

	Attendance Policy	
	Last reviewed: February 2017	Next review: February 2019
	Linked Governor: Andy Cunningham	SLT Member: Rich Peters

Rationale:

Ashlyns School is committed to raising levels of attendance. We believe good attendance and punctuality are vital if students are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities made available to them. The target level of attendance for all students attending Ashlyns School is set at 95%+. Poor attendance and punctuality is disruptive to both students and staff. Students with attendance levels of below 90% are classified as Persistent Absentees.

Aims:

With regard to attendance, Ashlyns School aims to:

- Provide a safe learning environment.
- Raise achievement through the promotion of good attendance.
- Continually strive to improve the attendance and punctuality of all students.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents/carers, teachers and governors.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students.
- Promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority (LA) Attendance Team and with other services and agencies.
- Detail the procedures and actions to produce good attendance and punctuality.

Responsibilities of the School

- To ensure a legal register is taken at designated times during the school day (a.m. and p.m.).
- To ensure accurate records of attendance and punctuality are maintained daily, according to legislation and guidance.
- To clearly distinguish between absences which are authorised and those which are unauthorised (it is the decision of the Headteacher as to whether or not an absence will be authorised).
- To encourage good attendance and punctuality and ensure school staff set good examples in this regard.
- To investigate all unexplained or unjustified absences and follow up poor attendance and punctuality.
- To keep parents/carers informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record and work with parents/carers should either give cause for concern.
- To monitor attendance and punctuality levels and report to Governors on a termly basis.
- To liaise regularly with the LA appointed Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) over attendance and punctuality issues relating to individual students.

Responsibilities of the Parents/Carers

Parents/carers have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure all children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full time basis and to ensure good punctuality at school. Parents/carers are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered. Consequently parents/carers should:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Ensure their child is properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn;

- Ensure family holidays are never taken during term time.
- Avoid arranging non-urgent medical appointments during school hours/term time.
- Inform the school, on a daily basis, of absence and communicate the reason for their child's absence by telephone/letter or in person.
- Confirm, in writing, the reason for their child's absence, when they return.
- Maintain regular communication with school staff, e.g. form tutor through the student's planner, about any concerns/issues.
- Ensure the school office is notified immediately of any change to contact details.
- Take an active interest in their child's school life and work.

Responsibilities of Students

All students are expected to:

- Attend school and all of their lessons regularly and on time.
- Be ready to learn
- Sign in and/or out at student reception, when they arrive late, leave for / return from medical appointments

Responsibilities of the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)

The Attendance Improvement Team fulfils the statutory duty of the LA in enforcing regular school attendance. The AIO provides the school with the following services:

- Regular consultation visits meeting with the school's Attendance Officer, Heads of Year and Key Stage Learning Mentors to identify students experiencing attendance difficulties
- Pre-referral work prior to a case being accepted, which may include telephoning or writing to parents/carers about their child's absences or lateness.
- Attending meetings with parents/carers arranged by the school to emphasise the need for improved attendance and the possibility that, if this does not occur, the AIO will become involved.
- Casework with students and parents/carers which may include making home visits, offering specific support to individual students or parents/carers, facilitating case conferences and other meetings or enabling the student and parents/carers to access appropriate support from other services and agencies.

The Traveller Project Attendance Improvement Officers are used to support students from Traveller families whose regular school attendance is adversely affected by the family's mobile way of life.

The AIO will follow up all instances of students who are absent from school for more than 4 weeks and who subsequently cannot be traced.

Registration/Lateness

All students are required to be in school by 8:35am and to attend form tutor time. Any student arriving more than 5 minutes late to form tutor time, without a valid reason, will receive a late mark and a sanction in line with our Behaviour Policy. Students arriving after 08:45am must report to student reception. Pupils arriving after 9.15am (i.e. after registers have closed) and without a valid reason will receive an unauthorised absence mark for the morning session.

The school will use a further range of sanctions to change the behaviour patterns of those students who are regularly late to school.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses form tutor time they may miss vital information delivered by the Form Tutor. Students arriving late to lessons miss work and also disrupt lessons and learning.

A register is taken in every lesson by the class teacher. All lateness to lessons is challenged by subject teachers and students arriving more than 5 minutes late, without a valid reason, will be placed in a C3 detention. Students are not usually permitted to leave lessons. Students leaving a lesson for any reason should have a note or exit card issued by their teacher. Students are expected to stay in school for the duration of the day. If students need to leave school during the day (for a medical or dental appointment) they should bring in a note from their parents/carers in order for the school to authorise the absence. If a student fails to bring a note in to school they will only be allowed to leave school if their parents/carers inform the school via phone or email.

Absences

Parents/carers should inform the school by 8:15am if they know that their child will be absent. Parents/carers of absent students, whose absence has not been reported to the school, will receive a text message requesting a call to the school to advise the reason for absence. If the child should be present, lessons will be checked to see whether the child is actually in school. All absences need to be confirmed in writing to the school on the student's return.

The responsibility for authorising absences rests with the school. Written or verbal parental communication does not by itself constitute authorisation. The school may or may not accept the reason offered as valid. All absence notes are kept for at least one term by the Attendance Officer. Where there are concerns, notes may be kept for a longer period, until there is no longer a concern. Weekly absence forms are issued to Tutors.

Under the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 students will not be permitted to take holidays in term time as it has a highly detrimental impact on their learning. Parents/carers do not have the right to demand leave of absence for family holiday reasons but the Headteacher may use their discretion to grant leave in very exceptional circumstances.

