

Abbots Hall Primary Academy



Pupil Attendance Policy

Our Academy works in collaboration with the schools, academies and governing bodies in the Northeast Cluster and The Inspiration Learning Trust to have a common approach to attendance management. This is supported by Thurrock Local Authority.

Agreed by Governors:

September 2023

Signed: _____

Next Review Date:

September 2024

Version control

Date	Version no.	Key changes from previous version
10/2021	V2	Policy updated with EWS recommendations
7/2/22	V3	Removal of 'panel' from meeting invites to reflect formality and personnel present. Updated key staff.
9/23	V4	Added attendance management process Removed reference to EWS Edited stage letters in appendix Made all suggested changes by Local Authority Education Engagement Officer

Introduction

This document is a statement of aims, principles and strategies for Attendance. Government guidelines on attendance and punctuality have been taken into consideration in its foundation.

Abbots Hall Primary Academy is a successful school that aims to provide the best available learning opportunities for children living in the local community. Without the help and support of parents, some children will find it difficult to adjust to the structured environment that schools have to be in order to achieve their objectives. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their time at school, it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive at school on time every day that the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

This policy sets out the information we think will help you to explain to your child what is important to their future success and how, with your support, attending school regularly will help them to achieve their full potential.

School Target for 2020/21

Type of absence	2021/2022 Actual	2022/2023 Actual	2023/2024 Target
Authorised absence	5.9%	6.0%	3%
Unauthorised absence	1.6%	1.9%	1%
Overall absence	7.5%	7.9%	4%

*Due to the high absence for 2019/2020 (Covid19) the continuing targets for 2020/2021 will stay the same.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

The effect of absence on progress					
<i>A whole year has 365 days; a school year has 190 days. That leaves 175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping and other appointments.</i>					
No absence	10 days absence	12 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence	38 days absence
190 days of education	180 days of education	178 days of education	171 days of education	161 days of education	152 days of education
100%	95%	94%	90%	85%	80%
Very Good Best chance of success. Gets your child off to a flying start.		Worrying		Serious Concern Your child will find it very difficult to make progress.	

	Less chance of success. Makes it harder for your child to make progress.	May result in court action!
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The Supreme Court ruled against a parent, who had earlier won a legal challenge against a £120 fine for unauthorised absence in a case brought by the Isle of Wight council.

The Department for Education (DfE) stated, "It is right that an individual Headteacher has that flexibility to make a decision to ask the local authority to issue a penalty notice for non-attendance." The High Court has ruled that the interpretation of "regular" attendance, at the center of this long-running dispute, should be decided by the school. The decision makes clear that parents in England can be fined if their children miss school without the agreement of the head teacher, except for reasons such as illness or family bereavement.

Abbots Hall Primary Academy

Any absence that a child has from school affects them as their learning becomes disrupted and social interactions can also be affected. Regular absences will have a serious effect on their academic progress and can affect a child's confidence within school.

Ensuring your child attends school regularly is your legal responsibility and allowing absence from school without good reason is a criminal offence and may result in prosecution.

A few days a week/month can quickly build up –

365 days in a year	<u>Attendance</u> 190 school days in total/ 39 weeks	<u>Absence</u>
100% attendance	190 days	0
95% attendance	180 days	2 weeks absence
90% attendance	171 days	4 weeks absence
85% attendance	161 days	6 weeks absence
80% attendance	152 days	Absence equal to the first school term Aug-Oct
75% attendance and below	143 days	9+ weeks absence

Safeguarding

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the Curriculum and anti-bullying.

Your child may be at risk of harm if they are frequently absent and so failing to attend school regularly will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall

cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable: -

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs, he/she may have Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State regarding safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Key personnel	
Designated Senior Attendance Leader	Headteacher – Jack Arnold
Deputy Designated Senior Attendance Leader	Deputy Headteacher – Stuart Holmes
Attendance Officer	Family Support Worker – Dawn Smith
Office Manager	Pauline Serowka

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent from school, you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and inform us of the reason for the absence.
- Provide us with an appointment card/appointment letter if taking your child out of school for a medical appointment; your child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
- Provide the school with medical evidence of any absence lasting more than 4 consecutive days (i.e., medical note, medical appointment card, medicine bottle)
- Provide the school with medical evidence for all future illness if your child has already had 5 different occasions in the school year when they have been absent due to illness.

