Aspire Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

Date: September 2019
Date of Board Approval: Sept 2019
Review Date: September 2022

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Aims

Aspire Academy Trust has high aspirations and expectations for all children. Research has shown that missing school can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their future life chances.

We will strive to work with parents and children to remove barriers to attendance to ensure all children can access, participate and engage with their learning.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole Trust community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

2. Legal Framework

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on parents to ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient fulltime education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

"Absence" as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Regular attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised
- Attendance at or above 96% (unless the child has a chronic medical need)

An "authorised absence" as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency or unavoidable cause

An "unauthorised absence" as:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

"Persistent absenteeism" (PA) as:

- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason
- These absences can be both authorised and unauthorised

"Parent" as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

4. Categorising Absence and Attendance

National codes are used by all school to enable them to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way. These codes ensure that schools comply with the Education Pupil Registration Regulations.

These codes are split into 4 categories:

- Present
- Absent from school – authorised circumstances
- Absent from school – unauthorised circumstances
- Administration Codes

Only a school can decide whether to authorise an absence.

Each day is made up of 2 sessions -am and pm – and therefore has 2 points at which the code is recorded.

Present Codes		
Present	/ am \pm	Student is present in school during registration
Late	L	Arrived late after the register closed. We would recommend registers are held open for 30mins and then closed.
Off-site Educational Activity	B	Students are off-site at an approved facility where they are supervised, and safeguards are in place. It is not for use if students are at home.
Dual Registered	D	Not counted as a possible attendance. Code is used where the student is not expected to attend the session because they are scheduled to attend the other school. Schools MUST be clear who has educational responsibility for the student for each session and who is recording absence/arrangements to share absence/attendance data.
At an interview with an employer or another school	J	The session must be linked to prospective employment; further education or transfer to another school.
Sporting or cultural activity	P	Sporting or cultural activities approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.
Educational Visit	V	Supervised trips or residentials organised by the school.
Work Experience	W	Work experience can be used for the final two years of compulsory education. Arrangements must be in place for the employer to let school know if a student doesn't attend.

Authorised Absence Codes		
Other authorised circumstances	C	Authorised absences which don't fit into another code and are generally exceptional circumstances e.g. bereavements part-time tables which are time limited and monitored court appearances pupil in custody
Excluded (no alternative provision made)	E	To be used up until day 6 of exclusion if no alternative education arrangements are in place. From day 6 of any fixed or permanent exclusion education must be provided by law and coded with the appropriate code.
Holiday	H	Leave should only be granted in exceptional circumstances and agreed in advance of the holiday being taken. The number of days agreed is at the discretion of the Head of School.
Illness	I	Parents should notify school on the first day of any absence. Absences for illness should be authorised unless there is a concern about the truth of this. Where the authenticity of the absence is unclear schools can request medical evidence. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards etc rather than GP notes.
Medical	M	Medical or Dental Appointments are authorised absences. As far as possible parents should be encouraged to make routine appointments outside of school hours. Where this isn't possible the student should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time needed to keep the appointment.
Religious Observance	R	The day MUST be exclusively set aside by the religious body to which the parents belong for religious observance. Where necessary advice should be sought by the relevant religious body.
Study Leave	S	Only to be used for y11 students during public exams. Provision must be made for students who wish to study in school.
Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Absence	T	Code should only be used where Traveller families are travelling for occupational purposes and not for other reasons. It is not to be used to cover all absences which should be treated in the same way as other student absences. Where students travel regularly with their families it is expected they will be dual registered at another school in the area to which they travel.

Unauthorised Absence Codes		
Holiday not authorised	G	If the school does not authorise the holiday and the parent still take the student out of school or the holiday is longer than initially agreed, then the absence is unauthorised. Approval cannot be sought retrospectively. If parents did not apply in advance the absence should be unauthorised.
No reason provided	N	When a reason for absence has not yet been established code N should be used. When an absence reason has been established this can then be changed. N codes should not be used indefinitely – where a reason is not given the absence is unauthorised (O).
Absent without authorisation	O	If the school is not satisfied with the reason for absence it should be coded O. Examples of unauthorised absence are: Caring for ill family members Collecting or taking siblings to school Waiting in for tradesmen Birthday treats or trips
Late after registers code	U	Student arrives after the register has closed. Schools should actively discourage lateness and seek explanations from parents.
Administrative Codes		
Pupil not required to attend	X	Used to record sessions for non-compulsory school age students who are not expected to attend at these times.
Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Y	Used where a student is unable to attend because: • The school site or part of it is closed due to unavoidable circumstances • Transport is not available, and the students home address is outside walking distance • Local or National emergencies which prevents the student attending school e.g. snow • A student is in custody for a period of less than 4 months (If the place of custody has educational activities then code B can be used)
Pupil not on admissions register	Z	Used where the register has been set up in advance of the student joining school.
Planned closure days	#	Half terms; bank holidays; inset days (up to 5 non-educational days per academic year) can be coded as #.

Leave of Absence

Since September 2013, changes to Government regulations and guidance means that Heads of School can no longer authorise leave of absence for the sole purpose of a holiday (unless in exceptional circumstances).

All absences associated with a holiday (without exceptional circumstance) during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register.

Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday may be referred to the Local Authority and be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution.

Aspire Academy Trust believes that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for child due to 'exceptional circumstances.'

Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must apply in writing to the Head of School at least a month before the planned leave. If a written request for leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, the leave will not be considered by the Head of School and it will be marked as unauthorised.

The Head of School will treat each application individually and may discuss with you the circumstances of the application before a decision is made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. In such cases the school may make a referral to the Local Authority to request that a penalty notice fine is issued or consider prosecution.

A penalty notice request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority if:-

- The parent fails to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Head of School but is still taken.
- A longer period of time is taken in excess of the agreed number of days.

