

AAT Attendance Policy

Introduction

It is vital that children attend school regularly and on time. This policy explains how this can be achieved by the school and parents/carers and pupils working together. It also clarifies areas of responsibility.

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects a child's learning, and serious or persistent absence will affect long term progress and social development. All schools in the Aurora Academies Trust have a responsibility to ensure that a pupil's intellectual, social, emotional and welfare needs are met daily. In addition to this, the link between persistent absence and/or lateness and safeguarding is well-documented - statistics have shown that children who do not attend school regularly are more likely to find themselves in unsafe or illegal situations.

Promoting good attendance is a joint responsibility between the parents or carers, school and pupils.

The Role of the Parent/Carer

1. Parents/carers are expected to send children into school every day on time.
2. We encourage all parents/carers to contact the school at an early stage if they are experiencing any difficulties with their child's attendance, so that we can offer support and advice. There is normally something that we can do to help, and it is much better if we can offer support before any difficulties become entrenched.
3. If a child is going to be absent from school parents/carers must report the absence to the school on the first day of each absence and make contact on any subsequent days of absence. Parents/carers should continue to report absences each day until their child returns to school, unless they have been advised by a health professional that the child should be absent for a specific period. In these cases parents/carers are expected to be able to supply a doctor/hospital note or letter confirming the expected period of absence.
4. If a child is absent due to illness and any hospital or doctor's appointment letters can be provided, this is also helpful. If a child has received medical treatment for an illness, and/or has ongoing symptoms or treatment then this information should be provided for the school's records. An Individual Health Care Plan may be appropriate in certain circumstances.
5. If a child's attendance falls below a level judged to be acceptable by the school then the parent/carer(s) will be informed in writing that any absence reported as illness cannot be authorised unless medical evidence is provided. In these cases it is the

parent/carer's responsibility to work with the school and health professionals and ensure that this can be fulfilled.

6. If a child is not in school and we have had no communication from parents/carers, by 9.30am they will receive a text message from the school requesting information and/or a reason for the child's absence. Parents/carers should respond to this message as quickly as possible. This reassures us that children are safe. Unexplained absences will always be recorded as unauthorised.
7. It is parents/carers' responsibility to ensure that the school is provided with current home and/or mobile telephone numbers for a minimum of 2 adult contacts, and home address in case of an emergency. We will check this information at least annually. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school of any changes to these details immediately.
8. Parents/carers must not book family holidays or trips during term time.
9. Any medical/dental appointments should be made outside school time whenever possible.
10. It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time. Failing to secure a child's regular and punctual attendance at school is a criminal offence in law and may result in Fixed Penalty fines from the Local Authority and/or prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This can carry a penalty of up to £2500 and/or up to three months imprisonment, as well as a criminal record. The definition of "parent" in this legislation can include any adult who has "day to day care of the child", regardless of parental responsibility.
11. It is really important that parents/carers communicate openly with school staff, particularly if they are experiencing problems with their child's attendance – school staff really do want to help.

The Role of the School

1. The school will make contact with parents/carers on the first day of any unexplained absence. This will be by text message and can be followed up by a telephone call.
2. The school will keep accurate attendance registers as required by law.
3. The school will regularly monitor absence levels for all children and if there are concerns will follow a clear and consistent process for all levels of attendance concern. This can include letters to inform parents/carers that there are concerns around their child's attendance; meetings in school to set targets and agree on actions to improve attendance; home visits where children are not at school and school staff are having difficulty contacting adults; and referrals to other agencies as appropriate.
4. The school will always try to offer support and work together with families where attendance is a concern. This can include signposting families to other agencies where help might be available.
5. The school will follow the Local Authority's guidance and procedures around addressing attendance concerns – this can include making referrals for fixed penalty

finances and/or legal action against parents/carers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

6. The school will provide parents with details on their child's attendance upon request.
7. The school will provide current information (via website, newsletters, display boards etc.) regarding the school's attendance levels and expected target, which is agreed each year.
8. The school will recognise and celebrate good attendance using assemblies, certificates and other rewards for individuals with excellent or improved attendance, as well as classes.

Understanding types of absence

The school is required to register each child twice a day (am and pm). For each registration a present or other mark is given. An absence mark is either authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absences may be for illness, medical appointments, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave has been given. This can include

- Absence reported as illness where parents/carers have not provided medical evidence despite being informed in writing that they will need to do so
- Parents keeping their child off school unnecessarily (e.g. birthdays, shopping, looking after other children or adults, day trips etc)
- Truancy
- Unexplained absences
- Holidays during term time

Lateness

It is vital that children arrive at school on time. Being late is not acceptable; missing the start of the school day can be very disruptive for the child, the teacher and the whole class.

Lateness is monitored by the school and letters will be sent to inform parents/carers where there are concerns around persistent lateness.

If a child arrives at school after the registers have been closed (**9.00am**), it will be recorded by a different late code (U instead of L). Although this code shows that the child is in school, it is recorded as an unauthorised half-day absence. If this situation persists, parents/carers are at risk of Fixed Penalty Notice fines from the Local Authority.

Holidays in term time

From September 2013, the Department of Education introduced guidance, which aims to reduce the amount of holiday taken by children in term time. The only leave of absence (holiday) which can be agreed by the school would be for exceptional cases such as where parent(s)/carer(s) are in the armed forces or emergency services and annual leave is fixed. Written confirmation of this would need to be provided. Head teachers are not able to authorise other holidays during term time.

Full details of Fixed Penalty Notices regarding School Attendance are publically available on Local Authority websites.

Vulnerable Children

The attendance of vulnerable pupils such as Looked after Children and those on a Child Protection or Child in Need Plan will be closely monitored by the school. If these children are absent, the school will advise the child's Social Worker.

Children Missing in Education (CME)

All schools have a legal duty to inform the Local Authority if a child is not accessing an appropriate education – this can include long periods of non-attendance, or if a child leaves a school but details of the new school are not provided. This will also apply to children where they are taken out of the country. Schools are committed to following local guidelines.