

Aylesford School

and Sixth Form College



wonder aspiration respect discipline

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Lead: Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral)
Via: Standards, Personnel and Curriculum
'from potential to reality'

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ATTENDANCE

Good attendance in school is vital for academic progress. High attendance levels are very often reflected in successful outcomes. The majority of Aylesford students achieve an attendance figure of above 95% and the school supports and encourages all students to aim for 100%. Regular attendance is essential for learning to be secured and for students to benefit from our aims, values and mission. Please be aware that even an attendance figure of 95% equates to about 50 missed teaching hours in an academic year.

We actively support involvement in school life and try to create a sense of belonging that fosters high levels of attendance. Our school mission of: 'To inspire in students a passion for lifelong learning; to work in partnerships to provide an exciting, engaging and enjoyable experience. To support high standards of achievement in a happy and secure environment' requires good attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

The school monitors attendance and punctuality via an electronic registering system.

Registering Attendance

- Registration is a legal requirement and should be conducted formally by a member of staff twice a day (am/pm).
- Every lesson should be registered and saved.

- Guidelines for the marking of registers are provided for staff – these must be adhered to (see Appendix A).

- A set of symbols are used to classify reasons for absence, these are detailed and comprehensive. Consistency in the use of these symbols is vital. These follow the DfE guidelines and must be used when recording reasons for absence. The appropriate codes must be recorded on a weekly basis and at the very latest by ten days after the absence (see Appendix B).

- It is expected that accurate registers are taken by staff.

- Totals are kept automatically on the system and can be accessed when required in a number of formats.

- A member of the Senior Leadership Team is in overall charge of attendance and supported by an Attendance Officer who provides data and checks for accuracy.

- Paper registers are available in case of electronic problems and must be completed and returned via the black folder, as required.

- Notes from parents should be kept in their own separate wallet in the register folder – as should all internal memos from staff. (Staff memos should be securely disposed of as soon as they become out of date).

- Heads of Student Progress should periodically examine parental letters. Tutors should file them all at least termly to ensure the register file does not become cluttered.

Absence

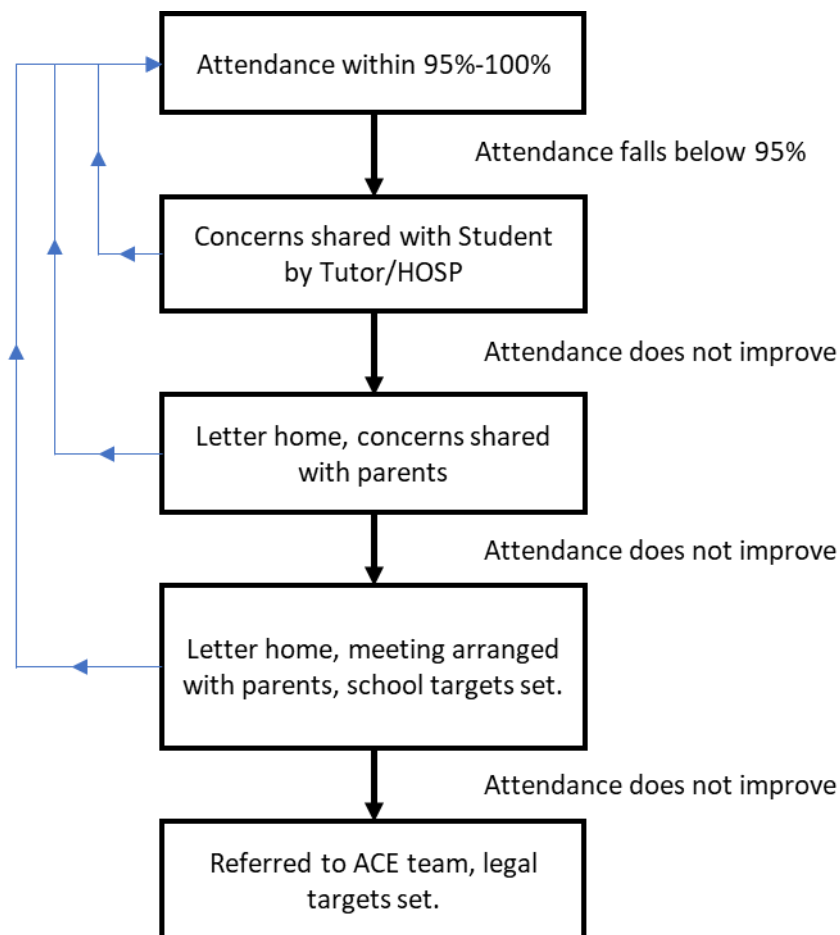
Day-to-day Recording procedures:

- Parents should leave either voicemail or phone messages by 9.30am. at the latest during the first morning of their son or daughter's absence.
- Parents should provide a note explaining their son or daughter's absence on the first day that the student returns to school, even if they have phoned to explain the absence. Written evidence is essential.
- Upon receiving voicemail messages or phone calls from parents on first day of absence, the Attendance Officer will record the appropriate information.
- An inadequate reason for absence or suspect note should be queried by the Form Tutor. A written record must be kept of the action taken and Head of Student Progress informed.
- All absence notes should be signed and dated by the tutor, noting the dates the absence note covers and left inside the register (in the appropriate sleeve).
- Form Tutors must follow up responses to the first day contact if appropriate and when necessary liaise with the Head of Student Progress.
- Following Public Health Guidance, we ask parents of children in the Primary phase to keep them at home for 48 hours following vomiting and/or diarrhoea.

General Points:

- Form Tutors (and Class Teachers if regular lessons missed) must alert their Head of Student Progress to any student where an 'absence' pattern develops (even if an absence note is provided). The Head of Student Progress/tutor should make contact with the parents/carers of the student and make their concerns known. When attendance falls to 90% it may be necessary to invite the parents/carers into school for a formal meeting via an Attendance Panel. The Head of Student Progress will refer to the member of SLT in charge of attendance for WAS involvement if attendance starts to fall below this point.
- Any involvement of WAS is clearly documented by the school. Records include, the date of referral, action taken (including reasons for absence and sanctions imposed where necessary) and review date. A referral is made when all other avenues have been pursued.
- The WAS team, once a referral has been received, meets with the student and parents, set targets, review them regularly and prosecute as required, including fines if the targets are not met as agreed.
- The WAS team must not be seen as the first resort. The school is responsible for ensuring a good attendance.
- Whole school letters, Newsletter articles, presentations at parents evenings etc. reinforce the facts that absence should be kept to a minimum. We should explicitly request that routine medical or dental appointments are arranged out of school hours or in holidays.
- In case of a prolonged absence of 10 days or more due to a valid medical reason, arrangements will be made for students to either receive work at home or preferably to return to school with adjustments made. The Form Tutor or Head of Student Progress will co-ordinate this.

- An important ingredient in ensuring good attendance requires working in partnership with parents, WAS, governors and all local services. Good communications between these groups are essential and all staff are advised to play a part in this.
- In the event of a student who is absent for a period of up to 20 days, with or without parental contact, a safe and well check will be made within the time frame. This will be by either a member of the school or a professional working on behalf of the school (Police, Attendance Officer, Social Worker etc.) alongside the safe and well check, a 'Child Missing Education' (CME) referral will be made to the local authority. Further checks will be made if the student does not return to school.
- An attendance of below 90% is classified as persistent absence by the government and equates to about 100 teaching hours missed in an academic school year. The school works in partnership with WAS (Warwickshire Attendance Service) to promote good attendance.
- The flow chart below describes the involvement of the school and process followed when the attendance of a student falls below what is expected.



The school must inform the local authority of any student who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:-

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered
- are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period or
- have been permanently excluded

Warwickshire Attendance Service

Leave of Absence

The Government have issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

- Headteachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Headteachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made at least 6 weeks in advance by the parent and failure to do so may result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) of Warwickshire County Council.
- The Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council's Non-School Attendance and Penalty notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>).
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Authorised and unauthorised

- Only Heads of Student Progress or the SLT member in charge of attendance, are to designate an absence as unauthorised.
- It is the school – not the parents/carers who ‘authorise’ absence/attendance.

First Day Calling:

- If the Attendance Officer has not received a voicemail or telephone message by 9.30 a.m., then he/she will phone home or seek information regarding the student’s absence
- First day calling will not occur if/when the General Office informs the Attendance Officer that a student is excluded. The Attendance Officer is informed of all exclusions.
- First day calling will cease if the parent answers the telephone and gives an explanation. In this case, the Attendance Officer will record the appropriate code.
- First day calling will cease if the Attendance Officer is able to leave a voicemail message requesting information. In the case of vulnerable students, a further call will be made and an email sent within the hour (if parent has provided an email address) where parental contact was not able to be established.
- If the Attendance Officer is unable to make contact or leave a message and the student is absent the following day, then the attempt will be made again, for two further days and the Head of Student Progress would be informed.

Strategies for Improving Attendance:

It is important to actively promote regular attendance in a positive manner.

- A positive regard for regular attendance must be conveyed to students and parents e.g. a greeting as students arrive, sensitivity towards an absentee if appropriate (such as working out a realistic timetable to catch up with missed work/messages in the school newsletter).
- Scrupulous maintenance of registers is imperative.
- The careful monitoring of the attendance of students and swift and effective follow-up action is required in certain cases. Strategies are in place to deal with persistent low attendees e.g. letters home, parental meetings, Attendance Panels and WAS involvement.
- At the end of every term certificates for full attendance are to be issued to individuals during a ‘Year’ assembly.
- At the end of every term certificates are given to the tutor group in each year with best attendance in a year assembly.
- House points are awarded each half-term for students achieving 95% or above attendance.
- Truancy is not condoned and appropriate action is taken by the class teacher and/or Head of Student Progress as appropriate (e.g. one hour detention for every one hour truanted).
- Identifying children who are poor attenders and devising ways of supporting them (such as involvement in ‘attendance panels’ where appropriate).
- Including attendance-related matters in the induction programme for all new staff and in particular for newly qualified teachers.

- Welcoming students back after illness.
- Taking specific measures to ease students back into school after protracted absence and regularly reviewing such arrangements.
- Briefing staff on how to organise the work of a class to allow for returning absentees without loss of momentum for the class as a whole.
- Establish a good link and a working partnership with parents. Good attendance will be achieved if the right conditions are created for parents to back the school's efforts. This requires that we are accessible, familiar and welcoming. Involvement of parents through our Home School Link Evenings will promote greater mutual understanding and hence foster good relations.
- Improved communications e.g. letter to parents with a clear statement on attendance and information helping parents to understand what they are expected to do if their child is absent.
- Skilful and positive induction of new students with a clear explanation to parents.
- Use of community languages in liaising with parents if appropriate.
- The library is available after school which can reduce anxiety re homework and possibly facilitate improved attendance.
- Home visiting if deemed appropriate, by Tutor/Head of Student Progress and keeping the WAS Service fully informed of such action, if required.
- Increasing the status of the WAS service by working effectively together to identify and deal with the causes of particular absences, and to improve attendance generally.
- Such strategies make attendance the responsibility of all teachers and not just a task for pastoral staff or an additional chore. Perceptive teachers pick up the patterns of absence among individual students, and are alert to warning signs such as lateness, 'feeling ill' at specific lessons, unhappiness about some elements of work, over-anxiety about deadlines or exams, and peer-group difficulties. They are also aware of signs of physical and emotional stress, marked changes in personality, motivation, concentration and behaviour, they seek out opportunities to talk with these children and in some cases with their parents.
- The use of the Inclusion Area to support students who are struggling to attend school, providing a quiet, safe space in which to study.

Complexities of Attendance-Related Issues:

Attention has been drawn to many of these in the preceding sections. However it is useful to highlight others not easily apparent.

- Bullying/harassment can occur and lead to non-attendance. Aylesford School has a clear commitment to deal firmly with all forms of bullying, when they are reported to us. This is dealt with in more detail in our Anti-bullying policy.
- School refusal happens very occasionally. Any case is dealt with on an individual basis to devise strategies to enable the student to reintegrate into the school. If necessary further help is sought from outside agencies.

- The role of the Learning Support Area is crucial in highlighting 'Special Educational Needs' since these can be a source of absence.
- Attendance of teachers is likely to have an effect on the attendance of students. Close monitoring of the effects of such staff absence and the prevalence of the use of supply teachers is an important way of attempting to ensure good attendance of students.
- The school has legal obligations in respect of attendance – including the prosecution of parents and the need to collect and publish data and attendance targets.
- School governors are required to see that registers are properly kept and that attendance figures are monitored.