Ashmead Primary School

Attendance Policy

Approved by the Full Governing Body September 2025

Due for review September 2026

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1. Aims

We want every Ashmead child to have great attendance and want to work in close partnership with families to achieve this.

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:

i. Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

ii. Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

iii. Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

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

v. The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

vi. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

3. Roles and responsibilities

The governing body is responsible for:

- 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
  - Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge, e.g. through regularly reviewing school attendance data
  - Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
  - 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 and deputy headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents

The Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for:

The Senior Attendance Champion is a designated senior leader and is responsible for:

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- 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, especially the local authority's attendance and welfare officer
- Working closely with families to tackle attendance issues, e.g. through creating intervention or reintegration plans.

The designated senior leader for attendance is Andy McPartland (the school's Attendance Champion). He can be contacted via telephoning the school or email: amcpartland@ashmead.lewisham.sch.uk

Class teachers (including supply or cover supervision) are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, onto the school's attendance system by the close of registration each morning and afternoon.

School admin staff will:

- Take calls and emails from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Where no reason has been given, follow up with phone calls, texts, etc.
- Keep senior leaders informed of any issues they notice.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Contact the school to report their child's absence before 9.00am on the first day of absence and each subsequent day.
- Provide the school with up-to-date emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting Andy McPartland

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.

4. Attendance data

The school will:

- Monitor and analyse attendance and absence data half-termly as well as yearly across the school. Individual pupils who are of concern will have their attendance monitored even more frequently. Data is shared half-termly with the local authority who assists the school in analysing this information.
- Identify whether there are groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- 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 severed absence, and their families
- Grant the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely

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 school regularly compares attendance data to the national average to identify areas of focus for improvement and share this with the governing board.

5. **Recording Attendance**

- The school will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. The school will take the attendance register at the start of the morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon session.
- Pupils must arrive in school by 9am on each school day.
- The school will mark absence due to physical or mental 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. Appropriate evidence could be: prescriptions, hospital discharge notes, text messages from 111. A GP can also provide evidence to the school (with parental consent).
- If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.
- Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

A pupil who arrives late:

- will be marked as late if arriving before the register has closed.
- will be marked as an unauthorised absence if arriving after the register has closed.

6. **What to do if your child is ill**

If children are absent through illness, parents are asked to notify the school by phone as soon as possible, and no later than 9.00am, on the first day of absence.

For safeguarding reasons, it is very important that you notify the school if your child is absent from school.

If your child is absent without notification, the school office will ring the parent or carer (and other contacts if necessary) to ask for a reason for the absence. If we have still not got through to anyone, we may carry out a home visit. If we still cannot contact anyone, we may need to contact children's social care and/or the police. Children missing for several days in a row where there has been no contact with the school may be reported as CME (children missing in education).

If your child has a fever (a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or higher), is vomiting or has diarrhoea then they should be off school for 48 hours.
If they are not feeling well but do not have the above symptoms, we ask parents to consider trying to get them into school and let us know how they are feeling so we can monitor them. Children very often perk up once at school and we can let you know they need to go home if they don't.

If your child potentially has or is definitively diagnosed with a communicable disease, please contact the school so we can check the most up-to-date advice on recommended absence.
Parents are asked to try to make all medical appointments outside of school hours where possible unless there is an emergency. If this is unavoidable, please try to maximise your child's time at school, e.g. by returning them to school once the appointment has finished or by removing them from school as shortly before the appointment as possible.

If your child is too unwell to attend school from 9.00am but they feel better later on in the morning please bring them to school. They will benefit from the learning on offer and being present for the afternoon register will minimise the impact of the absence on their attendance percentage.

7. **Punctuality**

School begins at 9.00am and children should be ready to enter the school premises at 8.55am.

Any child who arrives after 9.00am will be marked in late.

It is important that all children arrive on time to start school so that all pupils have a smooth start to the day

and are ready to start their learning as soon as the register is taken. If your child is persistently late, they will be missing essential information at the start of lessons and are likely to feel less able to get on with their work. The time lost in this way soon adds up to many hours of learning. If your child arrives late into class, they may feel shy and uncomfortable; this is also disruptive for the other children.

Punctuality is a valuable skill to develop as it also establishes good habits for secondary school and beyond.

We want children to arrive on time but if a child is late they should still come to school, e.g. a child arriving after the 9.30 registration close would still be marked present for the afternoon session; this will minimise the impact of the morning's lateness on your child's attendance percentage.

8. How we promote good attendance and punctuality

The school uses several strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality. These are constantly under review.

The most significant way we promote attendance is through our school ethos, which is positive, warm and friendly. Making school a place that children want to come to, where they know they will be treated with respect and valued as individuals, is crucial for good attendance. Having a vibrant curriculum is also an important part of making children want to come to school.

