



ALMOND HILL JUNIOR SCHOOL  
GOVERNING BODY

ATTENDANCE POLICY

FULL GOVERNING BODY	March 2021
DATE FOR REVIEW	March 2022

## **INTRODUCTION**

At Almond Hill Junior School, we aim to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality. Good attendance at school is essential for a pupil's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. Parents, guardians and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy as any absence will have a huge impact on their child's learning. 100% attendance is certainly possible, but in the event of your child being away from school it is essential that the parent inform the school of the reasons for absence.

## **RATIONALE**

- There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem.
- The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives efficient full time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence have to be reported to the School's Governing Body, Local Authority (LA), and the Department for Education (DfE).

Regular school attendance is essential and parents, guardians and carers, together with our school staff, all have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved. Pupils are expected to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- 1) **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as a satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence.
- 2) **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request.

The achievement and maintenance of high levels of attendance is the shared responsibility of parents, guardians or carers, the school with its Governing Body and the Local Authority.

## **AIMS OF THE POLICY**

To promote regular attendance thus offering all pupils equal access to learning.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY**

- Meet the Government attendance targets set for us.
- Create a clearly understood attendance procedure that is effectively communicated to and understood by parents/guardians/carers.
- Ensure pupils are in school for the maximum number of days.

This policy is designed to help all concerned adults to enable children to attend school regularly and thus be offered the most consistent access to learning as is possible.

## **1. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY**

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance. Schools are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on approved educational activity.

For pupils of compulsory school age, schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

Schools should:-

- Work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole - as one of their key tasks.
- Have clear procedures in place to address persistent absence.
- Support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance.
- Be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and this should be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. Schools should recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications. They should also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school.
- Follow up all instances of poor attendance and/or punctuality.

## **2. PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARER RESPONSIBILITIES**

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school and are therefore responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents should:

- ✓ Ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn.
- ✓ Instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- ✓ Ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school.
- ✓ Impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct.
- ✓ Take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good learning and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings.
- ✓ Work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- ✓ Notify their children's school if they are absent. This should be done on the first day of absence by 9.00 am. Parents should also provide an explanation for the absence.
- ✓ Avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours. If this is unavoidable, evidence of the appointment must be seen by the Headteacher.
- ✓ Not book holidays during term time.

## **3. PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE**

We promote and celebrate good attendance throughout our school by:

- Celebrating pupil attendance in class assembly
- Awarding 100% attendance certificates termly
- Publishing class attendance percentages in the school newsletter.
- Publishing information to parents in newsletters about the impact of absence on learning
- Discussing the importance of attendance and punctuality with pupils in PSHCE lessons and how these are important in later life.
- Sharing attendance and punctuality figures with parents at Parent Teacher Interviews and reporting these figures in annual reports.
- The school will seek to support families to improve attendance and may implement specific support strategies through structured conversations or around family meetings.

## **4. THE PROCESS FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE**

Office staff record attendance daily and discuss instances of attendance and lateness with senior staff. Senior staff hold monthly review of attendance and punctuality meetings with class teachers to monitor persistent issues. Where these persist the following will be actioned.

Stage 1: Where there are concerns about attendance (below 96%) and punctuality, the school will send a written letter to parents, guardians or carers to offer support.

Stage 2: If the concerns persist the school will write to the parents, guardians or carers explaining that no further absences will be authorised unless evidence is provided, and reiterate the offer of support. If a child's absence is improving but still below the expected standard, this will be acknowledged in the second letter.

Stage 3: If the concerns persist the school will write to the parents, guardians or carers inviting them to a meeting and explaining that a fixed penalty notice may be applied.

Stage 4: If the concerns persist further the school will arrange a meeting between the parents, guardians or carers, a school representative and the school's Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO).

Stage 5: If the concerns persist the school will make a formal referral to the Local Authority Educational Welfare Service to deal with the on-going issues. Should concerns persist the LAAO will agree action and where necessary meet with the parents, guardians or carers. Please note that ultimately the Local Authority can take legal action.

## **5. FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE**

Office staff will follow up where we have not received a reason for absence.

Step 1: An email or text is sent to the main contact(s) in the morning of the first day of absence, and Headteacher informed.

Step 2: If no contact is made to the school, then telephone calls are made to the other contact(s) by 12.15pm

Step 3: On the second day of absence, if there is still no contact with the family, steps 1 and 2 are repeated in the morning.

Step 4: If no contact is made, then the school will follow up as it deems appropriate. This may include contacting the following: Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) / Police / Children's Services / Other appropriate external agencies

## **6. AUTHORISING ABSENCE**

Only the Headteacher can authorise an absence. This may include reasons such as: illness, religious observance, moving house, sporting event, music, dance and drama exams, and entry examinations. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, in itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for the absence. If, after further investigation, doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence should be treated as unauthorised and the parent informed.