If your child is absent from school, we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. If there is no answer we will leave a voicemail and telephone other contacts saved on the school system.
- If we are still unable to contact you via telephone after the first days absence, we will undertake a home visit.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable in the school. If your child misses the start of the day, it can have a detrimental effect on their progress as they find it hard to settle and they will inevitably miss vital introductions to lessons. It also disturbs the class routines, which has a negative effect on other children's learning.

The school doors open at 8:40am and children must be in class for registration by 8:50am. If a child arrives at school after 8:50am they will need to come via the school office for their details to be recorded on the class electronic register. If a child is up to 30 mins late, they are marked in the electronic register as 'late' (L), pupils

arriving more than 30 minutes after the close of registration will be regarded as absent from the morning session and will be given an unauthorised absence mark (U).

Obviously, there are times when your child may be late for school due to an appointment; this type of lateness is marked accordingly, although the school does need to be notified prior to the lateness. If an appointment is later in the morning or afternoon it may be possible to send your child into school to obtain their 'present' mark and then collect them nearer to the appointment time. Ideally, where possible, appointments should be made for your child outside of the school day.

A letter will be sent home if your child is late on more than 4 occasions within a month and lateness will continue to be monitored from that point. Further lateness will result in a 'persistently late' letter and if the problem continues this will result in a Support meeting where an Action Plan will be put together.

If you are having problems getting your child to school on time you can approach us at any time to support, you and help resolve the problem.

First Day Contact

It is vital that you tell us as early as possible if you know your child is not going to be attending school. We have a 24hr answer phone service. We have the app Studybugs, where you can report your child's absence. If you don't contact the school, we will have to try to contact you, so it is important that you regularly notify us of your latest contact telephone number or any change of address. If you don't contact us and we can't contact you we will initially go down the contact list you have provided, until we know the cause of absence if we still have not made contact, we will make a home visit and may have to report your child as a 'missing person'.

Failure to give the school an acceptable reason for an absence will result in an unauthorised absence mark

Medical/Dental Appointments

Medical appointments should be arranged outside of school times, if an appointment is needed during the school day, proof of this appointment needs to be shown to the school office upon collection of your child.

Early Collection from School

We understand that there are specific circumstances that require parents to collect their children before the end of the school day, (following their afternoon registration mark). Where this is the case, the school requires prior written notice. For families where these are rare occurrences the school will accommodate this BUT if this becomes a regular occurrence the school reserves the right to unauthorise.

Understanding types of absence:

An electronic register is taken in the school every morning and afternoon (each classed as a 'session') and every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required by the school.

AUTHORISED absences are sessions away from the school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental

appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies or other unavoidable situations. Obviously, children do need to be kept off school if they are too ill to attend, however, if they are simply 'not feeling right' or are just tired then this will not be authorised. It is also important that a child returns to school as soon as possible after feeling unwell, for example, it is not acceptable not to send a child back to school on Friday simply because they have been unwell Monday-Thursday.

UNAUTHORISED absences are sessions away from the school which the school deems unreasonable. This type of absence may result in legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absences include:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been reported
- absences which have not been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is classed a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason, both authorised and unauthorised absences. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to any child's progress and educational prospects. Any case that is at the PA level or is moving towards it is given priority and you will be notified immediately and will be asked to attend a Support meeting where an Action Plan will be drawn up, and if there continues to be a decline in attendance you will be asked to attend an Attendance. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully in terms of both attendance and academic progress and most PA cases are also referred to the Local Authority.

Unauthorised Leave of Absence (term time holiday)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have been amended so that from 1st September 2013 references to family holiday (including reference to headteachers allowing up to 10 school days for a term time holiday) and extended leave have been removed. The amendments make clear that parents **do not** have a legal right to take children out of school on holiday, and headteachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days the child may be away from school if the leave is granted.

Exceptional leave forms must be completed for **ALL** holidays, failure to complete and send a form in will lead to a referral to the Local Authority.

Parents must apply for leave of absence in advance of taking it, failure to do so will result in the absence being marked as an unauthorised absence code 'O' rather than an unauthorised holiday code 'G'. All applications need to be made **at least 4 weeks** before the period of absence and before personal and travel arrangements are made.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday taken, the case may be referred to the Local Authority who may issue a Penalty Notice (See below). If a leave of absence is taken, staff will **not** set extra work for children to do during their absence or on their return.

Attendance management process

The school will use standard letters for information. The following table outlines when letters will be issued:

Attendance procedure	Action
A pupil has had 5 or more days' absence	Unauthorised leave of absence letter sent. Upon the child's return, the school will send a penalty notice application to the Local Authority.
Attendance has fallen below 96%	Stage 1 letter sent
Attendance has not improved since Stage 1 letter was sent	Stage 2 letter sent including support meeting invite
Attendance has still not improved since Stage 2 letter	Stage 3 letter sent informing of potential for further action
Attendance has still not improved since Stage 3 letter	Warning of Penalty Notice sent
Attendance has not improved 30 school days after issuing Warning of Penalty Notice	Penalty Notice issued
There is a high incidence of late marks	Late letter sent via email

All letters referring to a fall in attendance have a reply slip attached to acknowledge receipt of the letter and parents could respond accordingly. These letters also give an invitation to come into the school to discuss any attendance issues or difficulties if required.

We will do our best to help you with any problems that affect your child's attendance, but we cannot help you if you do not tell us. In fact, where parents consistently fail to cooperate with the school, the absences will be unauthorised .

In cases such as this, we will invite you to a support meeting. The purpose of this meeting will be to give you the opportunity to discuss the reasons for your child's poor attendance/persistent lateness and for us therefore to support you in ensuring your child gets to school where possible. The Family Support Worker will be present at the meeting. At the meeting an Action Plan will be drawn up with targets for your child to meet with respect to their attendance.

We review children's attendance monthly and we will on occasion request evidence for medical appointments and parents unable to provide evidence will find absence is unauthorised.

Penalty Notices

Thurrock Council have issued a 'Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence from School,' which came into effect on 1st September 2022. This complies with the relevant law as regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for pupils.

Irregular Attendance

Penalty Notices can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence, and in one or more of the following circumstances. Parents must first be sent a letter warning that a Penalty Notice could be issued and allowing them 30 days to evidence a commitment to improving their child's attendance.

- At least 12 sessions of unauthorised absence are recorded against the pupil's name within 120 available sessions (consecutive). (One session is a half day).
- The parent does not appear to be willing to take responsibility for securing their child's attendance and has not co-operated with any proposed voluntary or supportive measures.
- The School Attendance Support Team believes that issuing a Penalty Notice could avoid further absence, in the early stages of an existing case, for example, where a parent continually fails to provide an explanation for a pupil's absence when requested to do so.

Unauthorised Leave of Absence (term time holiday)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in 2013 so that references to family holiday (including reference to headteachers allowing up to 10 school days for a term time holiday) and extended leave were removed. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days the child may be away from school if the leave is granted.

Penalty Notices can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence, and in one or more of the following circumstances.

- If a headteacher does not authorise a request from a parent for term time leave of absence and the parent takes the leave. **In such circumstances, the school must advise parents of this and how a possible referral to the Local Authority could lead to a penalty notice.**
- There must be at least 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised term time leave of absence taken:
OR
- It is the second unauthorised leave of absence in a rolling 12-month period

Exclusion/suspension

- Where a pupil of compulsory school age who has been excluded or suspended from school, either for a fixed period or permanently, is found to be present in a public place during school hours in the first five days of the exclusion, without reasonable justification. The parent must have been notified in writing by the school at the time of the exclusion/suspension of this and the days to which it applies.

Penalty Notices will be issued by The Local Authority; Headteachers may make an application to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice in respect of pupils registered at their school; Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers can issue a Penalty notice in the cases of excluded pupils in a public place.

Once a person is issued with a Penalty Notice a fine must be paid, this is set by regulation at £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the fine is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority may prosecute for the offence to which the Notice applies.