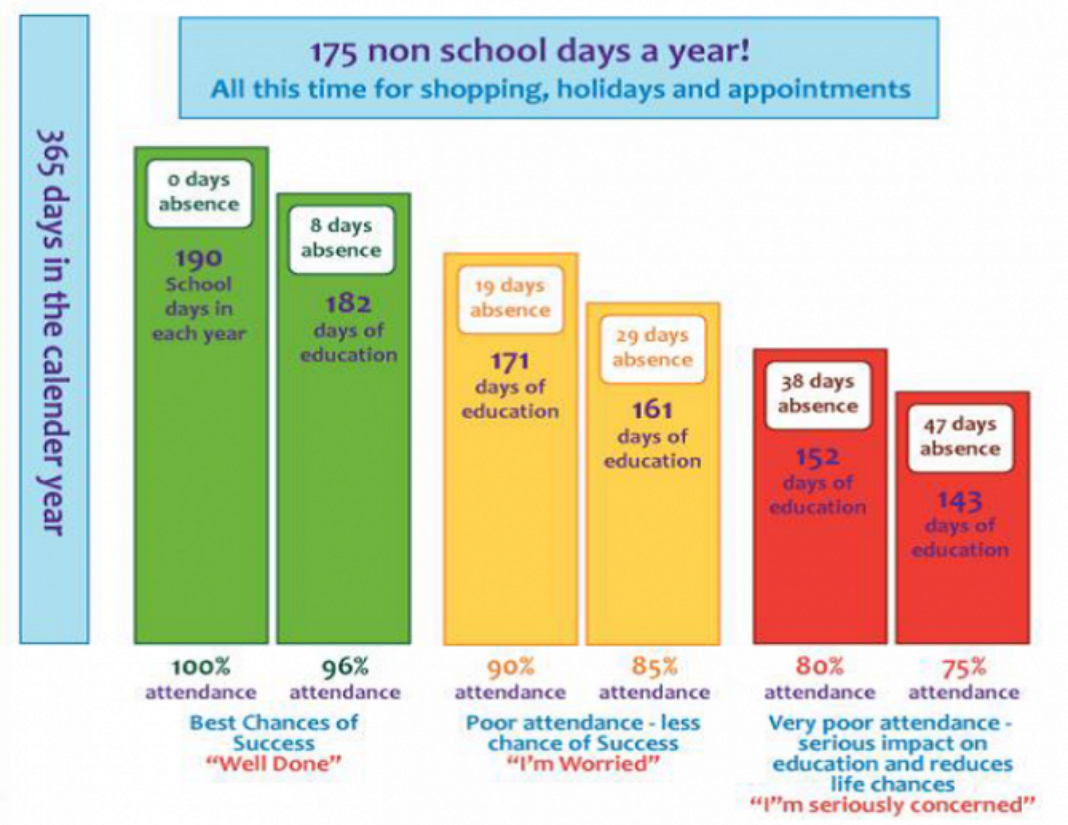
We work with families from when they start at Ashmead to give clear messages about the importance of children having good attendance and punctuality.

Each day senior leaders are visible at the school entrances as children arrive, giving all children a warm welcome to school. Children who struggle with attendance are given a particularly warm welcome.

All staff are made aware of how important it is to give positive messages about good attendance and are encouraged to target these messages in particular to children who struggle with good attendance.

Each child's attendance record is shared with the parents as part of annual written reports and attendance is also discussed during parents' evenings.

Explaining to parents the impact of non-attendance is another strategy we use, e.g. through sharing of graphics such as:



9. How we support families where attendance is low

We will work closely with parents, carers, and children to identify and address any barriers to attendance. This includes offering a graduated response through assessment, planning, intervention, and regular review of support plans. We will make reasonable adjustments and meet regularly with those at risk of absence.

For students requiring additional support, particularly those facing emotional barriers to attendance, we will offer targeted interventions and collaborate with external agencies to provide specialist assistance.

Meetings with parents regarding attendance are designed to be productive so that we can work together to improve the child's attendance. These are some of the things we look at with families when we meet:

- The *pattern of attendance.* Quite often our data shows a percentage much lower than parents are aware of, particularly when absence takes the form of single days off at different points in the year. There are also sometimes patterns worth exploring, e.g. a high number of Monday or Friday absences, particularly just after or just before a holiday.
- The *right level of resilience* for both children and parents. Deciding a child is too unwell to come to school is a judgment all parents have to make. We don't want very ill children being sent to school but neither do we want children kept at home who, with encouragement and perseverance, could cope at school.
- If a child is feeling less than 100% well at the beginning of the day, we encourage families to bring them to school and let us know this. We can then keep a close eye on them. In most cases the child is able to have a good day at school. We talk with the children about this too. If they know they can cope at school even if they start the day not feeling great this is important in forming their own habits of resilience.
- *Communication* between school and home is key. Some families find it difficult to use our default systems, e.g. phone calls or email, so we will use texting or WhatsApp via the school mobile if this helps.
- *Habits at home*, e.g. diet, bedtime, screen time (especially in children's bedrooms), homework, impact of very young or teenage siblings, etc. Sometimes there are simple adjustments in home routines that can really help children to be ready every day for school.

