

The Aylesbury Vale Academy Trust



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:	Ben Lee, Assistant Principal
Other Related Policies and Procedures:	Admissions Policy, Equality Policy
Governor Committee:	Full Governing Body
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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 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 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.

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 9.00.

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 therefore 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 enter into contact with 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.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, 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, 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.

However, 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.

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 in a week will receive a 1-hour detention on the Friday. A student who is late to school three times in a week will receive a 2-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 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.

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 Headteacher 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 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 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, 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 medals, and access to end of school year reward trips. Students whose attendance improves throughout the year are recognized and rewarded. Tutor groups with high attendance are rewarded and recognised on screens around the school. 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's 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 continue 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 headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Headteacher

The Primary Headteacher and the Secondary Headteacher 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 Headteacher 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

Appendix 1: 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	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national

	exceptional circumstances	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