



Attendance Policy
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Introduction

Pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. The government expects schools to:

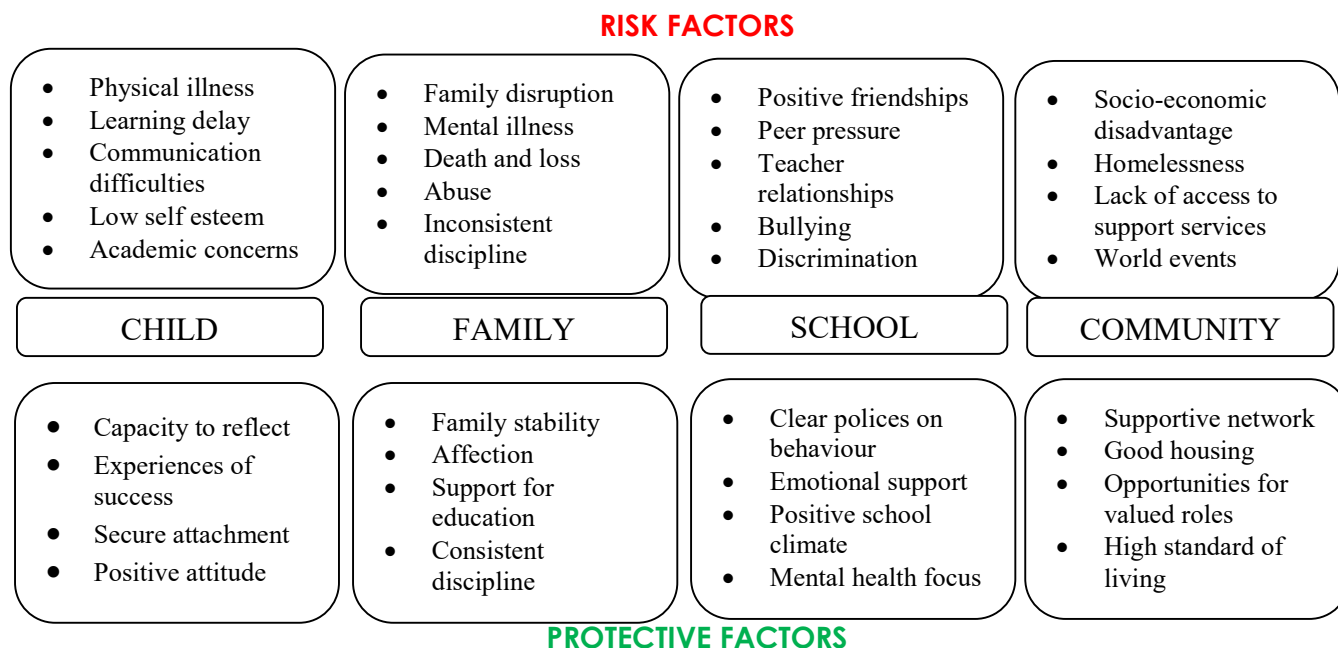
- Promote good attendance.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children attend school regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual.

The school has a senior leader in charge of school attendance, Rose McDermott. Together with the attendance officer, Josee Gritten, and Educational Welfare Officer, Louise Russell, they share the school's vision and core purpose. External partnerships support attendance improvements through a multi-disciplinary approach for identified children and families. Connecting and belonging drives the school approach to supporting attendance. All staff are supported to understand the possible deeper reasons behind poor attendance concerns. The school has developed and embedded effective systems and strategies to drive attendance improvements and celebrate success. As such the attendance team works together with the Pupil Emotional Support Team, SENCo, Parent Support Advisor and extended school provision.

School Expectation

The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality. The school has a fully embedded ethos in which excellent school attendance is expected, developed and nurtured. The escalated approach to supporting attendance is built on foundations of belonging and connectedness. We will offer an environment in which children are valued and welcomed.

Aldersbrook recognises that poor attendance can be influenced by a variety of factors and as such look at risk factors involved as well as preventative measures.



We want pupils to feel a pride in ensuring their attendance & involvement is the best that it can be. We hold weekly 'Attendance Cup' celebrations together as part of whole school sharing assemblies and end of year recognition events so that pupils know the importance of being in

school to learn. Pupils must feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent or late and that follow up action will be taken as outlined below.