- *Specific medical conditions, including mental health*. Where this is the case it will often lead to some absences that are unavoidable. But it is always useful to discuss the issue, as there may be support the school can offer.

10. 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:

- 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 our safeguarding procedures
- Hold regular 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 to families in order to 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, e.g. requesting the issuing of a penalty notice by the local authority (see sections 12 and 13).

11. Leave of Absence requests

Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave is only granted if the headteacher agrees there are exceptional circumstances; this decision is entirely at their discretion.

The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.

Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance.

When making an application for Leave of Absence in advance parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the headteacher/ deputy headteacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances.

Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised".

Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'.

When an unauthorised holiday of five consecutive days or more has taken place the school can request a penalty notice without the necessity of a Notice to Improve letter.

(There are some circumstances where a Leave of Absence will be granted, e.g. an agreed part-time timetable. Please ask the Attendance Champion if you would like more information.)

12.Legal interventions

Our primary approach will always be to offer support to families to understand and remove barriers to good attendance. Where those efforts are not successful – or where parents do not engage with those efforts – the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions that may be used.

Attendance contracts

This is a formal attendance contract agreed between the pupil, parent, school and/or local authority. This is not legally binding but allows a more formal route for getting parents to engage than voluntary support. It is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution.

Education support orders (ESOs)

Where a voluntary early help plan or an attendance contract has not been successful, an ESO can be used as a way of providing formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. Before progressing to an ESO we (and the local authority) will have exhausted voluntary support and our judgment would need to be that this order would be beneficial for the pupil and the parent.
An ESO would be made through the Family or High Court. They give the local authority a formal role in advising, helping and directing the pupil and parent(s) to ensure the child attends school. Persistent failure to comply with an ESO can lead to prosecution.

Attendance prosecution

Where children regularly fail to attend school, their parents may be guilty of an offence and prosecuted by the local authority. This would be a last resort, where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed or where support has been deemed inappropriate.

13. Penalty notices

When considering whether to request the issuing of a penalty notice we follow Lewisham's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct. This follows the national framework for penalty notices and is aimed at making the issuing of penalty notices fair and consistent across the borough.

The responsibility for the authorisation and administration of the penalty notice process is undertaken by Lewisham's Attendance Service on behalf of requests received by schools.

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure their child regularly attends school. They should only be used where it is deemed likely to change parental behaviour and support to improve attendance has been provided but has not worked or has not been engaged with (or would not have been appropriate, e.g. holidays in term time which would always be coded as unauthorised).

Where one of our pupils reaches the national threshold (see below) for considering a penalty notice we now must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate. Our judgments are made on each individual case; we do not have a blanket position of issuing or not requesting the issuing of penalty notices.

We only request the issue of penalty notices (apart from holidays of five days or more which are always unauthorised) in the following circumstances:

a) the threshold of 10 sessions (usually the equivalent of five school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks has been reached and a penalty notice has been deemed the most appropriate sanction.
b) attendance is <u>not</u> less than 80% and the case is not deemed to be complex and requires support. (Lewisham advise that attendance below 80% be addressed through casework and support.)
c) a child who has been excluded from school is found in a public place without good reason during school hours.
d) we have already sent a Notice to Improve letter to the parent/s of the child.

The national framework threshold includes a combination of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence, such as four sessions of holiday (G code) and six sessions of other unauthorised absence (either consecutive or not) within a 10-week period. In these cases, the school must issue a Notice to Improve letter before requesting a penalty notice be issued by the local authority.

Before requesting a penalty notice be issued, we would offer the following support:

- letters to parents raising our concerns about the level of absence
- telephone calls and/or emails when responses to letters have not been received
- parents to be invited to a school meeting to discuss attendance difficulties
- offers of support, including available internal interventions and referral to external services, e.g. Early Help.

Where the threshold has been met we would consider the following for each individual case before requesting the issuing of a penalty notice:

- Is further support appropriate? If so, this should happen instead of proceeding to requesting the issuing of a penalty notice.
- Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this family or would further support be more appropriate?
- Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010, e.g. where a child has a disability?

Because penalty notices are intended to change behaviour if they are being issued and the behaviour is not changing, they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. Therefore, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period. Any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days)
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

Appendix: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

(All codes below show absences that are authorised with the exception of section 5)

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
1. Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
2. Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable

C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
3. Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
4. Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
5. Absent – <u>unauthorised</u> absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
6. Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays