



Attendance Policy

Approval	Next review	Responsible Person
September 2024	September 2027 (or in light of new guidance)	Assistant Headteacher

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Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Good attendance allows pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Ashdene Primary School fully recognises its responsibility to ensure pupils are in school on time, every day, and that missed learning opportunities are kept to an absolute minimum.

Children who are frequently absent from school can develop gaps in their learning which may impact on their progress and ability to meet age-related learning expectations.

The school recognises that barriers to attendance can be complex and individual. We will work with pupils and parents/carers to understand and address barriers to attendance, providing support where appropriate and taking further action where attendance does not improve.

This policy applies to all children registered at our school and is made available to all parents/carers of pupils on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant legislation, statutory guidance from the Department for Education and guidance and procedures from Cheshire East Council.

Aims and Objectives

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on 'working together to improve school attendance', through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Promote high levels of attendance and aim for attendance of at least 97% wherever possible, while recognising that individual circumstances and barriers to attendance must be considered.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm in all year groups and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness to parents, carers and pupils of the importance of good attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Attendance and Children out of School team (ACOOS) so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Set out a plan for monitoring attendance and adapting expectations where special circumstances apply, e.g. chronic health conditions.
- Recognise the key role of all parties in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.

- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing effective procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance, as amended and in force at the date of this policy.

The policy also has regard to the relevant legislation governing school attendance, including:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014

It also has regard to:

- DfE school attendance guidance and statutory guidance
- DfE guidance relating to children absent from education
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- DfE guidance relating to pupils with medical conditions and attendance
- Cheshire East Council's attendance procedures and Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices.

The school will have regard to any subsequent amendments or replacement statutory guidance and will update this policy where necessary.

Definitions of key terms

Term	Meaning
Authorised absence	An absence authorised by the school under the relevant attendance regulations and statutory guidance. A parent/carers cannot authorise an absence simply by notifying the school.
Unauthorised absence	An absence that the school is not satisfied is authorised under the relevant regulations and guidance.
Persistent absence (PA)	A pupil whose absence rate is 10% or more of possible attendance sessions, subject to the DfE statistical methodology.
Severe absence	A pupil whose absence rate is 50% or more of possible attendance sessions, subject to the DfE statistical methodology.

Possible attendance session	A morning or afternoon session for which a pupil is expected to attend.
Notice to Improve	A formal opportunity for parents/carers to engage with support and improve attendance before a penalty notice may be issued, where the statutory and local conditions are met.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Governing Board

- set high expectations for attendance and ensure leaders fulfil their statutory responsibilities;
- ensure attendance is recognised across the school's policies and ethos;
- ensure attendance processes are sufficiently resourced and delivered effectively;
- challenge leaders using attendance data, including overall attendance, persistent/severe absence, vulnerable groups and intervention impact;
- review the effectiveness of the attendance strategy and hold the Headteacher to account.

Headteacher

- implement this policy and ensure statutory attendance duties are met;
- ensure accurate registration and reporting;
- monitor attendance and the impact of attendance strategies;
- ensure appropriate support and escalation are available;
- authorise leave of absence where legally permitted;
- make or authorise legal interventions in line with local authority arrangements.

Assistant Headteacher / Senior Attendance Champion

- lead the whole-school attendance strategy;
- analyse attendance data and identify pupils, groups and patterns requiring action;
- coordinate attendance support and escalation;
- work with families to understand barriers and agree practical actions;
- liaise with the local authority and other agencies;
- support staff to apply attendance procedures consistently;
- report attendance trends and intervention impact to the Headteacher and governing board.
- undertake attendance training appropriate to the role and ensure attendance remains a strategic priority across the school.

Class teachers and all staff

- promote attendance and belonging in daily practice;
- take accurate registers as required;
- notice patterns, changes or concerns and share them promptly;
- support pupils returning after absence;
- contribute relevant information to attendance planning and safeguarding responses.

Administration staff

- maintain accurate attendance records and absence information;
- process absence notifications and follow first-day procedures;
- record lateness and other attendance information accurately;
- alert the attendance lead to unexplained absence or emerging patterns.

Parents and carers

- ensure their child attends school regularly and on time, where the child is of compulsory school age;
- notify the school promptly when absence is unavoidable and provide sufficient information about the reason;
- work with the school to address barriers to attendance;
- make routine appointments outside school hours where reasonably possible;
- apply in advance for leave of absence where this is required.

Pupils

Pupils are expected, in ways appropriate to their age and development, to attend regularly, arrive on time, engage with learning and tell a trusted adult if something is making attendance difficult.

