

ATTENDANCE POLICY



KING EDWARD VI ASTON SCHOOL

Educational excellence for our City

Responsible Board	Curriculum and Welfare Committee
Policy Officer	S Hall
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1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- To promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- It also refers to:
- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Students

Students are expected to:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time.
- Inform their form tutor of any problem or reason that has prevented them from attending school.

- See their subject teachers to catch up with work they have missed due to any absence.
- No student in Y7-11 should leave the school grounds during the school day without parental approval and/or the permission of staff. Students should ensure they have signed out before leaving the school site.
- No sixth form student should leave the school site before **12.50 pm**. On leaving they should sign out using the Inventory system.

3.2 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day possible.
- Contact the school by 8.45am on the first day of absence due to illness via Studybugs (see section 4).
- Request planned absences by emailing students services as far in advance as possible.
- Provide valid reasons for any absence.
- Support their child to achieve maximum attendance.
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time other than for medical reasons, and these should be avoided where possible.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting their child's Year Leader

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Monitoring attendance for the whole school and identifying any student who may be cause for concern each half term.
- Discussing the attendance of students with year leaders at least once each half term.
- Produce a report on student attendance for the Headteacher each term with specific reference to the school attendance targets.
- Report to SLT and the Attendance Team on attendance matters each term.
- Line manage the Student Support and Services Officers.
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, in lieu of the headteacher.

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr S. Hall and can be contacted via email at S.Hall@ast.kevibham.org

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Arrange a School Attendance Referral Meeting (SARM) when attendance reaches less than 90%. Record all details on a SARM record sheet.
- Add any relevant information to the School Attendance Tracker.
- Support YL/DSL to make a referral to BCC if SARM meeting does not have desired improvements on attendance.
- Where a referral from the school is accepted by BCC, undertake home visits if necessary and provide feedback.
- Where necessary, support legal proceedings on behalf of the Local Authority including parental prosecutions and referring to the BCC attendance team.
- Support the school in the use of penalty notices and parenting contracts.

Support the Year Leader or DSL to establish multi-agency meetings should the need arise.

3.5 Form tutors

Form tutors are expected to:

- Continually monitor the attendance of each student in their form.
- Support students to maintain at least 95% attendance by holding attendance conversations with students on less than this.
- Complete morning registers accurately by 8.50am, making sure that each student is marked either present or absent. No registration entry should be left blank.
- Challenge suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence. If a form tutor does not accept the explanation offered for absence as a valid reason then the matter must be referred to the Year Leader.
- Add any relevant information to the School Attendance Tracker.
- Inform the Year Leader of any other concerns relating to student attendance and, if necessary, record on CPOMS.
- All instances of unauthorised absence should be followed up and the Year Leader informed.
- No student should be absent without a reason being provided. Student Support and Services Officers will contact parents for reasons, and then insert an absence code.
- If a student is late on TWO occasions in a week, without good reason, they should automatically receive an appropriate sanction (see section 4.4).

3.6 School student services staff

School student services staff will:

- Ensure that all registers are marked each morning and afternoon session.
- Contact parents by 10.30 am if a student is not in school and no reason has been provided for the absence.
- Ensure that tutors and Year Leaders are informed of any relevant communication with parents.
- Monitor carefully the attendance of students on the Vulnerable Children List.
- Reception staff will keep a log of students signing in after registration has closed.

3.7 Year Leader

The Year Leader is expected to:

- Reinforce good practice in tutor meetings.
- Oversee the registration process and support registers being completed accurately and on time.
- Monitor the attendance of students in their year group and analyse data every two weeks.
- Be a point of contact for parents.
- Initiate contact with parents when attendance falls below 93%.
- Add any relevant information to the School Attendance Tracker.
- Arrange online work for, and plan for the return of, long-term absentees.

3.8 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices where necessary, or authorising the designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance to be able to do so
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

3.9 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:

- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
- The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our AM attendance register during registration at the start of each school day and during period 5 for PM attendance. We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8:40 am and ends at 3:35 pm

Pupils must arrive at school by 8:40 on each school day.

The register for the first session (AM) will be taken at the beginning of registration and will be kept open until 9:05. The register for the second session (PM) will be taken at the beginning of period 5 and will be kept open until 2:45.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:45 or as soon as practically possible. This can be done via Studybugs

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents should request planned absence via Studybugs as soon as possible.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Refer to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the 'L' code.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the 'U' code

Students arriving late before the register has closed twice or more in a week will be issued a lunchtime detention

Students arriving after registers have closed will be issued with a same date lunchtime detention, and this will negatively affect their overall attendance.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, the school reserves the right to issue a notice to improve, a penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2) as appropriate.

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents (see definition of 'parent', as used in this policy, in section 3.7 above) about their child's attendance and absence levels via their regular reports. Parents can also access their child attendance data at any time via the Edulink app.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and before the absence has started. Leave of absence should be requested via Studybugs.

5.2 Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The Headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the

national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

5.3 Absences for religious reasons

Generally, up to 2 days' absence in an academic year will be authorised for religious observance if the day concerned is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which Parents and pupils belong. This absence must be requested in advance by completing a leave of absence form (below). For major days of religious observance (e.g. Eid), parents will be asked to make a request via a dedicated email address, which will be shared shortly before the date of the observance. Requests for religious observance on days not exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which Parents and pupils belong will be recorded as authorised.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The importance of attendance and punctuality is reinforced to students and their parents at every opportunity. Attendance is discussed weekly in form time and regular assemblies are run emphasising the impact of good attendance on attainment. Attendance information is shared with parents regularly via report cards and attendance alerts are sent when students' overall attendances drop below specific milestones.

Students can earn certificates for good attendance which are handed out in year group assemblies and congratulatory messages are sent home to students who have shown good or improved attendance over period of time.

7. Attendance monitoring

Where monitoring suggests that a student's attendance and/or punctuality is below the standard expected the Academy employs a staged intervention to address this.

Interventions include:

- Meetings with the student and/or family.
- Daily attendance and punctuality reports.
- Support to remove potential barriers.
- Mentoring and support for the student.
- Use of sanctions.
- Home visits

Where poor attendance patterns persist, legal sanctions are applied.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

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 benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to form tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including the SENCO and DSLs and year leaders)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

8. Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Inform parents as soon as a student's attendance drops below 95% attendance, 90% attendance and 50% attendance.
- Hold regular conversations with students who are at risk of becoming, or are currently persistently absent.
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above)

9. Sixth form attendance

As with the rest of the school, good attendance in the sixth form is vital to ensure students go on to achieve their very best. However, as post-16 school-based education is no longer compulsory, there is the assumption that any student joining the sixth form actively wants to attend. Therefore, no sixth form student should have an attendance of lower than 90% without a significant reason, which should be discussed with the Head of Sixth form. To comply with funding regulations, we must withdraw any sixth-form student from their studies if they have missed classes for 4 or more consecutive weeks. In addition, we may consider the following options for any sixth form student with persistently poor attendance (less than 90%)

- Letters of concern sent home
- Formal attendance meetings with parents
- Formal attendance panels
- Withdrawal of examination fee payments (meaning the student would have to self-fund exam entries)
- Complete withdrawal from individual courses
- Complete withdrawal from all courses and permanent exclusion from the school

Any student opting to join our sixth form agrees to abide by our attendance requirements and should speak to the head of sixth form urgently if they feel they may not be able to meet these requirements.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy