AYLESFORD SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

October 2026

Policy status	Draft subject to approval by the Local Governing Committee
Ratified / reviewed	October 2026
Next review	October 2027
Interim Headteacher	Mrs K. James
Attendance Champion	Mrs H. Davies-Lane

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1. Statement of intent and aims

Aylesford School is committed to securing high levels of attendance and punctuality so that every pupil can access education, make progress, build positive relationships and benefit from the full range of opportunities available at school. Regular attendance is fundamental to achievement, wellbeing, safeguarding and preparation for further education, employment and adult life.

The school actively promotes excellent attendance and punctuality and works in partnership with pupils, parents/carers, staff, governors and external agencies. The school's attendance aspiration is 97% or above for every pupil in each school year. This is a school aspiration and management target, not a statutory threshold.

Our aims are to:

- set clear, high expectations for attendance and punctuality;
- promote the benefits of regular school attendance and celebrate success;
- identify attendance concerns early and intervene before patterns become entrenched;
- understand and address the barriers that prevent pupils from attending regularly;
- reduce persistent absence and severe absence;
- provide appropriate support for pupils experiencing mental health, physical health, SEND, family or other barriers;
- work positively and consistently with parents/carers and pupils;
- maintain accurate attendance records and use data intelligently to identify trends and evaluate interventions;
- work with the Local Authority and other agencies where school-based support is insufficient; and
- use statutory and legal intervention where attendance support is unsuccessful, is not engaged with, or is not appropriate.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the statutory framework and guidance applicable in England, including the Department for Education's 'Working together to improve school attendance' (updated July 2026), the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, and relevant provisions of the Education Act 1996 and related legislation.

The school will follow current Department for Education statutory guidance and Kent County Council attendance and enforcement procedures as they are updated. Where this policy refers to a particular local process or threshold, the current KCC procedure will take precedence if it changes.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Local Governing Committee

- Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality and ensure attendance remains a strategic priority.
- Ensure the school has effective systems for accurate registration, attendance monitoring, safeguarding and intervention.
- Regularly receive and challenge attendance information, including whole-school attendance, persistent absence, severe absence, punctuality and relevant vulnerable-group data.
- Monitor the impact of attendance strategies and interventions and ensure an attendance action plan is developed where required.
- Ensure the school has appropriate staffing, training, systems and resources to improve attendance.
- Support and challenge the Headteacher and Attendance Champion regarding attendance performance and improvement.

3.2 Headteacher

- Provide overall leadership for attendance and ensure this policy is implemented consistently.
- Ensure statutory attendance duties are met and that attendance is treated as a safeguarding and educational priority.
- Support the Attendance Champion and relevant staff in implementing the attendance strategy.

- Authorise absence where appropriate and oversee decisions relating to legal intervention, in line with current KCC procedures.

3.3 Attendance Champion – Hannah Davis-Lane

Hannah Davis-Lane is the school's named Attendance Champion. The Attendance Champion provides senior leadership oversight of attendance and punctuality and is responsible for ensuring that the school's attendance strategy is implemented, evaluated and continually improved. The Attendance Champion may delegate operational tasks to the Attendance Manager, Attendance Assistant, Progress Leaders, Student Support Managers and other appropriate staff, but retains strategic oversight.

- Lead the school's attendance vision, strategy and improvement priorities.
- Monitor attendance, persistent absence, severe absence and punctuality data and identify trends and groups requiring action.
- Ensure attendance processes are applied consistently and fairly.
- Oversee attendance interventions, Attendance Support Plans/Attendance Contracts and escalation where appropriate.
- Ensure barriers to attendance are identified and that pupils and families receive appropriate support.
- Work with safeguarding, pastoral, SEND and wellbeing staff and external agencies where appropriate.
- Liaise with the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service and other agencies where school-based intervention is insufficient.
- Ensure governors receive appropriate attendance information and evaluation of attendance actions.
- Ensure attendance staff receive appropriate training and understand current statutory requirements and national attendance codes.
- Promote a culture in which attendance is understood as everyone's responsibility.

3.4 Attendance Manager and Attendance Assistant

- Maintain accurate and up-to-date attendance records and follow up unexplained absence.
- Monitor daily attendance and punctuality and produce reports for relevant staff.
- Contact parents/carers where attendance is unexplained or concerning.
- Support attendance letters, meetings, Attendance Support Plans/Contracts and referrals.
- Liaise with Progress Leaders, Student Support Managers, the Attendance Champion, KCC and other agencies as required.

3.5 Progress Leaders, Student Support Managers and pastoral staff

- Monitor attendance within their year groups and identify pupils requiring support.
- Discuss attendance concerns with pupils and parents/carers and contribute to Attendance Support Plans.
- Identify barriers to attendance and coordinate appropriate pastoral support.
- Escalate persistent or severe absence and safeguarding concerns to the Attendance Champion and relevant safeguarding staff.
- Support successful reintegration following significant absence.

3.6 Teachers and mentors

- Take accurate registers at the required times using the correct national attendance codes.
- Record attendance promptly and raise unexplained or concerning absence through school procedures.
- Support a welcoming classroom environment and encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.

3.7 Parents and carers

- Ensure their child attends school regularly, on time and ready to learn.
- Notify the school on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day unless the school has agreed otherwise.
- Provide an explanation for absence and any information reasonably required by the school to understand attendance concerns.
- Work constructively with the school when attendance becomes a concern and attend meetings or engage with agreed support.
- Where possible, arrange routine medical and other appointments outside school hours.

3.8 Pupils

- Attend school every day and arrive on time.
- Engage with staff when attendance difficulties arise.
- Follow the school's expectations for punctuality and registration.

4. Attendance expectations and targets

Aylesford School expects every pupil to attend whenever the school is open unless absence is authorised or otherwise permitted by law.

The school uses the following management definitions and indicators:

Indicator	Meaning	School response
97%+	School attendance aspiration	Celebrate and sustain strong attendance.
Below 97%	Below school aspiration	Monitor and consider early support depending on pattern/context.
Around 95% or below	Early concern indicator	Review pattern, barriers and appropriate intervention.
Below 90%	Persistent absence (PA)	Targeted intervention and formal monitoring.
50% or below	Severe absence (SA)	Intensive, individualised support and multi-agency/legal consideration where appropriate.

Persistent absence means missing 10% or more of possible sessions. Severe absence means missing 50% or more of possible sessions. These are national statistical definitions; the school will act before a pupil reaches these levels where there is evidence that attendance is deteriorating.

5. Recording attendance and attendance codes

The school will maintain an electronic admission and attendance register in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Attendance will be recorded at the beginning of each morning session and once during the afternoon session. Where required, lesson attendance will also be recorded through the school's internal systems.

- Only the approved national attendance codes will be used.

- Where an attendance entry is amended, the school will retain the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of the amendment and the person who made the amendment.
- Attendance register information will be retained in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Staff responsible for registration will receive appropriate training and guidance on accurate use of attendance codes.
- Unexplained absence will be followed up promptly and treated as a safeguarding matter where appropriate.

6. Reporting absence and safeguarding response

Parents/carers should report absence or lateness as soon as possible using the school's established channels:

- Email: attendance@aylesford.kent.sch.uk
- ClassCharts Parent App via the messages section
- Attendance Office via the main school switchboard: 01622 717341, option 1.

Parents/carers should report absence on each day that their child is absent unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed. A daily response is important because unexplained absence may be a safeguarding concern.

If a pupil is absent without notification, the school will make appropriate first-day contact. If the reason for absence remains unexplained, the school will continue to follow up and may undertake further safeguarding checks or home visits in line with its procedures.

Where no satisfactory explanation is provided, the absence may remain unauthorised. The school will not automatically authorise an absence solely because a parent/carer has provided an explanation; the school will consider the circumstances and the relevant statutory guidance.

7. Authorised and unauthorised absence

The school will decide whether an absence is authorised in accordance with legislation, statutory guidance and the individual circumstances. Parents/carers cannot authorise absence themselves.

Examples of absence that may be authorised include:

- absence due to illness or other unavoidable cause affecting the pupil;
- absence granted by the school in exceptional circumstances;
- religious observance where the statutory criteria apply;
- medical or dental appointments where absence is necessary and appropriately recorded;
- other circumstances permitted by the national attendance framework.

The following will normally be unauthorised unless exceptional circumstances apply:

- family holidays or leisure activities during term time;
- shopping trips or birthdays;
- oversleeping;
- avoidable lateness;
- absence because of family members being unwell where the pupil is able to attend;
- absence where the school has not been provided with a satisfactory reason;

- medical or dental appointments that unnecessarily remove a pupil from school for a substantial part of the day.

The school will consider individual circumstances and will not apply blanket rules where doing so would conflict with current statutory guidance.

Medical evidence will not be requested routinely or unnecessarily. The school may request appropriate evidence where absence is prolonged, where there is a repeated or concerning pattern, or where there is a genuine reason to require further information. Evidence may include an appointment confirmation, prescription, medical letter or other appropriate information. The school will take account of the family's circumstances and the nature of the illness.

8. Punctuality and lateness

Aylesford School mentor time starts at 8.30am. Pupils should be on site and ready to learn by 8.20am. The school expects pupils to arrive on time for the start of the school day and for every lesson.

A pupil arriving after 8.30am must sign in at reception and will be recorded using the appropriate lateness code. The morning register closes at 9.00am and the afternoon registration closes at 12.30pm. Arrival after the relevant register has closed will normally be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session, using the correct national code.

