

THE ASTLEY COOPER SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Principles:

- Attendance is strongly linked to achievement. Good attendance is therefore necessary if students are to fulfil their academic and social potential at Astley Cooper School
- Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of all staff, students and parents
- For high levels of attendance to be achieved good relationships are needed between home and school
- The creation of a school environment where students are safe, achieve, and enjoy coming are vital if attendance is to improve
- Strategies for dealing with both excellent and poor rates of attendance should be applied fairly and consistently to all students regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, disability and religion
- Wherever possible there should be early intervention to deal positively with high levels of attendance and appropriately with low levels of attendance. This intervention will involve working with external agencies if appropriate

Definition of terms:

Authorised absence – It is the decision of the school to determine whether a student's absence is authorised or not. Authorised absence is absence that the school has approved. The school may approve absence for any reason that it deems appropriate.

Unauthorised absence – This relates to student absence that the school has decided not to approve. Absence is also unauthorised if a reason for student absence is not provided to the school by parents.

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:

Part 6 of The Education Act 1996 Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

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.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Governors will establish an attendance and punctuality policy in consultation with the Headteacher, staff, students and parents. Governors will also work with the school to set an attendance target for each academic year. They will ensure that it is communicated to all stakeholders and that it is applied fairly and consistently. They will also ensure that the policy is regularly reviewed

- The Headteacher is responsible for the day to day implementation and management of the policy and procedures
- All staff will support students to ensure they attend regularly and will address problems that may lead to non attendance. All staff will recognise and reward good attendance. Staff will take registers twice daily and in all lessons. They will also record incidents of lateness. Staff will also share with students their attendance figures and work with them to improve them
- The attendance coordinator will contact parents on the first day of absence and record reasons for absence if a phone call is not received. Attendance figures will also be monitored on a weekly, fortnightly and half term basis and any concerns shared with relevant staff, students, external agencies, including the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) and parents
- The Attendance Manager is the member of SLT the headteacher has delegated the day to day management of the policy and procedures. They work closely with the attendance coordinator and Attendance improvement officer to ensure that attendance is monitored closely and safeguarding concerns are followed up and reported appropriately.
- The Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) will support the school in implementing procedures to raise the attendance of students. The AIO will also work with the school, families and individual students whose attendance is a concern in order to ensure they attend school regularly. If this intervention and support does not lead to sufficient improvement in the student's attendance the school will consider issuing parents a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) in line with guidelines issued to the school by Hertfordshire County Council
- Parents will ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time. They will also inform the school if their child is unable to attend for any reason by contacting the attendance coordinator in the school. Parents will work together with the school and other agencies to address any issues leading to non-attendance at school. Parents will endeavour to avoid having medical appointments during school hours
- The school discourages parents from taking holidays during term time. Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which came into effect on 1st September 2013 removed all references to family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time. Therefore, the Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where parents feel there are exceptional circumstances, they should apply in writing to the Headteacher. They will receive a written response to their request. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Absence for holiday which is not considered 'exceptional circumstances' will be marked as unauthorised absence and may lead to the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN)

Authorising absence

Only the Headteacher (or the staff he has delegated this responsibility to) can authorise absence. Every half day of absence must be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information on the reason for absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for good reason, such as illness or other unavoidable cause. Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' is to be given. These include:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy
- Absences which have not been properly explained, or for which the reason given is not acceptable
- Several sessions of absence for illness with no supporting medical evidence
- Unauthorised absence/holiday in term time which has not been given prior permission by the Headteacher

Parents are expected to contact the school on the first day of a child's absence using the school's phone number 01442 394141 (press 1) or email on attendance@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

All unauthorised absence will be followed up on a daily basis. Parents will be automatically contacted if their child has not registered and no explanation is provided. We use Iris Reach software to provide this service. The company complies with GDPR regulations.