Penalty Notices can be issued in respect of each child and to each parent in relation to each instance of unauthorised absence.

Those responsible for attendance matters in this school:

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the following staff have specific attendance related responsibilities

- **Class Teacher** – To complete electronic registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily; to be alert to early signs of issues which may result in non-attendance; to inform the attendance officer of any attendance concerns.
- **Office Manager** - To ensure children who are late or absent are added to the electronic register including recording reasons and first day absence calls.
Family Support Worker– The Family Support Worker role is to call parents who have not notified the school of an absence and if unable to make contact a home visit may be necessary, or the child may need to be reported as missing. To liaise with class teachers over attendance concerns; to alert parents over pupil absence and for frequent lateness and to closely monitor all identified children; to consult and liaise with the Local Authority and refer PA children to them; to promote good attendance within the school with assemblies, achievement certificates and rewards.
- **Head Teacher and Governors** – To ensure all attendance procedures are carried out in accordance with the Attendance Policy and to work with the Family Support Officer to raise the profile of attendance within the school and deal with the attendance issues that arise.

Re-integration programmes

Where children have been absent from school for some time, they may need to return on a gradual basis. Individual cases will need to be discussed with the relevant member of staff and agreement reached as to the pace and time scale of any return.

Summary

Whilst we do understand that children are ill from time to time, individual pupils' academic attainment does suffer if they miss school on a regular basis. Also, coming in late to school can have a detrimental effect on a child's progress as they find it hard to settle and will inevitably miss vital introductions to lessons. It also disturbs the class routines, which has a negative effect on other children's learning.

The school has a responsibility to discourage parents from removing their children from education for any reason as absences may have a negative impact on a pupil's educational attainment and progress. A pupil who takes 10 days absence a year will actually be spending more time at home than at school in that year and will only attain 94.7% attendance. 10 days absence means a child misses 50 hours of education.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance; equally parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school.

All staff within the school are committed to working with both parents and pupils to ensure that attendance within the school is as high as it can be so that the pupils receive the best education that they can which will improve their life opportunities

Appendices to Abbots Hall Primary Academy

Attendance Policy

- Stage 1 letter
- Stage 2 letter
- Stage 3 letter
- Penalty Notice Warning letter
- Persistently late letter

Abbots Hall Primary Academy

Committed to Safeguarding Children

Headteacher: Mr Jack Arnold
Deputy Headteacher: Mr Stuart Holmes
Abbots Drive, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex SS17 7BW



Tel: 01375 673188 Fax: 01375 679616

Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: **Child's name. Date of birth**

School attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils. There is a clear link between school attendance, a child's academic achievement, their wellbeing and wider life chances. As a school we are committed to fulfilling our responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across our school community. We regularly review the attendance of all pupils in accordance with our Attendance Policy, a copy of which is published on our school website, Add electronic link to the policy on your website.

The purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention that **Child's name** attendance is currently **...%** which is below the school attendance target of 96%. A Pupil Attendance Record (PAR) is included for your information.

We understand there may be valid reasons for **Child's name** absence, and you may have already conveyed these to us. There may; however, be circumstances that we are unaware of.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss with you, any issues affecting **Child's name's** attendance as there may be support that can be offered to remove any barriers to full attendance that you or your child are experiencing.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school office to arrange an appointment for an informal meeting.

Child's name attendance will continue to be monitored.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J Arnold'.

Mr J Arnold
Headteacher

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dawn Smith'.

Miss Dawn Smith
Family Support Worker

Achieve, Believe, Create

Email: admin@abbotshall.thurrock.sch.uk

Website: www.abbots-hall.co.uk

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Tel: 01375 673188 Fax: 01375 679616

Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: **Child's name. Date of birth**

Further to our letter dated... notifying you that **Child's Name** attendance had fallen below the school attendance target and was being monitored.

Following a recent review, it is disappointing to note that **Child Name** has incurred further absences and their attendance is now ...%. A Pupil Attendance Record (PAR) is included for your information.

