



# **Asterdale Primary School**

## **Attendance Policy**

Reviewed: 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Review: **April 2020**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Background**

### **Department for Education guidance *School attendance* (2014)**

Schools should:

- 1 Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- 2 Ensure every child has access to full-time education.
- 3 Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age, who are registered to a school attend regularly and arrive punctually.

### **Rationale**

Asterdale Primary School is committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for all children. Underpinning this is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually, they will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents, carers and school staff share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

For children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital children are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

### **Promoting good attendance**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child.

### **Responsibilities – Parents and Carers**

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any

special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at school. Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents should:-

- Ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and ready to learn.
- Instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- Impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct.
- Take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parent's evenings and other relevant meetings.
- Work in partnership with Asterdale Primary School to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- Ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of Asterdale Primary School.
- Notify School if their child is absent. This should be done as soon as possible - preferably on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence. This explanation should be confirmed - preferably in writing, when the child returns to school.
- Avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- Discuss with the tutor/class teacher and/or LM/SLT any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

### **Responsibilities - Schools**

Our school will support the attendance of their pupils and explore possible problems that may lead to non-attendance. Asterdale Primary School will complete all attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent, or on an approved educational activity.

For pupils of compulsory school age, schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

Schools should:-

- Work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole.
- Support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance.
- Be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and this will be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. School will recognise that

some parents have difficulty understanding written communications and that there may be a reluctance of some parents to come into school.

- Produce school attendance policies which are consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents.
- A member of the senior leadership team, in partnership with the Learning Mentor will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. They will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. It will be ensured that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.
- If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.
- Class teachers will ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Staff will promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Staff will liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Staff will communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- School staff will support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.
- School will aim to make contact with families on day 1 of absence if no notification is supplied by carers. This will be by phone, text or email.
- Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, School is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. If one is available, the school will place a child into the after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill and/or notify the Social Care team.

### **Responsibilities – Attendance and Pupil Support Service**

The EWS fulfils the statutory duty of the City Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities. The EWS retains the responsibility to initiate any legal sanctions against parents who fail to ensure their children attend school on a regular and punctual basis. Asterdale Primary School has an allocated Education Welfare Officer who will work in close partnership with the school.

In working closely with schools the Education Welfare Officer will offer the following Services:-

- Consultation Visits
- Consultation visits by the EWO will be allocated according to need. Need will be identified using the school's annual DfE absence data.

Schools will be banded into 3 categories

- Green - 95% can request EWO support when required.
- Amber - 93 to 95% will receive a fortnightly/3 weekly visit.
- Red - 93% or under will receive a weekly visit.

The purpose of the consultation visit will be to:-

- Identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This will include the regular examination of attendance registers. Pupils with persistent absence should be a clear priority and be readily identified by schools.
- Agree on focused, time-limited action which needs to be taken by the school and/or the EWO. (Before accepting a referral the EWO will expect school staff to have first undertaken some preliminary work themselves, e.g. discuss absence with parent, send a letter to parents highlighting consequences, send a follow up letter inviting parents into school to discuss consequences and hold a meeting to decide whether to refer the case to EWS.)
- Feedback and exchange information in relation to work which has been undertaken by the EWO and/or the school.
- Identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters.
- Advise the school on strategies for improving attendance.

### **The Use of Legal Action**

If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school), the Council may serve a School Attendance Order under sections 437-439 of the Education Act 1996 where evidence is provided that a child or children are not receiving a suitable education.

If a pupil who is registered at a school fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Education Welfare Officer and the school fail to secure that pupils return to regular attendance, the Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444 (1A) of the Education Act 2002.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly, the EWO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date. An application for a Parenting Order may be considered in such circumstances. In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to cooperate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the EWS team will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The EWS team will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order (Section 36 Children Act 1989) when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- Other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored.
- The attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as how it should be dealt with, will be noted.
- The EWO will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school.

### **Penalty Notices for Parents of Truants**

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 adds two sub-sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These sub-sections introduce penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures. It will be particularly useful as a sanction at an early stage, before attendance problems become entrenched and where the Local Authority considers that a prosecution would not be appropriate as a first action. Penalty notices will be considered for all parents where holidays during term time have not been authorised by the Head Teacher.

### **Attendance Registers**

A child not attending school attending school, or without good reason is considered a safeguarding matter. Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases. Registers must be taken at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Asterdale Primary School will ensure that pupils can be accounted for in an emergency, and that a pupil removed from the school at lunchtime will not go unnoticed.

Registers will record whether each pupil is present, absent or engaged in an approved educational activity. In the case of a pupil of compulsory school age who is absent, the register must also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the school.

Registers will open and close at regular, set times. When calling the register the appropriate mark and/or symbol should be placed against each pupil's name - gaps should not be left so that entries can be made later. In marking registers, schools must use the national set of symbols as required by the DfE. When the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised and any subsequent correction to the register made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence is established. Entries in manual registers should be written in red or black ink and any correction made in such a manner that the original entry and the correction are both clearly distinguishable. (Tippex should not be used).