Following up absence

- Parents must inform the school by telephone call, email or voicemail message, immediately a student is absent. NB a verbal message via a sibling or friend is not acceptable.
- When no reason for the absence has been obtained, and the absence continues, on their return to school, students must report to the Attendance coordinator.
- If a note has been provided, the Attendance coordinator will enter the details onto the database.
- On the first day of return to school, parents are asked to provide a written explanation for absence, which the tutor enters onto the MIS or sends to the Attendance coordinator so that these can be made available to the Head of year or Attendance Improvement officer (AIO) if requested. These should be passed to the HOY at the end of the year for safekeeping until the student is off roll.
- Tutors should alert the HOY to any aspect of notes that might indicate ongoing health problems/unusual home circumstances/too easy acceptance of excuses by parents/forgery/ absence for reasons other than poor health.
- If no reason is provided by the parent an email is sent home or phone call is made by the Attendance coordinator.
- Where no response is forthcoming, the absence will continue to be investigated by the Attendance coordinator who will also alert the HOY. A home visit may also be made.

- Attendance concerns and appropriate follow-up action or interventions will be discussed by the HOY with the Attendance Manager (AHT attendance) who will liaise with the Attendance Improvement Officer

Support on Return to School

- Tutors should endeavour to welcome a student back to school, particularly after a long absence.
- Subject teachers should help students to identify any work, including homework, that can reasonably be caught up and generally support re-integration.
- Students who have been absent for a continuous period, particularly where there have been difficult circumstances, should be referred by the Head of Year to the Inclusion Department. Inclusion Department staff will liaise with departments to help students to set targets for catching up, and identify any personal support that may be necessary.

Reducing persistent absence

The attendance coordinator and attendance manager meet weekly to discuss persistent absentees, defined as students with more than 10% absence (or less than 90% attendance). These students are also flagged by Heads of Year in Learning, Absence, Behaviour and Safeguarding (LABS) meetings. Persistent absentees will be phoned, written to and visited (in that order) to establish the attendance issues and develop a plan for their return. If there is no change, families may be invited to school for an attendance surgery appointment to expedite an improvement plan, which may include early or late starting times for school, a reduced timetable, school counselling, inclusion time or other initiatives which can facilitate a return to full attendance. If there is still no change in the attendance of the persistent absentee at this stage, the school will refer the case to the Attendance Improvement Officer (from county) for their help and the school will work with the AIO on a coordinated approach, which may include the threat of legal sanctions.

Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued*

- Penalty notices may only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence
- The pupil must have at least **15 sessions** (half days) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term
- The school must have sent a formal warning to the parent
- The school or Attendance Improvement Officer considers that issuing a penalty notice could avoid further absence
- Issuing a penalty notice does not conflict with any other legal action being taken
- A maximum of **two** separate penalty notices will be issued to a parent within any twelve month period
- Penalty notices will be issued for pupils of compulsory school age, up to the end of the spring term of year 11
- A penalty notice will not be issued in respect of a pupil who is looked after by the Local Authority without the prior agreement of the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Attendance

- Students will attend school regularly and on time. Once in school they will attend all lessons on time and they will remain on the school site. Students will not be allowed to leave the school site during the day without written or verbal permission from parents / carers
- Students will be aware of their attendance figures and should strive to improve it

Punctuality

AM registration

- Students to be on school site by 8.25am
- Students to be in form rooms by 8.30am
- Anyone who arrives in school after the 8.30 is marked late
- Registers will close at 8.45. Students arriving after 8:45am will be asked for proof as to why they are late. Sanctions, including late detentions, will be given to all students late to school without a valid reason.

A punctual start to lessons:

- All students are to move from lesson to lesson in an orderly and prompt fashion
- Any student who arrives to a lesson after the last name on the register has been called will be deemed late. There will need to be a degree of professional judgement from staff here as to whether a student is late with a genuine reason or not
- Students arriving up to ten minutes late without a valid reason should be marked late in the register and must catch up with missed work, in a ten-minute detention if necessary.
- Students who arrive more than 10 minutes after the start of the lesson without a valid reason should automatically be given a school detention for truancy
- Students with persistently poor punctuality around the school site will be referred to Heads of Year and may be put on punctuality report.

Rewards for good punctuality

- Students will receive house points each week for 100% punctuality
- These house points lead to termly raffle draws and prizes
- Students with good attendance may qualify for reward trips or events

Reporting and monitoring data

Student attendance is reported to parents every year in their child's academic report, and more often if there are concerns.

Pupil-level absence data will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Attendance is collected and stored using the management information system (MIS) - currently SIMS but moving to Go4Schools. Data is used to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support

The attendance policy links to the: Safeguarding policy and Behaviour policy