

Aylestone Federation Attendance Policy

Aylestone School, Broadlands Primary School and Withington Primary School

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Philosophy

At The Aylestone Federation we promote a culture in which children enjoy coming to school. We are committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embrace the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full potential a high level of school attendance is essential. We consistently aim for maximum attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We aim to provide sensitive and appropriate guidance to parents and carers concerning pupil attendance, taking into account guidance from the Department for Education, which states:

- School attendance is subject to statutory laws and regulations.
- The school should monitor its attendance figures and set targets accordingly.
- The school should review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

We have high expectations for attendance. Every child should attend every day that they are required to attend. We are committed to providing an education of the highest standard for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will pupils be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment and good progress depends on good attendance.

Statutory duty of parents

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Statutory duty of schools

Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

The Government expects that:

- Schools will promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence. Any attendance below 95% is a cause for concern (attendance that is consistently at 90% or below is classified as 'persistent absenteeism') and will be discussed with parents or carers as to how attendance can be improved.
- Schools will ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and act early to address patterns of absence, by working in partnership with parents.
- Parents and carers will perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly in accordance with the school's home/school agreement.
- All pupils will be punctual for their lessons.

Purpose of this document

Pupils, parents and carers, teaching staff, support staff and school governors have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this and the policies that underpin it.

The policy has been drawn up based on current Government and Herefordshire Council guidance, and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community have access to this policy.

Responsibilities

Federation's responsibilities

We have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

The Head teacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the federation. The senior leaders responsible for the strategic approach to attendance across the federation are:

Mr S Robertson – Executive Headteacher (srobertson@aylestone.hereford.sch.uk)

Mr P Lewis – Assistant Headteacher (plewis@aylestone.hereford.sch.uk)

Mrs C Willis – Head of Schools (Broadlands & Withington) (cwillis@broadlands.hereford.sch.uk)

The school will:

- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued;
- pursue explanations for each absence from school;
- work with all members of the school community, the school's learning mentor, the School Attendance Advisor and the Herefordshire Council in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy;
- encourage parents and carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance; and
- send information regularly to parents and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues.

It is a legal requirement that the Federation will:-

- a) Be open to all pupils for 380 sessions each school year.
- b) Maintain attendance registers in accordance with the relevant regulations (we will also maintain a separate PA register and monitor PA as a discrete category of absenteeism).
- c) Accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness.
- d) Clearly distinguish between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised according to criteria laid down by the DfE.
- e) Submit termly absence returns through School Census and publish information relating to levels of attendance and absence and include details of these in the Federation prospectuses and annual report to governors.
- f) Set annual targets to reduce absence and submit these targets in accordance with the relevant regulations;

The Federation will also take into account relevant guidance issued by the DfE and good practice identified by the Herefordshire Council and will:

- a) Ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents through parents' evenings, reports or through other media. Parents should be specifically reminded of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their student's regular and punctual attendance.
- b) Collect and make effective use of attendance data to monitor progress/trends and set targets for improvement – for individuals, classes, year groups, **vulnerable groups** and the whole school.
- c) Provide clear guidance to staff on the practice of registration.
- d) Identify clear absence procedures and follow up all absence and lateness; making first day calls where necessary.
- e) Recognise the crucial importance of early intervention and provide appropriate strategies.
- f) Monitor post-registration truancy through the taking of class registers and spot checks and ensure that the parents of any post-registration truants are promptly informed and where necessary actively involved.
- g) Discuss attendance issues as part of the KS2-3 transition process.
- h) Identify a range of both proactive and reactive strategies to promote attendance and address absenteeism, especially persistent absenteeism (including Early Help Assessment where appropriate).
- i) Provide a clear and unambiguous hierarchy of sanctions.
- j) Use attendance rewards which recognise pupils' attendance achievements. Attendance competitions now forms an integral part of the Aylestone School's Reward Policy.
- k) Set up effective networks for liaising with other involved agencies and services, such as the Herefordshire Council's Education **Enforcement** Officer, the Independent School Attendance Advisor, Social Care, Police, Health, etc.
- l) Establish procedures for reintegrating long-term absentees and pupils who may, for specific reasons, have been on a reduced timetable.
- m) Identify an interesting, flexible and accessible curriculum which encourages regular attendance.
- n) Work with families and children where attendance is a concern to improve individual attendance and overall outcomes for the child. Ensure that reasonable steps are taken by the Federation before a referral is made to the Herefordshire Council and keep a record of these.
- o) Not authorise leave in term time, unless in exceptional circumstances; and will stress to parents the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family leave during term time.
- p) Involve and identify a lead governor for attendance.
- q) Identify a lead person with overall responsibility for attendance at each of the federated schools.

Parents' and carers' responsibilities

The Education Act 1996 states that parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

The school expects that parents and carers will ensure that:

- their children attend school regularly and punctually;
 - they support their children's attendance by avoiding term time leave;
 - they contact school on every day of absence to provide an explanation;
 - their children arrive at school on time in correct uniform and with the right equipment for the day and are collected on time;
 - they work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
 - contact the school immediately if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives;
- and
- keep the school updated with any changes to contact details.