Repeated lateness will be monitored and may result in attendance intervention alongside any behaviour response. The school may use detention or other appropriate consequences in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

9. Supporting pupils with barriers to attendance

Aylesford recognises that poor attendance is often a symptom of barriers rather than simply a matter of choice. The school will seek to understand the individual circumstances before deciding on the most appropriate intervention.

- mental health, anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance or wellbeing concerns;
- physical health or long-term medical needs;
- SEND, disability or unmet additional needs;
- bullying, friendship difficulties or concerns about safety;
- family circumstances, housing, transport or other practical barriers;
- care responsibilities or other vulnerabilities;
- transition difficulties or problems reconnecting with school following absence;
- other individual, social or environmental barriers.

Support may include:

- a named trusted adult or pastoral contact;
- reasonable adjustments and SEND support where appropriate;
- attendance meetings and an Attendance Support Plan/Attendance Contract;
- pastoral, safeguarding, wellbeing or family support;
- Early Help or other multi-agency support;

- liaison with health professionals, the Local Authority or other agencies;
- support with reintegration following prolonged absence;
- temporary adjustments to provision only where exceptional circumstances justify them and in line with statutory guidance.

10. Promoting good attendance

- Attendance expectations will be communicated clearly to pupils and parents/carers.
- Attendance will be discussed through assemblies, tutor/mentor time, reports, communications and appropriate curriculum opportunities.
- Good and improved attendance will be recognised and celebrated.
- Parents/carers will be kept informed of attendance through ClassCharts, reports, letters, emails and meetings as appropriate.
- The school will use positive relationships and early support alongside formal intervention.

11. Attendance monitoring and data analysis

The Attendance Champion and relevant staff will regularly analyse attendance data at pupil, year-group, cohort and whole-school level.

- overall attendance and attendance against the 97% school aspiration;
- persistent absence and severe absence;
- punctuality and patterns of lateness;
- attendance by year group, tutor group and other relevant cohorts;
- attendance of pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, children looked after, previously looked after children and other vulnerable groups;
- patterns by day, lesson, week or period where relevant;
- reasons for absence and patterns of authorised/unauthorised absence;
- the number and outcome of attendance interventions;
- whether interventions are improving attendance and reducing barriers;
- comparison with national/local benchmarks where appropriate.

Attendance information will be reported to governors at appropriate intervals so that they can challenge performance, evaluate impact and support strategic improvement.

12. Attendance intervention pathway

The school will use a graduated approach. The exact point of intervention will depend on attendance level, rate of decline, pattern, safeguarding information and individual circumstances.

Universal: Promote attendance, celebrate success, communicate expectations and monitor all pupils.

Early concern: Where attendance falls below the school aspiration or a concerning pattern emerges, review the circumstances and communicate with parents/carers.

Targeted support: Identify barriers, meet with pupil/parent/carer, agree actions and consider an Attendance Support Plan.

Persistent absence: For pupils at or approaching 90%, intensify support, monitor frequently and consider an Attendance Contract/other formal support.

Severe absence: For pupils at or below 50%, provide intensive, individualised and multi-agency support and consider statutory action where appropriate.

Legal intervention: Where support is unsuccessful, not engaged with or not appropriate, the school may request a penalty notice or make a referral for other legal intervention in accordance with current KCC/DfE procedures.

Existing Aylesford processes, including attendance letters, PA letters, Attendance Support Plan Meetings, parental contracts, statutory attendance letters and referrals, will continue but will be used within this graduated framework.

13. Persistent absence and severe absence

Persistent absence (PA) is attendance below 90%, representing 10% or more of possible sessions missed. Severe absence (SA) is attendance at or below 50%, representing half or more of possible sessions missed.

Both require a heightened level of attention. The school will not wait until a pupil reaches a threshold before acting. Where a pupil is at risk of becoming persistently or severely absent, the school will identify barriers, agree support, monitor impact and escalate where appropriate.

14. Leave of absence and holidays in term time

Leave of absence during term time will only be granted where the school considers that the circumstances are exceptional and where the relevant statutory criteria are met. Family holidays and leisure activities will not normally be authorised.

Requests will be considered individually by the Headteacher or delegated senior leader in accordance with current regulations and statutory guidance. Approval cannot normally be granted retrospectively.

Examples of circumstances that may be considered exceptional include significant bereavement or other serious family circumstances, attendance at a funeral of someone close to the family, or circumstances involving significant health or welfare needs. Each case will be considered on its individual merits.

15. Penalty notices and legal intervention

Where attendance support does not work, is not engaged with, or is not appropriate, the school may request legal intervention through Kent County Council or take other action available under the attendance framework.

