

# ASHTREE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

## Policy for Attendance

### **Introduction**

**This document is a** statement of the aims, principles and strategies for promoting good attendance at Ashtree Primary School and Nursery

**It was developed** during the Autumn of 2018 through a process of consultation with teaching staff and governors.

**It was approved** by the governing body on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2018.

**This policy will be reviewed** in the Autumn of 2021. A schedule for the review of this, and all other, policy documents is set out in the "Schedule for Policies", which is an appendix to the School Improvement Plan.

### **Why Promote Attendance?**

Ashtree School aims to encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality with the specific intention of enabling all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

### **Statutory Framework**

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil aged 5 + is required to attend regularly at the school where s/he is a registered pupil.

(Pupils under this age who attend the Foundation Stage classes are not covered by this Act, but this school believes their regular, punctual attendance, is of equal importance to their learning.)

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter / message will the absence be authorised (see below.)

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

Maintaining good attendance and punctuality is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - parents, pupils, staff and governors.

### **Pupils**

All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and on time. Pupils who do experience difficulties due to unforeseen family circumstances will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from the class teacher, and if the need should arise, senior staff.

### **School**

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. The school will employ its agreed system of rewards to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents.

## **Rights and Responsibilities (continued)**

### **Parents**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school, on the first day of absence, - by phone call or in writing. There is a dedicated absence phone line. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent; if at all possible, medical and dental appointments for children during school hours should be avoided. Parents will be promptly informed of any concerns that may arise over a child's attendance. Parents should instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.

### **Registration**

Registers will be called promptly at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions, and will be entered on the computerised attendance database using the agreed codings. The school uses the SIMS computer attendance package and makes annual absence returns to the DfE. Up to date, individual, group and whole school data is available at all times via the attendance package.

Registers will close at 9.20am and 1.20pm for KS2 and 9.20am and 1.30pm for Reception and KS1. If a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked as "late" but counted as present for that session. If a pupil arrives after the register has closed and provides a satisfactory explanation or note he/she should be marked as "authorised absent" for that session. If a pupil arrives after the register has closed and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as "unauthorised absent" for that session and enquiries made by the office by contacting parents or guardians. Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the School Office, so that the 'absent' entry in the dinner register can be amended and the office will record the pupil as late after the close of the register.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session. If a letter or telephone call is then received by the school from the parent or guardian and a satisfactory reason is given, the "unauthorised absence" can become "authorised."

Registers are entered on to the computerised attendance database by individual class teachers. Late arrivals to the office are entered on the system by the office staff with reasons logged. Laminated class registers will be kept in class in case of a fire drill or other emergency. These lists will also be taken by the class teachers when the class is having a lesson elsewhere in the building

The Headteacher and the Attendance Improvement Officer attached to the school will inspect all registers regularly in order to: -

- ensure that correct procedures are being followed
- identify children who are experiencing attendance difficulties

- agree on action which needs to be taken by the school and/or the Attendance and Pupil Support Service – e.g. Pastoral Support Plan
- feedback and exchange information in relation to work undertaken by the Attendance Improvement Officer and/or school
- organise liaison with other departments of the County Council and with relevant external agencies
- celebrate good attendance with cups, certificates and newsletter reference
- re-integrate long term absentees.

The published times of the school day are:

Nursery: 8.45am – 11.45am / 12.30pm – 3.30pm.

Reception and KS1: 8.55am – 12.00pm / 1.15pm – 3.15pm.

KS2: 8.55am – 12.00/ 12.55pm - 3.15pm.

### **Authorised / Unauthorised Absence**

It is vital that staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence\*

*Absence can be **authorised** if: -*

- the pupil was absent for an agreed number of days due to exceptional circumstances
- the pupil was unwell
- the pupil was at a pre- arranged medical appointment supported by appointment card or letter
- the pupil was prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause (family emergency)
- the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- there is a close family bereavement
- the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition
- the pupil is participating in an approved public performance for which a licence has been granted
- the pupil is attending primary - secondary liaison activities.

(Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances will not exceed 5 days in any academic year.)

*Absence should be **unauthorised** if: -*

- no explanation is forthcoming
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the pupil stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings
- the pupil is shopping during school hours
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional special reasons e.g. birthday or family holiday
- the pupil is away from school on agreed leave of absence, due to exceptional circumstances, beyond day 5
- the pupil is absent for more than ten school days without a medical note.

\* A full and detailed list of explanations that are to be considered as authorised / unauthorised is to be found in The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 as amended in 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016.

Pupils who need to leave the school site during the day must be collected from the school office. Pupils who have had appointments at the start of the school day must be brought to the school office by an adult, in order for their attendance to be noted.

### **Penalty Notices**

At Ashtree School we expect parents to work with us to address attendance problems. If a pupil has 15 sessions (half a day = one session) unauthorised absence in the current or previous term the Headteacher may ask the LEA to issue a Penalty Notice. The Penalty Notice requires you to pay a fine of £60 (per parent) within 21 days. If this fine is not paid within the time limit the penalty rises to £120 (per parent) which must be paid within 28 days.

### **Holidays**

Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for family holidays in term time. Stevenage Headteachers have agreed to consider five days leave in any school year for exceptional circumstances, (not holidays) and these to need to be discussed with the Headteacher on an individual basis.

All letters and/or forms requesting Leave of Absence should be sent to the School Office initially, where the details will be recorded once the absence has been authorised. They will then be sent to the class teacher/s for reference.

\* A form 'Application for Leave of Absence' is available from the School Office.

### **Procedures for Following up Absence**

If a pupil is absent at morning registration and no message about the absence has been received, the school office will attempt to make contact, on the same day, with those families to determine the nature of the absence. A follow up letter will be issued if no telephone contact can be made. The school requires a least two parent/carer/family member contact numbers per pupil for safeguarding purposes.

When a pupil is persistently late or absent and the school's efforts to effect improvement have been unsuccessful, it may be necessary to refer the matter to the Attendance Improvement Officer.

All notes from parents regarding children's absence should be stored in the class register wallet for one year as a point of reference. In some cases, absence notes will be passed on to the receiving teacher. Absence notes are entered by the office staff on to the database.

If the school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure should establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Confirmation should then be sought from the receiving school. When this information has been obtained, the school should complete a Removal from Roll form and return it to the local Attendance Team office. Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed.

If the school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has "disappeared" the matter should be drawn without delay to the attention of the Local Attendance Team.

## **Publishing Data**

Pupils' individual attendance rates are reported to parents annually. Termly, whole school attendance patterns are reported to the Governing Body and weekly newsletters to parents regularly cover information about attendance and targets.