Procedures

Our school will do the following to support good attendance:

- Maintain appropriate registration and transfer processes.
- Maintain appropriate attendance data, making use of analysis to implement targeted actions as needed for individuals/key pupil groups. Particular attention will be given to attendance patterns among vulnerable groups, including pupils with SEND, pupils with medical conditions, pupils with a social worker and young carers.
- Communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- Have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Discourage unauthorised absence, including holidays taken during term time, and clearly communicate to parents/carers the potential consequences of taking children out of school without authorisation.
- Work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance and punctuality, including referral to wider agencies if required.
- Refer to the Attendance and Children out of School team (ACOOS) any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- Report attendance information to Cheshire East Council and the DfE as required, and make referrals to Cheshire East Council where the relevant criteria for further attendance or legal intervention are met.
- Ensure all staff are aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Senior Leadership Team member with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

The School Day

Registration

External school doors are opened at 8.45am and each designated entry point is supervised by a member of staff. These doors and the playground gates are locked at 8.55am. Any children arriving after the doors are locked will be required to come through the school office.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00am for the morning session and by 3.15pm for the afternoon session.

Registers are completed using SIMS. Should SIMS be unavailable for any reason, a paper copy will be provided for staff to complete and return to the office as soon as possible after registration closes.

All attendance records are documented using SIMS software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Any pupil who comes into the school office after 9am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school later than 9.20am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning (Attendance code U).

The school will record attendance and lateness using the attendance codes prescribed by the DfE.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning and this can have a significant impact on a child's progress and attainment.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school each day that their child is absent. Notification of absence should be made by telephone on 01625 917 335 or by email to admin@ashdene.cheshire.sch.uk before 9am. Class email accounts must not be used for this purpose - absences are to be notified to the school office - but can be copied in on notifications should parents wish.

When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence, it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence and an expected return to school date. Stating that your child is unwell is not sufficient.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where the school has concerns regarding safeguarding and attendance, these procedures will not always be followed and we will immediately refer to our safeguarding procedures.

Absence procedures

1. A termly attendance letter will normally be sent to parents by the Assistant Head where attendance is below 90%, or if a child has 5 or more late marks within a term. An attendance letter may also be sent if the senior leadership team have concerns around the nature of a child's attendance, for example if a child is regularly absent on Friday. Attendance below 95% will normally be monitored closely by the school's attendance team, alongside consideration of the pattern and reasons for absence. Parents/carers may be contacted where there are concerns.

2. Where attendance is not improving after receiving a letter, the school will move to step 2, which is where parents will be contacted for an attendance discussion with the Learning Mentor. Attendance will subsequently be closely monitored for that individual child.

3. If attendance is still not improving after an attendance discussion with the Learning Mentor, a meeting will be organised with the Assistant Head Teacher.

4. Finally, if there are still no improvements after meeting the Assistant Head Teacher, the final step is an attendance meeting with the Headteacher, where clear actions will be put in place.

N.B. In some circumstances, where the school have concerns regarding attendance, these procedures may not always be followed and parents may be contacted or invited in for a meeting earlier.

ACOOS/Attendance Liaison support might also be sought at any point deemed necessary by the school. Support from other agencies may be sought if the school deems it beneficial to the situation.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and no verbal or written communication has been received from the parent or carer, the school will initiate the First Day Contact process. Administration staff check all registers daily from 9.00am to identify pupils who are absent. If, after completing these checks, the reason for absence is unknown, the school will contact the parent or carer to obtain this information.

1. A phone call will be made to parents/carers and any listed emergency contact(s) to establish why the child is not in school.
2. If no communication has been received by lunchtime, a home visit will be undertaken.
3. If no reason for absence has been provided after one week, a letter will be sent to parents/carers. Parents/carers will have one week to respond. If no reply is received, the absence will be recorded in the register as unauthorised, and a further letter will be sent informing parents/carers of this decision.

Where there are concerns about a child due to an unexplained extended absence, this will be managed in line with the school's safeguarding policy. This may include a staff visit to the home address and/or a referral to local safeguarding services.

Provision of Education for Pupils with Medical Conditions

The school is committed to supporting pupils with medical conditions so that they can access a full and appropriate education and participate fully in school life. In accordance with Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014, the school will make arrangements to support pupils with both physical and mental health needs, whether these are short-term, long-term, recurring or fluctuating.

Where appropriate, the school will work in partnership with parents/carers, healthcare professionals and other agencies to develop and regularly review an Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP). This will identify the support required to enable the pupil to attend school, access learning and participate safely in all aspects of school life.

The school will make reasonable adjustments to curriculum delivery, assessment arrangements and the learning environment where necessary to meet a pupil's medical needs. Where a medical condition constitutes a disability under the Equality Act 2010, the school will fulfil its duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that the pupil is not placed at a substantial disadvantage.

Pupils with medical conditions will not be unnecessarily prevented from participating in educational visits, sporting activities, extracurricular opportunities or other aspects of school life, provided that appropriate arrangements can be made to support their health and safety.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school for an extended period because of a medical condition, the school will work closely with parents/carers, healthcare professionals and the Local Authority to ensure that suitable educational provision is arranged in accordance with statutory guidance. This may include home tuition, hospital education provision, remote learning or a combination of approaches, depending on the pupil's individual circumstances and medical advice.

Any reduced or part-time timetable will only be implemented in exceptional circumstances, as part of a planned and time-limited intervention, and will be subject to regular review with parents/carers and relevant professionals. The aim will always be to support a return to full-time education as soon as it is appropriate to do so.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

Headteachers may only grant leave of absence during term time where they are satisfied that there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Parents/carers are asked to submit any request for leave during term time in writing and in advance to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will consider each request on its individual circumstances. The school may request additional information or supporting documentation from parents/carers where appropriate.

If the school does not authorise a leave of absence but parents/carers nevertheless take their child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If parents/carers do not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

Parents/carers are reminded that they do not have an automatic right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time. **The school will clearly communicate to parents/carers that unauthorised term-time holidays may result in a referral to Cheshire East Council for consideration of a Penalty Notice.**

Where a child is taken out of school during term time without the Headteacher's permission, the school may refer the matter to Cheshire East Council for consideration of a Penalty Notice in accordance with the

Council's current Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices. A Notice to Improve is not required for a Penalty Notice requested in response to an unauthorised term-time holiday.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a parent/carer to fail to secure their child's regular attendance at the school at which they are registered, where that absence is not authorised. Penalty Notices are one of the legal interventions available in appropriate circumstances and may be used as an alternative to prosecution.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are one of the legal interventions available to address unauthorised absence. They are issued in accordance with the Department for Education's statutory guidance and Cheshire East Council's Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices.

In Cheshire East, Penalty Notices are issued by authorised officers within the Cheshire East Attendance and Children Out of School Service. The school may request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice where the relevant criteria are met.

The national threshold for considering a Penalty Notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks, subject to the circumstances and requirements set out in the statutory guidance and Cheshire East Council's Code of Conduct.

Before requesting a Penalty Notice for irregular attendance, the school will consider the individual circumstances of the case, including whether support is appropriate and whether a Penalty Notice is the most appropriate intervention.

Unauthorised term-time holidays are dealt with separately. Where a child is taken out of school during term time without the Headteacher's permission, the school may request that Cheshire East Council consider issuing a Penalty Notice. A Notice to Improve is not required for a Penalty Notice requested in response to an unauthorised term-time holiday.

Where a Notice to Improve is appropriate, it will be issued in accordance with Cheshire East Council's current Code of Conduct. The Notice to Improve provides parents/carers with a final opportunity to engage with support and improve their child's attendance.

The school will consider its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the individual circumstances of the pupil before requesting a Penalty Notice.

The current Penalty Notice amounts and arrangements are determined by the national framework and Cheshire East Council's current Code of Conduct. Parents/carers will be informed of the potential consequences of unauthorised absence through the school's attendance communications.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A 20-school-day improvement period, in accordance with Cheshire East Council's current Code of Conduct.
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

A Notice to Improve is not normally used for an unauthorised term-time holiday Penalty Notice referral.

Missed work/lessons/activities

Where a parent/carer chooses to take their child out of school for an unauthorised holiday or other unauthorised absence, the school is not required to provide work for the child to complete during the absence.

The school will nevertheless provide appropriate support for pupils to reintegrate into school and access learning following absence where this is required.

Monitoring Attendance

Our administration staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Assistant Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Attendance data is collated on a half-termly basis. This data is used to monitor attendance against national figures, to identify potential whole school patterns around attendance, to identify individuals who have attendance issues and to inform strategic planning around attendance. Attendance data will be used alongside information about individual pupils, patterns of absence and known barriers to attendance to inform proportionate support and intervention.

Attendance Awards

As school attendance is often beyond the control of the child, we do not offer standardised rewards for attendance. This also helps to normalise the expectation of punctuality and attendance for all learners.

On a case-by-case basis we may, however, allocate merits in line with the school reward system and/or make use of individualised tracking and rewards where it will positively impact a child's school attendance to do so.

Contact details

Absence notifications: School office 01625 917 335 admin@ashdene.cheshire.sch.uk

Attendance queries/ concerns: Assistant Headteacher (Mr Alex Gill) or Learning Mentor (Rebecca Ford) via the school office.

Requests for authorised absence: Headteacher (Mrs C Mather) in writing via the school office.

External Links

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ews

[School attendance and absence: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

PENALTY NOTICE AND PROSECUTION

Penalty Notices may be issued for

Term time leave: Penalty Notice fines may be issued for term time leave of 5 or more days (10 sessions) in a 10-week period.

10 Sessions of Unauthorised absence in a rolling 10 week period: A Penalty Notices may be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.

However, school retain the discretion to request a Penalty Notice before the threshold is met. For example, where parents/carers are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below the threshold.

Per Parent/Per Child

Penalty Notice fines will continue to be issued per parent/carer per child. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent/carer receiving 3 separate fines.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular school attendance the fine will be charged at:

£160 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 28 days of the issue, reducing to £80 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days.

(Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)

Second Offence

Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent/carer for the same pupil within 3 years of the first penalty notice, for either term time leave or irregular attendance the second penalty notice will be charged at:

£160 if paid within 28 days. (Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)

Third Offence

On the third time that an offence is committed within 3 years of the first penalty notice for either a term time leave or irregular attendance a penalty notice will not be issued.

The Local Authority will decide on appropriate next steps which may include:

*Prosecution under s444 (1) or (1a) of the Education Act 1996 which may result in a fine of upto £1000 or £2500 respectively.

*Referral to other agencies.