

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:

- The Education Act 1996 Part 6
- The Education Act 2002 Part 3
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 Part 7
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

- The Education (Information about individual) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- Working together to improve school attendance (August 2024)
- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (August 2024)

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.
- The school system 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 2024 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations and Working together to improve school attendance which came into effect on 19th August 2024 has 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 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
- Holiday during term time - Headteacher can no longer authorise this.

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.
- 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 / Local authorities.

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 with the Head of Year 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 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.
- Penalty notice fines will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent.
- The school must have sent a letter of concern.
- The school would offer an appointment to parents in which both parties can discuss the child's absence and an action plan to support going forward.
- The school has a right to make a referral to the County if no improvement after the agreed action plan.
- The school or Attendance Improvement Officer considers that issuing a penalty notice could avoid further absence

- The pupil must have at least 10 sessions (half days) or 5 full days of unauthorised absence in any 10 week period.
- The first time a penalty notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.
- If within 3 years, a second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.
- If within 3 years, there is a third offence of student absence in term time or Irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate, due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education.'
- Issuing a penalty notice does not conflict with any other legal action being taken
- 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 from 8.00am
- Students to be in line up by 8.30am
- School gate closes at 8:35am
- Anyone who arrives in school after 8.30am will arrive through reception and receive a late detention
- Registers will close at 8.45.

A punctual start to lessons:

- All students are to move from lesson to lesson in an orderly and prompt fashion
- Any student who arrives at 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 a punctuality report.

Rewards for good punctuality:

- Students will receive termly certificates for 100% attendance
- Students will receive x2 house points, every morning 1 for equipment and 1 for uniform during form time
- 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 also tracked in 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.