It is important for us to discuss **Child's name's** absences from school and the impact on their learning and we therefore invite you to meet with Miss Smith in school on **Date, at Time.**

At this meeting, with your consent we will complete a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to identify the barriers to **Child's Name** full attendance and explore what support could be offered to you.

If this appointment is not convenient for you, please contact the school immediately to make alternative arrangements. Should you fail to attend the appointment without notification the matter may have to be escalated in accordance with our attendance management processes, as set out in our Attendance Policy.

Please be advised that future absences due to illness will no longer be authorised unless medical evidence is provided. This can include evidence of attendance at a medical appointment, a copy of a prescription for your child which clearly states their name and the date prescribed and/or a letter from your child's Doctor.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mr J Arnold'.

Mr J Arnold
Headteacher

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Miss Dawn Smith'.

Miss Dawn Smith
Family Support Worker

Date

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**CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND COURTS SERVICES ACT 2000
ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003
EDUCATION ACT 1996
CHILDREN ACT 1989**

Dear

Re: School attendance warning to parents/carers of **child name (date of birth)**

We have been trying to work with you to improve **Child's Name** attendance since **(date of stage 1 letter)** when you were first notified that their attendance had fallen below the school target.

You were invited to attend a Stage 2 meeting on **...** to identify the barriers to **Child's Name's** attendance at school and to explore what support was available to you.

You now need to be specific for each individual case.

- a) You attended this meeting and consented to the completion of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which was submitted to Thurrock Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
*Detail support offered and comment on engagement/non-engagement.**
- b) You attended this meeting but did not give your consent to the completion of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in order to seek support for you and your family.**
- c) You did not attend this meeting and you made no contact to make alternative arrangements.**

Please include here the details of any other support that has been offered e.g. reduced timetable, buddy in school, named member of staff, time out card, toilet pass etc.

Child's Name attendance has deteriorated further and is now unacceptable being only **...%**.

***If attendance is below 90% include: The Department for Education considers any attendance below 90% to be 'persistently absent'. A Pupil Attendance Record (PAR) is included for your information.**

****If attendance is below 50% include: The Department for Education considers any attendance below 50% to be 'severely absent'. A Pupil Attendance Record (PAR) is included for your information.**

It is your legal responsibility to ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually. Failure to ensure your child's attendance may result in a referral to the Local Authority for statutory action to be taken against you. Action may include a Penalty Notice being issued (up to £120 per parent per child), consideration for an Education Supervision Order through the Family Court or application to the Magistrates Court for a summons to begin legal proceedings against you. In this matter the Courts may impose a Fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months custodial sentence.

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We must now consider whether to refer your child's case to the Local Authority for statutory action. Before doing so, we invite you to meet with Mr Arnold (Designated Senior Leader for Attendance) in school on **Date, at Time**. At this meeting you will have a further opportunity to discuss the barriers to **Child's Name's** attendance and to explore whether a Parenting Contract would be beneficial and encourage an improvement in their attendance.

If this appointment is not convenient for you, please contact the school immediately to make alternative arrangements. Should you fail to attend the appointment without notification the matter will be escalated in accordance with our attendance management processes, as set out in our Attendance Policy.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Arnold
Headteacher

Miss Dawn Smith
Family Support Worker

To the Parents/Guardians of **name of child**

Date

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Tel: 01375 673188 Fax: 01375 679616

Lateness

In the month of September **name of child** has been late for school on **number of** occasions. Coming in late to school can have a detrimental effect on a child's progress as they find it hard to settle and will inevitably miss vital introductions to lessons. It also disturbs the class routines, which has a negative effect on other children's learning. As a reminder, the school doors open at 8.40am and the children should be in their classes by 8.50am, any child arriving after this time will be recorded as 'Late' in the register. Pupils arriving more than 30 minutes after the close of registration will be regarded as absent from the morning session. If there is a specific difficulty that you are experiencing which is preventing you getting **name of child** to school on time, then please come in to discuss the matter so that we can help to prevent her continual lateness. Please could you fill in the attached form to acknowledge receipt of this letter and ensure that **name of child** arrives in school before 8.50am each day.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Arnold
Headteacher

Miss D Smith
Family Support Worker

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