- Providing direct intervention with pupils who fall below target levels of attendance and work with families to devise strategies to improve attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for an extended period of time will be looked at individually and where there is a known medical condition strategies may be employed in accordance with the Education Act.
- The school will liaise with other external agencies when appropriate (e.g. in the case of Child Protection)

Parental Responsibility

Regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for all pupils and is essential if pupils are to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Therefore parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school on time, in full school uniform and in a fit condition to learn.

Registration

School starts at 8.50am. All children should be in class **before** this time. The school promotes soft start. School gates open at 8:30am, allowing children to go straight to class. The school does not accept responsibility for children that are left unsupervised.

The school day ends at 3.20pm. Parent/carers who collect children from school are asked to do so promptly. Failure to do so, may result in a fee being charged for arrangement of 'after school' provision.

The Nursery morning session starts at 8.30am and ends at 11.30am. Afternoon sessions start at 12.30pm and end at 3.30pm. Irregular attendance at nursery could result in the place being withdrawn.

Role of the Education Welfare Advisor

The Education Welfare Advisory and Support Service Ltd (EWASS), works to ensure that children and young people benefit from the education provided. To achieve this, the EWASS aims to work in partnership with parents, pupils and schools.

The school registers are regularly inspected by the Education Welfare Advisor (EWA). They monitor attendance and lateness via the registers and in cases of persistent absenteeism and lateness, will contact parents to discuss the situation.

Late Arrival

The school gates on Ingatestone Road open at 8.30am and are locked at 8.50am. If your child arrives after this time, you will need to bring them to the school office via Harpenden Road, to be registered as late. Upon arrival you/your child will be asked to give an explanation for the lateness and a record is kept in the late arrival register, for the EWA.

All arrivals after 9.00am will be marked as an unauthorised late, which will impact on your child (ren)'s attendance.

If a pupil who travels to school unaccompanied by an adult arrives late, their parents/carers will be contacted if needed.

The registers are updated every day and inspected by the Education Welfare Advisor on a regular basis.

Procedures for following up lateness

Persistent lateness after the close of registration does not constitute as regular school attendance (Section 444 of Education Act, 1996).

An initial letter will be sent home by the school to parents whose children are arriving late on a regular basis. If no improvement is noted, the EWA is informed and appropriate action is taken by the officer.

The EWO will undertake an unannounced late gate inspection, at the request of the school. A parent is at risk of receiving a penalty notice issued by the Local Authority for persistent lateness.

Sanctions for persistent lateness

Legal proceedings can be initiated by the Local Authority (LA) under the Education Act 1996, Section 444 (1) and (1a) after all other formal procedures have been exhausted, subject to school unauthorising the persistent lates after the close of registration.

In cases of persistent lateness, a Head Teacher can apply to the LA to issue a Penalty Notice, if the child concerned has 7 or more unauthorised lates in any one half term.

Reporting an absence

Parents are responsible for informing the school if their child is absent. This should be done by telephoning the school on the **first day** of the absence before 9.15am.

Once your child has returned to school, parents are required to send a letter of explanation or an email (absence@aldersbrook.redbridge.sch.uk) to the office which covers the entire period of absence.

If no explanation is provided, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is defined when a **reasonable and acceptable** explanation has been provided to the school, in writing or email.

The decision to authorise an absence rests with the Head Teacher however strict guidelines should be followed.

Acceptable reasons for authorised absences:

- **Illnesses** – any absences lasting 3 days or more should be supported by medical evidence. This can be a doctor's appointment card/text, proof of prescription or copy of prescribed medicine. The school must have full explanation for absences rather than stating "unwell". Where patterns of absence are evident and no medical evidence is forthcoming, the EWA may request parent consents from them to approach the GP directly to obtain evidence.
- **Medical/Dental appointments** - the school will need to see evidence of any appointments made and/or received which will require the child to be absent or result in a late arrival.

Please note children can be collected from the school for appointments during the day and can be returned to school after the appointment. Efforts should be made to make appointments outside of school hours.