When absence is granted by the Head of School, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible Children Missing from Education procedures being instigated.

Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance

Aspire Academy Trust acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children Absence

Where a family are travelling out of area for work purposes, school will use the code T to record the absence.

It is expected that parents will give advance notice to the school of when they are travelling and when they are expected to return.

The T code will only be used if the child has recorded a minimum of 200 sessions attendance at any school within the 12-month rolling period.

Where a child is absent, and the family are not travelling the appropriate absence code will be used in accordance with the school's attendance policy.

Where there are concerns about attendance the school will liaise with the Inclusion Education Welfare Service in accordance with the "Advice and Guidance for Schools – Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children" Document 2019.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school. That decision is at the discretion of the Head of School.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include, but are not limited to:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms/shoes or other items
- Arrangements or appointments for cutting the pupil's hair
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- An unwillingness to attend school, or inability to attend owing to inadequate personal/family organisation
- A refusal to attend school on health grounds but where the pupil is actually considered well enough to attend
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the school

Persistent Absence

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational potential.

The attendance of all pupils at school is monitored to identify children who are PA, or are at risk of becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice or full prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of up to £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or up to a £2500 fine and/or up to a 3 month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

Lateness to School

All pupils are expected to arrive on time for school every day.

The school day begins as per the academy website. We advise all parents to ensure their child is on site prior to this as this helps with a smooth start to the school day.

The school register will be taken at the start of the morning and afternoon session. All pupils arriving after this time are required to report to the main office with their parents, who will be expected to sign the late book and provide a reason for their absence. If their arrival is within 10 minutes of the school register, it will be recorded as late - L code (Late before the close of register).

The school register will officially close 10 minutes after the start of the session. All pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session - U code (Late after the close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the session. Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

Please note: L or U codes will be used if a pupil arrives after the close of the afternoon register for the PM session.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Aspire Academy Trust believe that improved school attendance is a responsibility shared by Trustees, hub councillors, school staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Aspire Board will:

- Promote the value and importance of regular school attendance and punctuality
- Annually review the Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Ensure that the Regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Board meetings Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior leader to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site. Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Senior Leadership Team within school will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior leader to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Trustees.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated
- Set out how Pupil Premium will be used to support pupils with irregular attendance

All staff working with the Aspire Academies will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Regulations and other relevant legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner.
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents, and the school timetable
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class

- Bring a note of explanation from their parents or parents to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen
- Follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

Members of staff responsible for attendance will work to further develop relationships with families to bring about improved attendance. This may involve seeking multi-agency support. The members of staff responsible for attendance will support good attendance, respond to concerns and promote improvement in attendance by:

- Ensuring first day calling procedures are adhered to, if a child is absent from school without contact from parents
- Taking an active lead in delivering whole school initiatives such as awards assemblies and reward schemes
- Monitoring and analysing pupil attendance data
- Undertaking attendance meetings with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and other relevant staff members as needed
- Implementing the identified strategies for promoting good whole school attendance
- Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance
- Managing individual pupil casework files
- Coordinating Individual Action Plans for pupils causing concern including the instigation of a Attendance Support Plan (ASP)
- Making referrals to appropriate external agencies

Aspire Academy Trust requests that parents:

- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return, following this with a note wherever possible
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their school work or home and family life
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues

6. Attendance Protocols

If a child is absent, the following will be initiated by the school:

- The first day calling procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register and where no reason for absence is known
- If there is still no contact made from the pupil's parents, a further telephone call home will be made again that morning. If no response can be gained, the child's named emergency contact will be telephoned
- If school cannot contact a parent and are concerned about a pupil, a home visit may be carried out
- School will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission

In certain circumstances the school may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil or request a welfare check to be made by the police
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement
- Refer to an external agency/ support service to offer support, guidance and advice
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or referring to Children Services, where there are safeguarding concerns

Expected absence procedure for parents:

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to:

- Contact school by telephone call on the first day of absence and each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return
- If no contact is received, the Attendance protocols above will be instigated

Children Missing from Education

Aspire Academy Trust acknowledges its responsibility to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children is promoted in line with the "Keeping Children Safe in Education" statutory guidance.

As a result of this, where a school has made all reasonable attempts to contact a parent, (as outlined above), and has been unable to do so, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Children Missing Education team.

Support Systems

School recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- Discussions with parents and pupils
- Parent Support advisor/Family Support Worker support
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Motional assessments / TIS support
- Friendship groups
- 1 to 1 mentoring
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages
- Attendance clinics
- Engaging the support of other agencies – Early help hub referral / support

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, the Head teacher will consider the use of legal sanctions following consultation with the Local Authority.

Attendance Reward System is conducted per Academy[1]

Each school will use a system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance.

Each week the class with the highest attendance percentage are rewarded.

Parents are informed termly and half termly of their child's percentage of attendance for the year to date.

Children with 97% or above for attendance are rewarded termly and half termly with a certificate.

Children who attain 97% or above for attendance for the year are rewarded.

*Children who have chronic medical conditions or other needs will be set alternative attendance targets at the discretion of the Head of School.

7. Related Policies

To underpin the values and ethos of Aspire Academy Trust and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential the following policies are integral to this approach:

- Safeguarding children policy
- Admissions policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Behaviour policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disability policy
- Teaching and learning

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[1] Each Academy/School has their own reward system in place

8. Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- School attendance, DFE (2018)
- School attendance parental responsibility measures: statutory guidance, DFE (revised March 2017)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, DFE (2018)
- Cornwall Council Children Missing Education Practice & Procedures
- Cornwall Council Elective Home Education Practice & Procedures
- Cornwall Council Advice and Guidance for Schools – Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children