Fixed Penalty Notices may be applied to all unauthorised absences. A warning letter will be sent to parents/guardians/carers, if a child has two or more unauthorised sessions.

## **7. HOLIDAYS**

Children should not be absent from school to go on a family holiday. Only in exceptional circumstances may a Headteacher give permission for a child to be absent for this reason.

Possible exceptional circumstances:

- Service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during school holidays and evidence is provided to this effect.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis e.g. visiting a seriously/terminally ill relative and the holiday is likely to be the last such holiday.

Please note that any other request e.g. because of the overall cost or to celebrate a special birthday cannot be counted as an exceptional circumstance.

An appointment to discuss the circumstances with the Headteacher who will determine the number of school days a child can be absent if leave is granted, must be made before a Leave of Absence Form is submitted. There is no right to take a holiday in term time and you are strongly advised not to book a holiday before discussing your exceptional circumstances with the Headteacher. If your child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed, this will be classified as an unauthorised absence and you may be fined (Fixed Penalty Notice) or legal action taken against you.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.

Should parents make a request for leave, a 'Leave of Absence Form' must be completed as early as possible, providing details of your exceptional circumstances, following an appointment with the Headteacher.

## **8. ABSENCES DURING TERM TIME**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

*'Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.'*

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed 'Absence of Leave Form – Exceptional'. These may be obtained from the school office. Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents will be informed within 7 school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

## **9. LATENESS**

Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite.

- Children must be in class by 8.55am each day ready for registration. Any child arriving after 8.55 am but before 9.15am will be marked as late before registers closed but counted as present for that session.
- Children who arrive at school after 8.55am must come into the school via the main office, where they will be entered into the school's inventory system. Arrival after 9.15am is counted as a late after registers close which counts as an absence.

Lateness will be monitored and brought to the attention of the LAAO.

Please be advised that where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who seem to be developing

patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem with the LAAO.

## **10. SICKNESS**

- Please notify the school on each day of the absence before 9.00am
- We reserve the right to request a doctor's/consultant's letter regarding recurring and frequent illness.

Please be aware that when a parent telephones the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness, or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. Your child's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised. Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a headache, sore throat or slight cold is not acceptable.

Repeated absences will require us to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit, or prescription or medicine bottle. Any of the above is to be shown to a member of the school office. (Please note: that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost.)

If your child's attendance falls below 96%, for whatever reason, including sickness, a letter will be sent home.

## **11. THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY ATTENDANCE OFFICER (LAAO)**

The school work in partnership with the LAAO. The Headteacher and Deputy Head meet 4 weekly with class teachers to monitor attendance. The LAAO strives to support schools, parents/carers, and pupils with the aim of ensuring and promoting good attendance and punctuality consistently. However, the LAAO also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

## **12. LEGAL ACTION**

Section 444 of the Education Act states that "if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence."

Hertfordshire County Council, through the Education Welfare Service, may issue a Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly. The Headteacher can also issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If a pupil, who is registered at a school, fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the LAAO and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Attendance. If 'exceptional mitigating circumstances' are not deemed to exist, then cases which remain open for more than 24 weeks will be referred for legal action. Legal action will, however, be taken earlier when appropriate.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the LAAO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date. In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Team will begin legal proceedings promptly on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Attendance will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced.

The Attendance Team will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored
- the attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted
- the Local Authority will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school

### **13. EDUCATION RELATED PENALTY NOTICES FOR PARENTS OF TRUANTS**

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added two new sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example, it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures.

Further information on penalty notices is available from the local Attendance Team Manager or <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/attendance.shtml>

**As of 1st September 2013, the rate per parent per child will be fined is £60 if paid within 21 days and rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days.**

If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

Revenue received from penalties are payable to the Local Authority to cover the costs of issuing or enforcing notices, or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

### **14. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ORDERS**

If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school). The LA will serve a School Attendance Order under Sections 437 - 439 of the Education Act 1996. This requires the parent to register their child at a school named by the Local Authority.

### **15. FAST TRACK**

In exceptional circumstances the Local Authority reserves the right to:

- issue a Penalty Notice for a first offence
- issue a Penalty Notice without warning

The Fast Track framework promotes early intervention and aims to ensure that appropriate action is taken to tackle non-attendance as soon as attendance problems become apparent. Fast Track involves engaging the parent and specifying what improvements need to be made over a fixed time-frame (usually 12 weeks). Parents have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates Court.

### **16. GOVERNORS**

It is the Governors legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in their schools. The school's attendance figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

### **17. UNCOLLECTED CHILDREN**

The staff of Almond Hill Junior School are aware that sometimes parents are delayed when due to collect their children. Therefore, we operate an uncollected child policy.

