



Aylesford School

COURAGE
CONFIDENCE
CHARACTER

Attendance Policy

Ratified/Reviewed	To be reviewed
November 2020	October 2021

AYLESFORD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Aylesford School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our students. Regular attendance is critical if our students are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. The School undertakes its role as educator seriously and has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Punctuality and attendance are habits which, when learned, carry our pupils effectively into the wider world of work and further education. **Our attendance target for every student is 95% or above for each school year.**

STATEMENT OF INTENT

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. The school actively promotes **100%** attendance for all students and we use termly and annual rewards. School staff are committed to working closely with parents who equally have a legal duty to make sure their children attend regularly, to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible, to this end, it is desirable that parents/carers should be the first line of contact whenever a child is absent from school. It is the parents/carers responsibility to contact the school on the first and subsequent day's the child is absent.

THE ROLE OF THE ATTENDANCE OFFICER

The Attendance Officer has a legal duty to maintain and analyse all attendance and punctuality data, ensuring all data is accurate and up to date. The Attendance officer will liaise with Teachers, Mentors, Heads of Year, Student Support Managers and the KCC Educational Welfare Officer regarding all attendance and punctuality, producing any reports required and making referrals to agencies as necessary.

TIMELINE FOR MANAGING POOR ATTENDANCE

For pupils whose attendance is below our target and the attendance is between 90-95%, this will trigger school intervention by way of letters, emails and meetings with parents. For pupil's, parents and carers for whom good attendance is a concern the school will promote effective partnerships with the local KCC inclusion and Attendance Service and other agencies as appropriate. The school will endeavour to work with the parents/carers to try and improve a child's poor attendance and put interventions in place and for the cases that require intensive family support, the school will make an Early Help referral.

For pupil's, whose attendance falls below 90%, these are called 'persistent absentees' by the government. The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of pupils whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. The school will closely monitor the pupils at risk of falling into this category, as this low level of attendance will do considerable damage to a pupil's attainment and well-being. If this is not successful Penalty Notices may be issued or if these measures are ineffective the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service, who may use other legal proceedings.

CHILDREN MISSING IN EDUCATION

Parents/Carers should inform the school if their child is no longer planning to attend and provide the school with the new contact details and intended new school details when known.

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by the school completing a Child Missing in Education referral for the following circumstances:

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school have been unable to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no pupil file has been requested by another school.

LATENESS

Aylesford School Mentor time starts at 8.30am daily. Pupils should be on site ready to learn by 8.20am, The morning register will close at 9am and the afternoon registration 12.15pm, if students arrive after 8.30am they will be required to sign in late at the reception desk. The student will be marked on the register as Late (L Code) and after registration has closed at 9.00am (code U) this code will count as an unauthorised absence.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice warning letter.
- The Penalty Notice warning letter sets out 15 school days which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued. (one per parent per child)

Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings.

ABSENCES

It is a legal requirement for class teachers or class mentors to complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon and the pupils marked either present, late or absent.

Parents/Carers should inform the school of any reason for absence by phoning the Attendance Officer, **Mrs M Bartholomew**, on the first and subsequent days of absence or use email. (This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know your child is safe). The school will contact the parent via text/email if a child has not registered and notification has not been received. If no reason for absence has been provided, the absence remains unauthorised until the reason is established.

A letter or email should be provided to the Attendance Officer when the child returns to school confirming the reason and number of days, for more than one day's continuous absence, in order that appropriate attendance code can be recorded.

If a child's absence persists for more than three days then we would require medical evidence as to illness by way of a Doctor's appointment card, medical letter, or note. With the new GDPR laws this information can be obtained free of charge from the doctor's. Patients are entitled to see any data that is held on record.

Absence during term time can only be approved in 'exceptional circumstances'. Unauthorised absences are those which the school do not consider reasonable and for which no approval has been given. The following reasons would not be recorded as unauthorised.

- Persistent nonspecific illness eg. Poorly/unwell
- Truancy
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Child's/family's birthday
- Shopping Trip
- Medical/Dental appointments of more than half a day's absence without very good reasons
- Any absence on the last day of term or first day back of a new term will be recorded as unauthorised for all pupils whose attendance is below the school's target or if there is a pattern of poor attendance on these days, unless medical evidence is provided
- Any single day's absence after an organised school trip will not be authorised if the pupil's attendance is below the school's target or there is a pattern of poor attendance on these days, unless medical evidence is provided.

The school is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation for the absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised parents will be notified.

We appreciate that pupil's may sometimes feel unhappy about attending school, as they may have concerns about possible bullying, have learning difficulties or going through unsettling times at home. However, these issues must be sorted out at school at an early stage, in order that they still attend school regularly. Parents are expected to contact the school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school should follow procedures prior to the referral and parents notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the Child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings need to be attached to the completed AS1 referral form and any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:

- Attendance Improvement Meetings
- Home Visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

LEAVE OF ABSENCE/HOLIDAY

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Head teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.

Requests for holidays in term time will **not** be authorised.

We expect students to be in school every day when the school is open. Where there are more than 10 sessions or 5 days unauthorised absence in a 50 day period, the school will request a Penalty Notice.

The Head Teacher may authorise absence in 'exceptional circumstances' but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Head teacher, acting on behalf of the trust. Each case is judged on merit and the Head Teachers decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- To attend a funeral of a person close to the family
- Service personal returning from tour of duty abroad
- Where absence is recommended by a health professional
- A child's rehabilitation from a medical or personal issue.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice within the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- With leave (the school has given permission)
- Due to sickness or unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child not parent)
- Religious observance
- Failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In Law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school, with medical evidence being given after three days of illness.

The School will commit to keeping parents informed of their child's attendance percentage via the school app, reports, emails and letters to raise concerns. Pupil's with 100% attendance or significantly improved attendance will be praised and rewarded. Rewards for good attendance include letters or emails home and certificates.

In recent years the attendance percentage of all our pupils has improved. The school strives to be outstanding in the field of attendance and punctuality and to do this effectively relies upon the goodwill and understanding of our principles by all our parents and carers.

Attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

Attendance Expectations

From the start of the autumn term 2020 pupil attendance will be mandatory, including countrywide lockdown with schools remaining open and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- Parent's duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil.
- School's responsibilities to record attendance to follow up absence.
- The ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities codes of conduct.

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

These examples are :

- Pupils required to self-isolate as they or a member of their household has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Pupils who are required to self-isolate by Track and Trace because they are a close contact of someone who has confirmed and or symptoms.
- Students who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine.
- Pupils who are extremely clinically vulnerable in a future lockdown scenario only.

Parents/Carers will be asked to provide evidence of Covid testing and also Covid results to allow registers to be marked correctly, failing this will lead to unauthorised absence.

Guidance Links

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>