

# Attendance and Absence Policy



## Introduction

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

## 1. Aims

The aims of this Policy are:

1. To ensure the safeguarding of our children.
2. To ensure attendance targets are met and the school has high levels of pupil attendance.
3. To promote a positive attitude towards punctuality, preparing pupils for adult life.
4. To provide a clear framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
5. To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and with other services and agencies.

**PLEASE SEE APPENDIX FOR ADAPTATIONS TO PROCESSES DUE TO COVID-19**

## 2. Implementation

### PUNCTUALITY

- The bell goes at 8.50am and children enter school through their designated doors. A member of staff will meet children at the door on their way in.
- Children arriving after this time must enter school through the main entrance at the school office.
- The register opens at 9am and is closed at 9.15am. Children arriving after 9am will receive a late mark (L) and after 9.15 a (U) late after the register has closed mark.
- Children late more than 5 times in one half term will have a letter sent home, reminding them of the importance of attending school on time.
- If lateness persists and registers show a high number of lates (e.g. 15 or more in 6 months, support from the Education Welfare Officer will be sought and a letter will be sent to parents.
- Children may be set punctuality targets alongside academic targets.

### ABSENCE

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 1996 the Governing Body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

On each occasion the school must record whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;

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- Absent;
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not;
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

### Authorised Absence

Aston by Sutton Primary decides on how an absence is to be recorded according to the DFE 'Advice on School Attendance' (2012). This states that:

"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." 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. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Authorised absences include:

- Off-site educational activities or visits or sporting activities
- Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. The school considers 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.

- Family holiday authorised by the school Amendments to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
- Illness (not medical or dental appointments)
- Parents must notify the school as soon as possible when a child is ill. 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 seriousness of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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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.

### Unauthorised Absence

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

- Absent from school without authorisation

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

- Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence and the parents still take the child on holiday, 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 the leave of absence in advance the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

- Reason for absence not yet provided

Aston by Sutton Primary will 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. If no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be marked with absent from school without authorisation.

- 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.

### Repeated unauthorised absences

If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the issue. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the EWO for support.

### Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are fines of £60 (within 21 days) or £120 (within 28 days) 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 the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. They can only be issued by a head teacher, a local authority officer or the police. All schools and the police must send copies of penalties issued to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

Penalties can be used 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.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

### Parents' Role

- Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school, punctually and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school as soon as possible by contacting the school office.
- To notify the school office if a child has a medical appointment, **prior** to the appointment.
- Parents are strongly urged to avoid taking family holidays during term time and parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday.

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- Parents are informed promptly of any concerns that may arise over a child's attendance or punctuality.
- A pupil's absence from school is considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parents.

### **Class Teacher's Role**

- Staff endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example.
- The school bell is rung at 8.50 am
- Registers are called promptly at 9am and at 1pm and completed on SIMs in accordance with the list of symbols shown. No gaps must be left for any child.
- Registers should be saved.
- If class teachers have concerns about a child's attendance or punctuality they make their concerns known to the Headteacher, who may take a range of actions, such as contacting parents directly or involving the Education Welfare Officer.
- Individual pupil attendance and punctuality is reported to parents in their Annual Report.
- A record of absent children should be kept on the laminated register card in case of a fire alarm. These are to be kept in the classroom and taken out in such an event.

### **School Bursar and Administration Assistant's role**

- To record all telephone and electronic messages regarding absence on SIMS and enter codes in the register in SIMS.
- To ensure pupils who are late enter school via the school office and are recorded on the electronic school entry system and on SIMS as late.
- To phone the parent of any child who is still absent by 9.15am and has not contacted school to explain this absence.
- To ensure parents/carers record in the electronic school entry system any children who are arriving late due to an appointment or who are leaving school to attend an appointment.
- Meet with the EWO for annual register checks.

### **Headteacher's Role**

- The parents of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern (i.e. where a child's attendance falls below 90% through a term) are contacted and the matter discussed with the Headteacher.
- If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence and fails to bring a note or if the explanation offered by a note is unsatisfactory, the Headteacher writes to the parents, asking for clarification.
- If your child's attendance falls below the national average of 90% due to illness, parents/carers will be challenged by the school and medical evidence will be required to authorise future absences.
- If a pupil is persistently absent or late, and the school's efforts to affect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation is referred to the Education Welfare Officer for further advice and support.
- The Headteacher will implement initiatives to celebrate and promote good attendance and punctuality where necessary.
- To authorise leave of absence under exceptional circumstances.
- To liaise with other agencies – Educational Welfare Officers, Family Support worker, and Social Services etc. when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- To report attendance figures to Governors termly through the Head teacher's report.
- The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

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## **The role of governors**

- To set and agree an annual target for attendance. The targets are challenging yet realistic and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.
- To monitor attendance and punctuality and ensure action is taking place to address any concerns.
- To ensure the attendance and punctuality policy is reviewed annually and regularly monitor and evaluate its implementation.
- To support the school and Headteacher when addressing any individual pupil concerns with regards to attendance and punctuality.

## **4. Opportunities for Spiritual and Moral Development**

In Aston, we are part of a very strong school community. Children need to be present at school to experience the full range of opportunities for Spiritual and Moral Development.

## **5. Equal opportunities**

We will ensure that the specified aims are implemented for all children regardless of race, religion, gender, ability and disability.

Children with specific special needs, preventing good attendance at school, will have this taken into account if a request for additional leave is requested.

Teachers will provide school work to be completed at home only under exceptional circumstances where a child's medical condition necessitates a prolonged absence from school and whose parents or carers request it.

## **6. Health and Safety**

Correct completion of registers is vital in ensuring the health and safety of our pupils. This policy must be adhered to by all staff to ensure that the safeguarding of children is our main priority and that in the event of an emergency such as a fire, all children are accounted for.

Date: September 2020

Reviewed by Governing Board

Policy agreed on 10/12.20

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## **APPENDIX**

### **ADAPTATIONS TO PROCESSES DUE TO COVID-19**

#### **Punctuality**

Staggered starts are in place to ensure all four classes enter and leave school at different times. This is to avoid children and staff mixing outside of their 'bubbles'.

The times allotted to each class are subject to change, as decided by the Headteacher.

For register purposes, any child will be marked late if they do not arrive within their 'bubble' arrival time. They will be given an unauthorised absence mark if they have not arrived by 9.15am.

#### **Absence**

Policy to be determined by Governors