Pupils' responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly they should speak to their class teacher or tutor.

Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. Pupils also have a responsibility for reporting to the school office if they arrive late.

Governors' responsibilities

The Governing Body will oversee, support and challenge the leadership team in ensuring excellent attendance with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils at the school.

Recording attendance

Registration

School starts at 8.50 am each day **and finishes at 3:15pm**. The register remains open until 9.20 am each morning. Any child arriving after 8.50 but before 9.20 will be recorded as late (L). **Any child arriving after the register has closed without a satisfactory explanation will be recorded as late after registration closes (U); meaning an unauthorised absence is recorded for the session.** Afternoon registration is taken at 1.15 pm. The afternoon register will close at 1.35pm. **Any child arriving after the register has closed will be recorded as late after registration (U); an unauthorised absence for the session.**

Absence from school

If a pupil is unfit for school, parents or carers are asked to contact the school on each day of absence by 9.00am using the school's absence telephone number or via the following e-mail addresses dependent upon which school your child attends:

attendance@aylestone.hereford.sch.uk

attendance@broadlands.hereford.sch.uk

attendance@withington.hereford.sch.uk

If a pupil is absent at morning registration and the school has not received an explanation by the close of registration, the office staff will be informed and will contact the parents or carers to establish the reason for the absence.

In cases where the absence at registration is due to an early morning medical appointment, the absence will be recorded as authorised as long as prior notification has been received.

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; the school will decide whether an absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised not the parent; and
- 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.

We recognise the clear links between attendance and progress and attendance and safeguarding children. Pupil's attendance rates will be monitored on a weekly basis.

At registration each morning and afternoon, any child who is not present will be marked as an “unauthorised absence”, unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment or correction is distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher. A note or explanation from a pupil’s home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. **The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.**

Illness

Pupils should only be absent from school when too ill to attend. Pupils can attend with minor illnesses. Where there is a long term medical illness, parents and carers may be asked to grant permission for the school to consult the medical practitioner concerned to provide appropriate support. In cases of recurring absences through illness or where the authenticity of the school can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. The school can record the absence as unauthorised if it is not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions or appointment cards. The School may ask for consent to liaise with medical professionals.

Medical Appointments

Parents are expected to make medical appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments are unavoidable in school time the child is expected to only be absent for the duration of the appointment, coming to school before the appointment and returning once the appointment has taken place. Parents must provide appointment cards or other evidence of the appointment.

Term time Leave

Headteachers cannot authorise term time leave unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any application for leave must be made in writing six weeks in advance and the Head teacher must be satisfied that there are truly exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head teacher’s discretion. If the Head teacher does not authorise the absence and parents or carers still choose to take the leave this will then be deemed unauthorised absence. As a result a referral may be submitted to Herefordshire Council, who may issue a Penalty Notice; a fine of £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but before 28 days or may take other legal proceedings.

Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

If a pupil’s attendance is deemed to be below expectation, parents or carers will be informed in writing of the school’s concerns and will be encouraged to keep absences to a minimum. The attendance of these pupils will be monitored by the school and if no improvement is noted The Federation will contact parents and carers to work together to remedy the problem.

Where appropriate, if attendance does not improve after parents have been informed that their child’s attendance has reached the point of being a concern, the federation will consider referrals to other services that will provide support in improving the attendance.

If support is not accessed or attendance does not improve with the support of outside agencies, then support will be formalised in conjunction with Herefordshire Local Education Authority.

Unauthorised absence

If no explanation is received for absences, or the School is not satisfied that the explanation for absence is reasonable they will be recorded as unauthorised absences. The School will make efforts to work with pupils and their families where unauthorised absences occur to try to overcome attendance and punctuality issues. This support may be through, letters, telephone calls, meetings, home visits and referrals to other support services; including the School Attendance Advisor.

Where unauthorised absences persist the matter may be referred to Herefordshire Council for consideration of legal action. Details of this can be found on the Herefordshire Council website.

Penalty notices

Penalty notices or other legal proceedings, such as court hearings, can only be instigated by Herefordshire Council. They are seen as a last resort after all avenues of support have been exhausted and can be used where the pupil's frequent or prolonged absence has not been authorised by the school.

A penalty notice is a fine imposed on the parents or carers. The penalty is £60 per child, per parent, if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 per child, per parent if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Details of this can be found on the Herefordshire Council website.

Children missing in education

When pupils leave the school and no information has been received by the school regarding their new placement and parents/carers are unable to be contacted, the school has a duty of care regarding safeguarding and must contact the Herefordshire Council. The child will be considered to be a **Child Missing in Education**. This means that the Herefordshire Council has a legal duty to investigate, which will include liaising with Social Services, the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate the child. By giving the school details of the child's new school and location, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.