The school will follow the current DfE statutory guidance and KCC procedures when considering a penalty notice. Current national guidance uses a framework based on unauthorised absence sessions over a rolling period, with individual circumstances and prior support considered. The school will not rely on the historic '100 school sessions' wording in the previous Aylesford policy.

Current Kent information states that a penalty notice is £160 per parent per child, reduced to £80 where the first notice is paid within 21 days; if unpaid after 28 days, prosecution may follow. These details are subject to change and the current KCC process will always be followed.

Legal intervention may also include other measures available to the Local Authority, including prosecution or other statutory powers. The school will maintain appropriate records of attendance, communications, meetings and support.

16. Children Missing Education

Attendance is closely linked to safeguarding. The school will follow Kent County Council procedures for Children Missing Education (CME) and will make a referral where appropriate.

- the whereabouts of a child are unknown and the school has been unable to locate the child;
- the family has indicated that the child is leaving the area but the school has not received confirmation of a new school place or pupil file request;
- there are other circumstances that meet the Local Authority's CME criteria.

Parents/carers must inform the school if their child is leaving Aylesford and provide new contact details and intended school information where known.

17. Reintegration following absence

Where a pupil has experienced significant or prolonged absence, the school will plan an appropriate return. The level of support will depend on the reason and length of absence and the pupil's individual needs.

- agree a named member of staff to support the pupil;
- identify any barriers that remain;
- consider reasonable adjustments where appropriate;
- liaise with parents/carers and relevant professionals;
- monitor attendance closely following the return;
- review and adapt the support if attendance does not improve.

18. Attendance, safeguarding and vulnerable groups

Unexplained, sudden or significantly changed attendance patterns may indicate safeguarding concerns. Staff should follow the school's safeguarding procedures where attendance information raises concern.

The school will pay particular attention to pupils who may be more vulnerable to absence, including pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, children looked after or previously looked after, pupils receiving social care support and pupils with significant physical or mental health needs.

19. Monitoring, evaluation and governance

- The Attendance Champion will review the effectiveness of this policy and attendance strategy throughout the year.
- Attendance data and the impact of interventions will be reported to the Local Governing Committee at appropriate intervals.
- The school will identify attendance priorities and actions and will evaluate whether these are improving attendance.
- Staff training will be provided where statutory requirements, national codes or school procedures change.

- This policy will be formally reviewed at least annually, or sooner where legislation, statutory guidance or local procedures change.

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The school will use the current national attendance codes specified in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and current DfE guidance. Staff should use the school's attendance system guidance and the current DfE code set rather than relying on historic code lists.

Code	Meaning
/	Present in school at the start of the morning session.
****	Present in school at the start of the afternoon session.
L	Late arrival before the register has closed.
U	Late arrival after the register has closed; counts as an absence for the session.
K	Attending education arranged by the Local Authority.
V	Attending an educational visit or trip.
P	Participating in an approved sporting activity.
W	Attending work experience.
B	Attending approved off-site educational activity.
C	Absent due to exceptional circumstances.
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or employment.
M	Medical or dental appointment.
J1	Pupil is at an interview for employment or admission to another educational institution.
S	Study leave.
X	Non-compulsory school-age pupil not required to attend.
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment).
G	Family holiday not granted by the school.
N	Reason for absence not yet established.
O	Absent for another unauthorised reason.
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances or another specified reason under the national framework.
Z	Prospective pupil not required to attend before admission.
#	Planned whole-school closure.

Note: This appendix is a practical summary. The school will always use the current national code definitions and guidance where they differ from this summary.

Appendix 2: Attendance intervention pathway

Stage	Typical trigger	Action	Escalation

1. Universal	All pupils	Promote, monitor, celebrate, communicate	Move to early concern if pattern emerges
2. Early concern	Below aspiration / concerning pattern	Attendance communication, pupil discussion, barrier check	Targeted support
3. Targeted support	Attendance continuing to decline	Attendance Support Plan Meeting; agree actions and review date	Formal attendance support
4. PA	Below 90% / at risk	Intensive monitoring; Attendance Contract/parental agreement; agency support where needed	Legal intervention considered
5. SA	50% or below / at risk	Intensive individualised and multi-agency support	Statutory/legal action considered
6. Legal	Support unsuccessful, not engaged with or inappropriate	KCC penalty notice or other legal route in accordance with current guidance	Local Authority process

Key staff

Role	**Named person / responsibility**
Interim Headteacher	Mrs. K. James
Attendance Champion	Mrs H Davies-Lane
Attendance Manager	Mrs M Bartholomew
Attendance Assistant	Mrs C Lands
Lead Governor responsible for Behaviour and Attendance	Mr J Murphy

External reference points used in this revision: DfE Working together to improve school attendance (updated 9 July 2026); School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024; current Kent County Council attendance and penalty notice information.