Schools are required to notify their EWO of any pupil of compulsory school age child who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 5 school days, without a legitimate reason or contact from a parent.

A pupil's name may not be deleted from the attendance register unless it has also been deleted from the admissions register and a removal form completed. A pupil of compulsory school age shall have his/her name deleted from the admissions register when:

- The pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a school attendance order and another school is substituted by the Council for that named in the order, or the order is revoked.
- The pupil has been registered at another school. (Schools can register travellers' children even if they are on the roll of another school. The school the child normally attends is the base school; the other registration is temporary).
- The school has received written notification from the parent that they are educating the pupil themselves. (Elective Home Education)
- The pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer lives within a reasonable distance of school.
- In the case of a pupil granted leave of absence exceeding 10 days for the purpose of a holiday, the pupil has failed to attend the school within the 10 school days immediately following the last day of absence which was granted and the school is not satisfied that the pupil is unable to attend school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable case. Both the school and the Council must make reasonable enquiries to find out where the pupil is, to include letters, home visits and telephone calls.
- The pupil is certified by the School Medical Officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
- The pupil has been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days and both the school and EWO have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate him/her. Again, reasonable enquiries should be made. In such cases the school should ensure the EWO are informed and procedures concerning missing children protocol should be followed.
- The pupil had died.
- The pupil will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets and their parent has indicated that they intend to cease to attend.

At school includes, for these purposes, approved educational activities undertaken off site, including work experience.

- The pupil has been permanently excluded and the exclusion has been upheld by governors.
- The pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education and has not, on completing such education, transferred to a reception class at school.
- The pupil attends a special school and the Council gives consent for his/her name to be removed.

Where;

- i) the pupil is a boarder at a maintained school or academy;
- ii) charges for board and lodging are payable by the parent of the pupil; and
- iii) those charges remain unpaid by the pupil's parent at the end of the school term to which they relate.

If a school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure should establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Confirmation should then be sought from the receiving school. Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed. If a school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or a pupil has "disappeared" the matter should be referred immediately to the Education Welfare Service who will investigate missing pupils as part of Derby City Council's Missing Children's protocol. When a child's name is removed from the admissions register the school should notify the EWS.

Registers should be kept in a secure place for a period of 3 years after the end of the relevant school year. When computerised registration systems are used a print out of the register should be made once a month. A print out of the register relating to a particular school year should be bound in a single volume and retained for a period of 3 years. The EWS will inspect school's registers at periods during the course of the academic years. Any issues that may arise during inspection will be brought to the attention of the Headteacher and any appropriate advice will be given in writing.

### **Punctuality**

Asterdale Primary School ensures that punctuality is taken very seriously and highlights the need for this to parents. Pupils will be supervised on the playground from 8.45am and are expected to be in school for 8.55am. Any pupils arriving after 9.10-9.30am will be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session. When a pupil arrives after the register has closed but the parent provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as authorised absent for that session. When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and the parent fails to provide a satisfactory explanation then the pupil should be marked as "unauthorised absent" for the session. When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, the pupils presence on site will be recorded in a book in the school office for the purpose of emergency evacuation and health and safety regulations.

All instances of lateness will be investigated by school and, if required, referred directly to the EWS.

### **What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

- Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning.
- Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped.
- Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.
- Your child will bring home a school diary each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day.

- Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!
- For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

### **Authorising Absence**

Only the Headteacher or someone acting on his/her behalf can authorise any absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (i.e. telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after investigation, there is any doubt about the validity of any explanation offered, or when there is no explanation offered at all, the absence should be marked in the registers as unauthorised. Schools should communicate to parents the schools policy on attendance and the notification of absence procedures; this should be made available to parents in a relevant format that they can understand. This is valuable evidence for the EWS when prosecution for non-attendance is being considered. This will also ensure that schools are complying with equalities legislation.

### **Requests for Leave of Absence during Term Time**

Derby City Council promotes a zero tolerance to parents taking their children out of school during term time for the purpose of holidays. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 states that Headteachers cannot authorise absences for holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances. Holidays are not deemed to be exceptional circumstances; Head teachers can discuss applications for leave with their respective EWO if they are unclear about exceptional circumstances.

The EWS will investigate any absence referred by schools and will consider initiating legal proceedings against parents who take their children out of school without the Headteacher's permission. Sanctions such as penalty notices being issued to parents or prosecutions under Sect 444 Education Act 2002 will be considered.

### **Pupils Leaving School**

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to:

- Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing
- If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

**Absence through child participation in public performance, including theatre, film or TV work and modelling**

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as an authorised absence.

**Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport**

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

**Absence of a child from a Traveller family**

Absence for a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the *T* code.