

The Aylesbury Vale Academy Trust



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RESPECT | ASPIRATION | RESILIENCE

Attendance Policy

Policy Reference:	AVA.008
Description:	This document describes how the school meets its obligations with regards to school attendance
Status:	Non-Statutory Policy
Policy Audience:	Parents/Carers
Academy Trust Contact:	Khursh Ahmed, Vice Principal
Other Related Policies and Procedures:	Admissions Policy, Equality Policy
Governor Committee:	Full Governing Body

In reviewing this policy, the Governing Board has had regard to the Equality Act 2010 and carried out an equality impact assessment. It is satisfied that no group with a protected characteristic will be unfairly disadvantaged by this policy.

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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly¹, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)

¹ The Academy defines 'Regularly' as >95%.

- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy makes reference to [Recording attendance in the school attendance register during the coronavirus outbreak](#) and [Guidance for full opening: schools](#).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all students are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Primary phase: Students must arrive in school between 8:30 and 8:50am on each school day. The gate is closed at 8:50 and after that time students must sign in via the front office.

The morning register will be taken at 8:50 and will be kept open until 9:00. If a student arrives after 8.50am, a late mark will be recorded on the register (L).

Secondary phase: Students must arrive in school by 8:25 am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:30 and will be kept open until 8.50. The register for the second session will be taken at 8.55 and will be kept open until 9.05.

On arrival after the close of register for the first session, students must immediately report to the school office to sign in. For the second session onwards, arrival after the registers close, without evidence for an acceptable reason, will automatically result in a late mark and appropriate sanction applied as outlined in section 3.4.

Whole school: The lateness will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example attendance at a medical appointment (code M). The

absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and a late mark awarded, if the student has arrived late after the registers have closed without justifiable cause, for example if they woke up late or got a late bus (code L).

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by telephone or text by 9.00am at the latest. Alternatively, you can email us at enquiries@theacademy.me. It is useful to know the expected day of return and it is a requirement that parents/carers contact the school each day the child is absent. Failure to supply this information will result in contact from the school and, if necessary, a home visit.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness or the illness may result in long-term absence.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, or the illness is likely to result in a long period of time absent from school, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, or evidence is not provided for long-term absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Students should not be absent from school for more than one session (the morning or afternoon) for medical appointments.

In case of a medical appoint, parents should notify the school through means of a letter with as much notice as possible. If it is not possible to provide a letter, an email sent to enquiries@theacademy.me will be accepted.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A student who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

In secondary phase

A student who is late to school twice or more in a week will receive a 1-hour detention on the Friday.

Any student that is late to class without a valid reason during the school day will receive a 1-hour detention the same day.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

All unauthorized absences are reported to Bucks County and a variety of actions are taken, depending on the situation. These actions range from a meeting at the school, to a monitoring letter, to a Parent Contract, to a recommendation for a penalty notice.

3.6 Reporting to parents

The school will report student attendance to parents and carers at the end of each term as part of each student's end of term report.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers and Principals may not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Whether or not a situation qualifies as an exceptional circumstance is at the discretion of the Headteacher and Principal.

Examples of 'exceptional circumstances' may include:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Principal is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs";
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative - if the Headteacher or Principal is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there WILL be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations the Headteacher or Principal may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision
- Exceptional circumstances as discussed above.

Reasons that are not considered valid and therefore will result in unauthorised absence include:

- Shopping visits
- Days out to attend functions
- Parent's work commitments
- School uniform issues (the school will provide replacements for the day if needed)
- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence will be requested.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.

Attendance is monitored, and unauthorised attendance will trigger close monitoring, along with one of the actions discussed in 3.5.

Study leave and Flexi-schooling requests

- It is not the school's policy to accept these requests. All students are expected to attend school on a full-time basis until their courses, including exams, are complete.

4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher and Principal, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Good attendance is rewarded in a number of ways. For example, certificates and badges, and reward breakfasts in school. Students whose attendance improves throughout the year are recognised and rewarded. Primary classes and secondary tutor groups with high attendance are rewarded and recognised during tutor time and assemblies. Where a student's attendance is dropping, the school will communicate with parents and attempt to find a solution.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors student absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call the school each day a child is ill.

If there is no contact from parents for two days a home visit will be made to ensure the whereabouts and well-being of the child.

If a student is absent twice in a half-term, an additional phone-call will be made to parents. If a student is absent three times a meeting between school and parents will take place to discuss support strategies.

If after speaking with parents a student's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the student will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Student-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

Attendance data for all students is collected and stored on the SIMs system. This is then analysed to track the attendance of individual students, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Principal and Headteacher

The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented across the Academy.

The primary Headteacher and the secondary Vice Principal in charge of Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitude are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school in their respective phases, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Primary Headteacher and the secondary Vice Principal in charge of Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitude also support other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The attendance officer

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual student level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Assistant Principal in charge of attendance
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.4 Class teachers and form tutors

Class teachers and form tutors are responsible for recording attendance throughout each day, using the correct codes, and saving the information onto the school system.

7.5 Achievement Directors

Achievement Directors are responsible for implementing attendance strategies with their year group, and for monitoring and acting on attendance data for their year group. They are required to have a weekly meeting with the attendance officer to discuss strategies and support.

7.6 Reception staff

Reception staff are not expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. Reception staff are able to transfer calls and messages to the Attendance Officer, who will take the necessary action.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Principal with attendance oversight. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

10. Coronavirus 2021

In the [DfE Schools Coronavirus Operational Guidance](#) published in February 2021, it states that “school attendance will be mandatory for all pupils from 8 March.” This means that it is the parent/carers’ duty to ensure their child attends school regularly, and that the school can issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, where this is not the case.

10.1 Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate because they:

- have symptoms or have had a positive test result
- live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household contact
- are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

Many children identified at the start of the pandemic as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are not at increased risk of serious outcomes from coronavirus (COVID-19) and children are gradually being removed from the shielding patient list (SPL) as appropriate, following review with a clinician. The advice for pupils who have been confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable is to shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice. They are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally. All 16 to 18 year olds with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality will be offered a vaccine in priority group 6 of the vaccination programme. At present, these children should continue to shield, and self-isolate if they have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of a positive case, even if they have been vaccinated.

We request that parents provide a copy of the shielding letter to us, to confirm that they are advised not to attend school or other educational settings whilst shielding guidance is in place.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, the school will provide work through the use of Microsoft Teams and other online platforms.

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

10.2 Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school

All other pupils must attend school. Where students and families are feeling anxious about returning to school, we would ask that you contact the school to discuss these concerns so we can put suitable support in place.

Appendix 1: Policy for students signing in and out of school during the school day

1. Students wishing to leave for appointments during the school day must either be collected by a parent/carer at reception, or the parent/carer should ring and speak with staff in advance. Unfortunately, notes are not always a reliable method of communication.
2. Students entering or exiting the building during the school day should do so only by main reception.
3. As both the main reception is fully staffed during school hours, students must sign in/out at main reception at all times.
4. Reception staff will record the name, time and reason for the student signing out and communicate this with the attendance team.
5. The member of staff at reception will inform the attendance team of students entering and exiting the building as soon as possible and provide the reason.
6. If a student exits the building without permission, or without evidence of a parent collecting them for an appointment, the senior leadership team will be informed immediately.
7. Whenever students evacuate the building, for example when the fire bell sounds, registers will be taken at the meeting point.
8. Post-16 students who have been issued with cards for signing in or out must only use the card allocated to them in their name. Failure to follow this expectation will be taken seriously and sanctions put in place by the school.

Appendix 2: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment

P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school

N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day