

## 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 pupils 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 pupils 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).

**Monitored persistent absence is recognised as below 85%.**

The majority of our pupils 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.

#### **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 Attendance Lead (Caroline Morrison) and the Senior Leadership Team 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
  - Recognise and commend pupils with improved attendance over a school term

#### **Pupils will**

- Attend school regularly and on time.

### **Registration & punctuality**

Registers will close at 9.30 am. Any pupil arriving after this time, without a valid reason, will be marked as late. Registers in the afternoon close at 1.30pm. There is a clearly coded system for marking of registers (see appendix A)

Any unknown reasons for absence are recorded as No reason (N) in the first instance to ensure registers can close on time. But this must be followed up as soon as possible by class teacher and admin staff. The Attendance Lead will monitor this on a weekly basis.

If a pupil is consistently late the school will:

- Contact parents to discuss the situation.
- If the pupil is late 10 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 18 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, **at least 3 weeks in advance**, 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 pupil 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.
- A pupil attends a respite provider like Rainbows where structured activities are arranged
- Where a LAC child attends a residential with their LAC provider
- Where a child attends a planned transition visit

#### 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 will make contact with the parent/carer by text or email when a child is absent on the first day of absence if no explanation has been received by 10.30am and a follow up call will be made if an explanation is still missing. These will be recorded on the attendance register (School Pod)
- If there is any cause for concern they must report this to Caroline Morrison with responsibility for attendance and/or a designated safeguarding lead immediately.
- If there is no response on day 2 of absence office staff to call 1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> name on pupils card or any other emergency number. If still no response by 12.00, SLT and the attendance lead to be informed and a home visit should be considered.
- Attendance Lead (Caroline Morrison) to meet with class teachers on a half termly basis to ensure that good attendance is encouraged and to input additional support where required.
- Parents will be informed termly if their child's attendance falls **below 85% and satisfactory explanations have not been received**. If satisfactory explanation has

been received a review of attendance with parents may still be needed to assure appropriate support is given.

- 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 is deemed persistent 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.

- All registers need to be completed on time am / pm
- Missing marks should be chased up admin staff twice a day
- Any No Reason (N) marks should be chased up weekly
- Attendance Lead to follow up staff who continuous fail to complete the register on time
- Attendance Lead to be informed of unexplained absence by day 2 of absence
- Attendance Lead to be sent attendance figures of risk pupils/groups identified (FSM, PP, LAC, Previous persistent absentees etc)
- Half termly report to be written by Attendance Lead and risk pupils identified and follow procedures implemented.
- Termly reported written for governors and a meeting with named governor arranged before full governor body to report to include statistical analysis and highlighting Pupil Premium, Looked After Children and Free School Meals pupils.
- To write an annual attendance report and identify actions for the following year.

### **Flexible Schooling Arrangements**

Pupils who are not attending Ash Lea School on a full-time basis are recorded on an individual flexible schooling arrangement form. These records show the hours a pupil is in school and what they do in their off-site hours. It contains the reasoning behind the agreed flexible arrangement, links to EHCP and a review date (see appendix b)

### **COVID-19 addendum**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred in 2020 attendance figures for the period of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 have not been included in attendance reports for the school. The school remained open during this period for key worker children and

those pupils prioritised as needed some school-based support for themselves and their families' health and safety.

A new code X has been introduced to record COVID-19 related absence such as shielding and self-isolation. A home learning programme is in place for all pupils well enough to access this during these periods of non school-based attendance.