Types of Absences

Every half-day absence from school, known as a session, has to be classified by the school (not the parents/carers) as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**.

Authorised absences are sessions away from school for a legitimate reason including, but not limited to:

- Sickness
- Medical appointments which are unavoidable
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement
- Approved sporting activities

Unauthorised absences are those where no 'leave' has been granted or those which the school does not consider reasonable. The Headteacher will make the final decision regarding classification of an absence, in consultation with the Assistant Headteacher, Head of Year or Attendance Officer. Unauthorised absence can lead to the LA issuing fixed penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping students off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been fully explained

- Students who arrive at school too late to get an AM present mark (i.e. after 9.15am)
- Shopping
- Looking after other children
- Birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- A pet going to the vet/death of a pet

Whilst a student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the student and, in cases where attendance levels of a student fall to an unacceptable level, parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence to support their child's absences.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance rate falls below 90% at any time of the school year, **for whatever reason**. Absenteeism of this level will considerably damage a student's educational prospects and the parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation will be needed to tackle this.

All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA level or is at risk of moving towards that level is given priority and the parents/carers of those students will be informed of this promptly.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully by the school's Attendance Officer and Heads of Year. Parents/carers will need to come into school and meet with the Head of Year, Attendance Officer and /or Key Stage Learning Mentor (and possibly the LA AIO) on a regular basis to discuss their child's attendance and the progress being made.

Truancy

Truancy is recorded as an unauthorised absence. A number of systems are put in place to inform students that this behaviour is unacceptable. A record will be made in the student's school file. The procedures for following up truancy are outlined in the schools' behaviour policy. The local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) may be informed of any truancy and the PCSO and AIO will work together with the school on serious cases of repeated truancy.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Parents/carers who fail to respond to requests by the school to send their child to school or who take unauthorised holidays during term time may be issued with a fixed penalty fine by the LA.

The notices will be issued at the discretion of the Headteacher and will be applied to parents/carers whose child has at least 15 sessions of unauthorised absence in the previous and/or current term. The fines will apply to cases where the parent/carer is able but unwilling to ensure the attendance of the student. The penalty is £60 per parent/carer if paid within 21 days of receipt of notice, and rises to £120 which must be paid within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid, the Local Authority may subsequently prosecute the parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance. Fixed Penalty Notices will operate following the Hertfordshire County Council Code of Conduct and Guidance for Schools, dated February 2016.

The Use of Legal Action

If a student fails to attend school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the school and the AIO fail to secure that student's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action.

A complaint may be made against the parents/carers, in the Magistrates' Court (under section 444 of the Students Act 1996), or an educational supervision order relating to the student under section 36 of the Education Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances are taken in to account, when considering legal action.

Promoting Attendance and Rewards

Students with high attendance (100%) will be celebrated in assemblies and certificates will be awarded at the end of the summer term. Other school incentives to celebrate good attendance include success charts on notice boards and prize draws.

Part-time timetables

It is recognised that there may be occasions when a child is unable to attend school full-time, due to, for example, recovery from illness or exceptional family circumstances, pregnancy, or returning home from a period in custody. Also, there may be instances when a child is experiencing severe behavioural difficulties at school and is finding it increasingly difficult to cope with full-time attendance. In such circumstances the law permits the temporary use of a part-time/reduced timetable.

In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence

- A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term plan. The arrangement should always specify an end-date by when it is expected that the child will return to full-time education (or when an alternative will be provided) and be reviewed regularly in the light of any changes to the child's circumstances.
- A temporary part-time timetable should provide a means of achieving re-integration to full-time education. It should never be used as a form of exclusion from school for part of the school day or as permanent provision.
- The local authority will be informed of any instance of a child being placed on a part-time timetable, so that the local authority is aware of the arrangement
- Governors will be informed about any children placed on part-time timetables, so that governors can fulfil their responsibilities to monitor the school's provision.

If the school considers that full-time education would not be in the best interests of a child's physical or mental health, and is considering placing him/her on a temporary part-time timetable, it will:

1. Consult with relevant agencies to determine the education and support provision that would best meet the child's individual needs, for a fixed term.
2. Complete an action plan which shows a clear path to planned reintegration from part-time provision to full-time attendance, with a date for review. Where appropriate, the child should be actively involved in this planning. The plan should be reviewed if there is a change to his/her circumstances or needs.
3. If the child has a Statement of SEN, or an Education, Health and Care Plan, consult with the local authority's SEND team to ensure that the Statement/EHCP is implemented fully under a reduced timetable. The school will also consider whether it is appropriate to arrange an interim

statement review, if for example the child's needs have changed and it is considered that this could impact on the ability for the provision to meet his/her needs.

4. Confirm, in writing, which adults will be responsible for the duty of care for the child during school sessions when he/she is not attending; (schools retain full duty of care for all children who are on the school roll if they are receiving education off-site).

5. Obtain written consent to the arrangements from the child's parents/carers. Should parents/carers not agree to the part-time timetable, it cannot be implemented, as without parental agreement a part-time timetable would be considered to be an unlawful exclusion.

6. Keep a central record of the arrangement and reviews and notify the local authority, using the form provided for this purpose

7. Record the child's absence from school for sessions when he/she is not in attendance as authorised absence (register code C).

8. Inform the local authority when the child returns to full-time education.