longer been possible to authorise family holidays.

For any requests for leave, parents are required to complete a leave of absence request, PRIOR to the time of absence.

Attendance meetings (face to face or on the telephone) will be held for ANY requested leave of 5 days or more.

Any leave taken without prior notice will be unauthorised. If the lack of notice is due to emergency travel you must contact the school as soon as possible with clear proof of your last-minute travel booking. Leave of absence will NOT be authorised retrospectively without proof of emergency.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request, in line with the above.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

Illness and medical/dental appointments

Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. One day will be authorised for a recognised religious event, but any other days taken before or after this day will be given an unauthorised holiday mark.

External exam - One day will be authorised for the exam but any other days taken before or after this day will be given an unauthorised mark.

Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

## Legal sanctions

If you take leave which is not authorised by the school, then the school is encouraged by the Department for Education, to refer the matter to the Local Authority who will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice. This is to ensure consistency across England and Wales.

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued to each parent and per child. A FPN is £80 if paid within 21 days, and £160 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, you will be prosecuted in the magistrates' court and could receive a fine of up to £1000 (per parent) and a criminal record.

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If a second period of leave is taken within 3 years (same parent/child) then the fine will start at £160 payable in 28 days.

If there is a third offence in 3 years (same parent/child) then the matter will be prosecuted in the magistrate's court.

### **Procedures if a child is absent due to persistent illness.**

If a child is persistently ill, school will be able to provide support for the child and the family. Parent/Carers are advised to contact a member of the Strategic Leadership Team to inform them of the child's medical needs, proof may be required for your child's records especially if they are absent for long periods during serious illness. In this instance, the school will require written medical evidence, for example, letters or a doctor's visit.

### **Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives and strategies**

The PATH schools have a whole school attendance target of 97%.

Punctuality is monitored regularly and should your child's attendance fall below 90% they will be placed on attendance watch.

- o If your child is persistently late, parents/carers will be contacted to support punctuality.  
Attendance figures can be seen via your child's MCAS account.

### **Procedures**

#### **Procedures if attendance falls below the school expectation.**

If a child's attendance falls below 96%, the procedures are as follows:

#### **Attendance Percentages below 96%**

At the end of every half term a letter will be sent out to parents informing them that their child's attendance has dropped below 96%. The letter will remind parents of the importance of attending school and offer support if needed. Parents and carers will be reminded that if their child's attendance does not improve over the next half term, they could be placed on attendance watch.

#### **Attendance Percentage below 93%**

If your child's attendance drops below 93% over a couple of weeks a letter will be sent out to parents informing them of the drop. This will give the parents a chance to discuss any difficulties with school and ensure that attendance improves before falling into the category of persistent absence.

#### **Attendance Percentage below 90%**

If your child's attendance falls below 90% they will be classed as persistent absence.

Parents will be invited into school to work collaboratively on creating an action plan with a support first approach. We will discuss the situation in greater detail and medical records will be requested as appropriate. Your child will be placed on attendance watch and an attendance contract will be drawn up. An early help referral will be made if appropriate.

Any absence during attendance watch will be unauthorised unless proof is provided (for example Doctors note for sickness).



If a child has 10 unauthorised sessions in 10 school weeks, then your child's school will send a Notice to Improve, this will warn you that they will refer the matter to the Local Authority for the issue of a Penalty Notice. The Penalty Notice will be issued after 6 school weeks if there is no improvement although a Penalty Notice can be issued after 3 weeks if there has been in sufficient improvement.

**Arriving late to school after the registers are closed is recorded as an unauthorised absence.**

### Attendance Percentage below 50% or historic poor attenders

If school attendance falls below 50% your child will be classed as severely absent.

In this instance a Multi Agency Referral will be made. Where there is no improvement or lack of engagement then school can refer to the local authority for a PACE meeting to take place. This is a precursor to prosecution. School may also choose this pathway if there is historic poor attendance, siblings with poor attendance or there have been previous prosecutions.

### **Absence**

Weekly monitoring by the core safeguarding team of all absence ensures patterns are addressed quickly.

Good attendance is at the heart of the school ethos and as a result, class teachers will discuss the importance of good attendance with the children in their class and during school assemblies.

### **Analysing attendance**

The school will:

Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.

Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

### **Using data to improve attendance**

The school will:

Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### **Reducing persistent and severe absence**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school

Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

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## ***Responsibility for Attendance***

Parent/Carers and all staff are ultimately responsible for attendance and punctuality matters. Others responsible within school for attendance include:

Jess Elford – Head of School

Sharon Kelly – Business Manager

Toni Cole – DSL

Lyn Funnell/Vicky Crosby School Business Support

## ***Summary***

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with Parents/ Carers in the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## ***Links with other policies***

This policy links to the following policies:

- o Child protection and safeguarding policy
- o Behaviour policy