Attendance Lead: Caroline Morrison

Named Governor: Mags Bailey

Last Reviewed: November 2020

Next review: November 2022

Signed:

Date:

Chair of Governors

Signed:

Date:

Head Teacher

## Appendix a:

**Completion of Register - Quick Reference Guide**

	<p>Pupil present in school at time of registration.</p> <p><b>Registration closes at 9.30am in morning and 1.30pm in the afternoon</b></p> <p><b>N.B.</b> if pupil is not present at close of register, please mark as N if you do not know why the pupil is not there. If a pupil is late, reception staff will change this to record number of minutes late. If you are struggling to mark the register before it closes, please notify reception.</p> <p><b>N.B.</b> You need to press F5 to refresh the register if you have left it open and are returning to it later, please do this <u>before</u> changing codes, otherwise it may overwrite a code entered by office staff.</p>
	<b><i>If pupil not here at time of registration...</i></b>
<b>I</b>	<p><b>Absence due to ill health</b> – illnesses or infections, including recovery from seizure activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With a confirmation phone call received from parents/carers on the day</li> <li>- For sickness and diarrhoea, the guidelines are 48 hours after last bout before return</li> <li>- Other illnesses / infections are dealt with on an individual basis, refer to NHS guidelines</li> </ul>
<b>M</b>	<p><b>Medical</b> - any medical appointment, including dental, that has been correctly reported to reception either via parent phone call, letter and email to reception, or a note in school diaries.</p> <p>If unsure or no definite confirmation, please mark as N. (Verbal messages via transport must be verified)</p>
<b>B</b>	<p><b>Educated Off Site</b> - If an agreed regular educational visit is happening i.e. Hydro /Physio</p> <p>This will be an agreed regular activity, and parents / carers will be asked to inform us if not attended (just as if absent from school)</p> <p>Residential visits e.g. Dukes Barn, Lea Green, Wingate</p>
<b>W</b>	<p><b>Work Experience / Placement</b> – regular agreed work experience placement, if offsite. Parents / Carers to inform school if not attending (just as if absent from school).</p> <p>If pupil comes into school first, they will be marked as present in the morning and an off-site form completed. If this extends over the afternoon registration period, then it will be marked as V in the afternoon, similar to educational trips out.</p>
<b>V</b>	<p><b>Educational visit or trip</b> – Students being taken out of school on an approved trip or visit i.e.: Class Trips, Ed's Playbarn, Educational visits, Drayton Manor, Barge Trip, community/ independence programmes</p> <p>This would apply to afternoon registration when pupils have gone off-site during the morning and have not returned before 1.30pm.</p> <p><b>Offsite forms should be completed for these events too.</b></p>
<b>L</b>	<p><b>Late arrival</b> – these will normally be filled in with Staff should note the number of minutes late taken from 9am (or 1pm if afternoon only)</p>
<b>G</b> <b>H</b>	<p><b>Leave of Absence</b> – any leave of absence / holiday correctly applied for will be completed by the office. Parents have to complete a leave of absence request form at least 4 weeks in advance (available from office). The attendance officer will decide if the leave of absence is authorised or unauthorised, and a letter will be sent to parents on outcome decided.</p> <p>The office will then complete this on the register and will inform classes of the dates of absence.</p>
<b>C</b> <b>O</b>	<p><b>Other authorised circumstances</b> – to be agreed with attendance lead / head teacher before putting in register.</p> <p><b>Other unauthorised circumstances</b> – to be agreed with attendance lead / head teacher before putting in register. If using these codes, please add a note if possible, stating reason for absence.</p>
<b>X</b>	<p><b>COVID-19 related absence</b> – such as shielding (during local and national lockdown periods), self-isolation, closure of a school bubble due to a positive test.</p>
<p><b>In the event of you not knowing what to put – please mark as N – and get it clarified as soon as possible.</b></p> <p><b>Please contact the attendance officer if you have marked a child as N in the register and the office or yourselves have not managed to make contact with family / carers by the end of the school day.</b></p> <p><b>If the office has marked the register with a code already, please do not change this without talking to them, as they will have done this on information they may have received directly.</b></p>	

Appendix b:

## Flexible / Not Full-Time School Arrangement

Student Name	
Plan Date	
Agreed with / by	

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM					
PM					

Reasons for flexible school arrangement

Is this arrangement part of the student's EHCP document?

Yes

No

Review Date