- **Religious Observance** – any requests will need to be made in writing. A maximum of 3 days per academic year will be considered. Consultation may be needed with the relevant faith leaders.
- **Exceptional Circumstances and Special Consideration** This category is very difficult to define and so any absence would be at the discretion of the Headteacher. It may include (but not limited to):
 - Sudden illness or death of a close relative- It is recognised that relatives will need to attend funerals and that children and families need time to grieve. It is also documented that children with prolonged absences from school find it harder to return and settle. A maximum of 3 days' leave is recommended. We, the school, can require evidence of booking/tickets if travelling abroad for a funeral.
 - Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence up to a maximum of 3 days.
 - Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport will be considered on an individual basis e.g., time off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, which is subject to a licence being issued by the Education Welfare Service (EWS), will be considered on an individual basis.
 - Religious observance up to a maximum of 3 days per academic year.

Absence will be unauthorised if:

- No explanation is forthcoming
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings
- The pupil is shopping during school hours
- The pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (e.g. birthdays, airport trips)
- The pupil is away from school for an authorised absence but stays away longer than that negotiated with the school
- The pupil is on a family holiday without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday, and instead seek retrospective approval on their return.
- The pupil stays at home due to a parent/sibling being unwell.

Where an absence exceeds 20 school days, the pupil will be at risk of being taken off roll.

The onus will then be on the parent to apply to their local borough for a place in primary education. A place at Aldersbrook Primary cannot be guaranteed. In addition, if a pupil fails to return from leave of absence (holiday) they may be off rolled after ten days.

Children Missing Education (CME)

All schools must inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered
- have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age
- are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,

- have been permanently excluded.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school EWA and Local Authority have failed, after taking reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the pupil. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend school.

Holidays

The Department for Education continue to be concerned about the increasing absences due to parents withdrawing their children for family holidays during term time.

These absences can cause pupils to fall behind with their studies and have a detrimental effect in their academic achievement, especially when taken out of school more than once a year, or when the pupil already has a poor attendance record.

Learning needs to remain consistent throughout school years. Pupils who do not take holidays during term time will find the national target more achievable.

The Department for Education (DfE) now state that leave of absence requests will not be considered unless in the most exceptional of circumstance. Holidays for leisure will not be granted.

Procedures for following up absences

- First day calling, including contact to extended family/emergency contact
- Below 94% School monitoring letter 1
- If no improvement after day 10 – School letter 2
- Below 90% referral to EWASS actions considered
- Possible Home Visit from EWASS
- Letters from EWASS
- School Based Meeting
- Warning letter (at risk of penalty notice or court under The Education Act (1996))
- Legal Review Meeting
- Penalty Notice Fine
- Prosecution

Sanctions for Unauthorised Leave of Absence

A Penalty Notice can be considered for unauthorised leave of absence taken after 12 sessions (6 days) of absence has been reached and for any unauthorised holidays (a minimum of 3 days). It will be issued by Redbridge Local Authority at the request of a Head Teacher in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct.

If issued, this will incur a fine per child, per parent. Subsequently, consideration will be given for the matter to be investigated by the EWASS and possible legal action.

There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.

In cases where unauthorised leave of absence has been taken without permission, which exceeds 10 days or more, the school should advise the borough immediately in order that investigations can be implemented.

Prosecutions are brought under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 but alternatively legal interventions will be considered, such as Education Supervision Orders under the Children's Act 1989.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

- Leave of absence taken without permission (a minimum of 3 days)
- Unauthorised leave of absence without justifiable cause (12 unauthorised sessions).
- Persistent lateness (7 unauthorised lates in any one half term)

A Penalty Notice may only be considered in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct and must be sanctioned by the Local Authority.

Withdrawal of Penalty Notice

A penalty notice can only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- Where it ought not to have been issued
- Where it has been issued outside the terms of the local code of conduct or where no offence has been committed
- Where it has been issued to the wrong person and/or an incorrect address
- Where the notice contains material errors
- In the circumstances of permanent exclusion, reasonable justification has been made by parent.

Persistent and Severe Absence

Pupils absent more than they are present at school (missing 50% or more) will have specific support with attendance or a whole family plan. A holistic, team around the child approach will be taken which may include accessing external support unrelated to attendance directly and the wider needs of the family. At this point possible referral to Social Services may be appropriate.

