

ASH LEA SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY.

Statement of intent.

Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents / carers and teachers have a shared responsibility to facilitate this.

Ash Lea School aims to work with parents and carers to ensure that all its students attend both regularly and punctually, to enable them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Good attendance is recognised as 95% or above.

The expectation from the Department for Education and OfSTED, is that we as a special school strive to have an overall attendance of 94% or above, and at Ash Lea we strive to ensure our students exceed this, whilst recognising that some of our pupils have a high level of absences because of medical and/or therapy appointments and/or illness because of their medical conditions or Special Educational Need (SEN).

The majority of our students rely on educational transport to come to school which is not always available in extreme weather conditions. We acknowledge this within our policy.

School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes (see appendix A).

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Responsibilities and roles.

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their children.

Parents must:

- Inform the school as soon as possible, on the first morning of absence, if their child is absent from school for any reason. This can be done by phone, email, or in person to the school office but not via the bus escort. As good practice, an explanation of the absence, by letter, email or note in the home-school diary, should also be sent in once the child returns to school.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school in time for registration (8.50 – 9.30) if, for any reason, the child arrives after this time, parents should report directly to the office (this does not, of course, apply if transport is delayed).
- Avoid booking family holidays during term-time. This is particularly important around exam times (usually May/June) for older students. Parents should make any request for absence in term time in writing at least three weeks in advance. The head teacher will only authorise this in exceptional circumstances, in line with a change in national policy. If the child was still absent, this would be recorded as an unauthorised absence. If a child's attendance rate is below 85% the request would be automatically refused.

School will

- Recognise external factors which influence pupil attendance and work closely with parents and carers should attendance or punctuality give cause for concern and be as supportive as possible in improving the situation.
- Record and monitor attendance in accordance with both the statutory requirements and the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.
- The behaviour and attendance leader (Jane Wood) and senior leaders will employ a number of strategies to promote regular attendance.
 - Communicate regularly with parents on attendance matters where appropriate.
 - Liaise with Targeted Support where attendance gives cause for concern
 - Give appropriate reward and congratulations to students with exemplary attendance.

Pupils will

- Attend school regularly and on time.

Registration & punctuality

Registers will close at 9.30 am. Any student arriving after this time, without a valid reason, will be marked as late.

If a student is consistently late the school will

- Contact parents to discuss the situation.
- If the student is late 5 or more times over the course of a term a letter will be sent to parents and Targeted Support may be contacted.
- NB: criteria for placements at college post 19 include punctuality and good attendance. School will be asked to supply records.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Families do not have a right to take their children out of school for the purposes of family holidays or trips abroad.

Government Guidance instructs Head teachers **NOT** to authorise leave of absence in term time. Permission for this type of absence should only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances.

Requests for Leave of Absence during Term Time should be made to the Head teacher using the Leave of Absence Request Form (available from the school office

Each request will be judged on a case by case basis.

Penalty Notices may be issued:

- If parents have not sought permission from the Head teacher before taking their child out of school for a holiday or leave of absence in term-time;
- If the Head teacher has refused the request but the absence occurs anyway;
- If a pupil has not returned to school by the agreed date with no satisfactory explanation and the pupil remains on the roll of the school.

All student absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised. Should an explanation for an absence not be received or should the explanation be unsatisfactory, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Examples of 'authorised' absence:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical or dental appointments
- Days of religious observance.
- Exceptional family circumstances, e.g. bereavement.
- School visits.
- An immediate family member is critically/terminally ill
- Families who have been through a traumatic event
- Families where a parent/carer is able to demonstrate clearly (e.g. a letter from an employer which can be verified) that they are restricted to all annual leave within school term time.
- Transport arranged by the LA has failed to arrive.

Examples of 'unauthorised' absence

- Shopping
- Haircuts
- Missed bus
- Slept late
- No uniform
- Birthdays
- Holidays not agreed in advance

Response to absence / non attendance.

- Office staff or Grade 5 TA with admin responsibility will make contact with the parent/carer or home by telephone or email when a child is absent on the first day of absence if no explanation has been received by 10.00 am and a follow up text will be sent if an explanation is still missing.
- If there is any cause for concern the Grade 5 TA must report this to the Asst. Head Teacher with responsibility for attendance or a Named Person for Child Protection immediately.
- If the absence continues and remains unexplained, school will write a letter requesting information.
- If the above actions do not elicit an explanation for the absence and the absence continues, a further letter will be sent to the parents/carers.
- Parents will be informed termly if their child's attendance falls below 90% and satisfactory explanations have not been received.
- Parents will be asked to a meeting if this happens regularly, to see what support can be offered. Referral to Targeted Support may be made to identify and support those students whose attendance or punctuality give cause for concern e.g. below 85%.

The school makes exceptions for children who have long term illness or ongoing essential medical appointments.

Collection of data

A range of attendance data will be collected and analysed in order for the school to be proactive around attendance matters.

Behaviour and attendance leader: Jane Wood

Named Governor: Steve Gardner

Policy reviewed February 2016