- Parents are asked to phone the school as soon as possible if they are going to be late.
- If a child is not collected at the end of the school day, the children will be brought to the school office and inform the staff there. Staff will contact the parent's contact numbers first (home, mobile, work) before trying emergency contact numbers. **Parents must ensure that all contact numbers are up to date and that mobile phones are switched on. We require 2 emergency contacts for all children.**
- When the parent/carer arrives to collect their child, they must come into the office and sign their child out.
- If a child is still uncollected the children's services duty desk will be contacted and children's services will then be asked to collect the child. (PLEASE NOTE THAT CHILDREN'S SERVICES ARE CONTACTED ONLY AS A LAST RESORT).
- In the event of Social Services' involvement, a message will be left on the main door informing parents where the child is, with a contact number.

## **18. PARTNERSHIP**

The school aim to work in partnership with families to promote excellent school attendance and punctuality.





## Almond Hill Junior School Application for absence in term time.

By law you must ask permission for your child to miss school. Stevenage Primary Heads, working with representatives of the Local Authority, will no longer authorise holidays in term time, except in very exceptional circumstances.

If you feel that there are exceptional circumstances please give details below after which you may be contacted by the school to arrange a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the matter.

Parents wishing to apply for their child to have leave from school should complete this form and return it to school at least 2 weeks in advance of the proposed leave.

### **Fixed Penalty Notice**

A fixed penalty notice will be issued when unauthorised absence exceeds 10 days within one academic year. The penalty notice requires you to pay a fine of £60.00 within 21 days. If this fine is not paid within the time limit the penalty rises to £120.00 which must be paid within 21 days. If payment is not received you will be liable for prosecution for the offence and could be subject to a fine of up to £1,000.00.

Surname of child		First name	
Date of birth		Class	
Surname of Parent/ Guardian		First Name	
Reason for absence during term time			
Is his/her attendance already below 90%? (Research shows that if attendance falls below 95% it will impact on pupil progress)	Yes / No		
Has he/she already had leave during term time this school year? (If so please provide dates)	Current attendance : Yes / No		
Length of absence requested (no. of days)		Dates	
Does your child have siblings in other schools for whom you are requesting an absence?	Yes / No		
If yes:- Child's Name & School (please use the reverse of this form if you require more space)			
Parent's / Guardian's Signature			
Date of interview with the Head Teacher			
Authorised / Unauthorised			
Signature of Head Teacher			

Appendix 2

Attendance Percentage – Letter 1

«date\_of\_printing»

«addressee»

«address\_block»

Dear «salutation»

Our records show that since the beginning of this academic year, «forename»'s attendance has been «percentage\_attendance»%. This level of attendance is below the school's minimum target attendance of 96% and, to put this into perspective, a child who is absent a day of school per week misses an equivalent of two years of their school life.

Ongoing poor attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success and many pupils have difficulty maintaining friendships if they have long or numerous periods of absence.

We wish to help «forename» to improve attendance. If you would like to discuss «forename»'s attendance please contact the school office on 01438 233660 and we will be happy to talk with you and arrange a meeting if required.

We would appreciate your support to make sure «forename»'s attendance improves. The school will continue to monitor the situation and will be in touch again if it does not improve.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Emma Fordham  
Headteacher

Appendix 3

Attendance Percentage – Letter 2

«date\_of\_printing»

«addressee»

«address\_block»

Dear «salutation»

With reference to previous correspondence, I have noticed that «forename» is still continuing to be absent from school. «chosen\_forename»'s attendance has been «percentage\_attendance»% since the beginning of this academic year. This level of attendance is below the school's minimum target attendance of 96% and, to reiterate, a child who is absent a day of school per week misses an equivalent of two years of their school life.

Ongoing poor attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success and many pupils have difficulty maintaining friendships if they have long or numerous periods of absence.

I do understand that children may be ill at certain times of the year but due to your child missing so much time at school I am writing to inform you that I am unwilling to authorise any more absences unless medical evidence is provided. Examples of evidence that the school is willing to accept are medical appointment letters or cards which must state the child's name and the date and time of the appointment, or a copy of the prescription.

We would appreciate your support to make sure «forename»'s attendance improves. The school will continue to monitor the situation and will be in touch again if it does not improve. In the meantime, if you would like to discuss any concerns then we will be happy to meet with you to offer the appropriate support as we want your children to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Emma Fordham  
Headteacher

## Appendix 4

### Attendance Percentage –Letter 3

«date\_of\_printing»

«addressee»

«address\_block»

Dear «salutation»

With reference to previous correspondence, I have noticed that «forename»'s attendance is now at «percentage\_attendance»% since the beginning of this academic year. This has improved since I last contacted you. However, it is still below the school's minimum target attendance of 96% and, to reiterate, a child who is absent a day of school per week misses an equivalent of two years of their school life.

Ongoing poor attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success and many pupils have difficulty maintaining friendships if they have long or numerous periods of absence.

We would appreciate your support to make sure «forename»'s attendance continues to improve. The school will continue to monitor the situation and will be in touch again if it does not improve. In the meantime, if you would like to discuss any concerns then we will be happy to meet with you to offer appropriate support as we want your children to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Emma Fordham  
Headteacher