

# Aldersbrook Primary School

## Attendance policy



<b>Approved by:</b>	Headteacher	<b>Date:</b>
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## 1. Aims

**Attendance at Aldersbrook Primary School is led through: Clarity, Consistency and Compassion. Our priority is building strong, supportive relationships with families to ensure that children are at school as much as they can be.**

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 (applies from 19 August 2024)) through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- 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

## 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 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
- Our link Governor for attendance is Rosie Chapleo. Please contact the office if you'd like to speak with her.

### **3.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Working with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCO) to support the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND
- 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

### **3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader Rose McDermott (Deputy Head) is responsible for:

- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- 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, where needed
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Rose McDermott (Deputy Head) and can be contacted via [Admin.Aldersbrook@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:Admin.Aldersbrook@redbridge.gov.uk)

### **3.4 The attendance officer**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 8)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Josee Gritten and can be contacted via [Admin.Aldersbrook@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:Admin.Aldersbrook@redbridge.gov.uk)

### **3.6 School office staff**

School office staff will:

- Process messages and calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

### **3.7 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 every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9:15 on the day of the and, if appropriate, each subsequent day of absence, and advise when their child is expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 2 emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority

Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting Josee Gritten office who can be contacted via [Admin.Aldersbrook@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:Admin.Aldersbrook@redbridge.gov.uk)

### **3.8 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to, and will be supported to:

- Attend school every day, on time.

## **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 attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

We are obligated to record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### **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 9:15 or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school 020 8989 0210 or emailing [absence@aldersbrook.redbridge.sch.uk](mailto:absence@aldersbrook.redbridge.sch.uk)

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

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day of absence, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school can 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.

Proof may be requested.

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.

### **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

The school gates on Ingatestone Road open at 8.30am and are locked at 8.50am. The register is taken at 8:50 in class. A pupil who arrives after 8:50 must go to the office where they will be marked as late. Registers close at 9:20 and any pupils arriving after that time will be marked as absent.

Persistently late pupils will be supported to improve their punctuality.

#### 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
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- On the 4<sup>th</sup> day of absence, if no contact is made, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer (EWO) who may complete a home visit.
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, we may issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below), as appropriate.

#### 4.6 Reporting to parents

Parents can view their child's attendance on Arbor.

### 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](#). These circumstances include:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Exceptional circumstances

Exceptional circumstances are 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. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.
- Family weddings (for immediate family members) may be authorised for one day.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is highly unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request including previous patterns in attendance. We may request flight details if the holiday is abroad.

Any request should be submitted in advance via email. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. The local authority recommends only authorising a maximum of 3 days a year for religious observance.
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience



- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

## 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, 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.

Aldersbrook Primary School request the London Borough of Redbridge to issue a penalty notice. Before requesting a penalty notice from the borough, we 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).

#### **Penalty Notices**

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 (including legal) will be taken instead.

### Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and parents have not engaged 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 reasons given
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Opportunities for 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 immediately before or after a school holiday**

If your child is absent before or after a school holiday we must see evidence for the absence. This may be medical evidence if your child is unwell, or evidence of flight delays or circumstances beyond your control. We cannot authorise any absences before or after a holiday without this evidence and you risk being issued with a penalty notice.

## **6. Strategies for promoting attendance**

**At Aldersbrook Primary School we want our attendance policy to be: Clear, consistent and compassionate.**

We are a caring school, committed to ensuring conversations about attendance are positive and helpful for our families, with the clear aim of helping children to attend school as much as possible.

Our strategies include, but are not limited to:

- We prioritise phone calls and face-to-face meetings instead of emails to provide the best possible support for families
- Welcoming children on the gate and offering a smiling, supportive SLT every morning
- Staff who are compassionate and kind to pupils
- Experienced team responsible to attendance including SLT, Parent Support Advisor, Attendance Officer and support from Education Welfare Officer
- Regular meetings between different departments in school including Safeguarding, attendance and SEND
- Certificates of 100% attendance awarded to pupils at the end of the year
- Attendance Cup given to the class with the highest attendance each week
- Signposting families for external support including bereavement charities and housing support.

- We begin to monitor pupils when their attendance is 94% (Statutory guidance requires us to monitor when attendance falls below 90%)
- We write Individual Attendance Plans for pupils whose attendance dips under 80%, or on an individual basis

## **7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school**

### **7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance**

Complex barriers may include one or more:

- Socioeconomic challenges
- Health issues
- Legal or immigration status

We work closely with families to understand their unique challenges and collaborate with external agencies to provide comprehensive support. By fostering a supportive and understanding environment, we aim to remove obstacles and ensure every child has the opportunity to attend school regularly

### **7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND**

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

If your child has SEN, we will work with you and the SENCO to support your child's attendance. This may include making reasonable adjustments or support from external agencies.

### **7.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence**

We will work with the family and pupil to provide support, to build confidence and bridge gaps to ensure the pupil is able to attend school as much as they can.

## **8. Attendance monitoring**

### **8.1 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.

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.

## 8.2 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

## 8.3 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)
- 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

## 8.4 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 Keeping Children Safe in Education
- 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, and understand barriers to attendance
  - Explain the help that is available

- o Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
- o 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)
- Monitor pupils when their attendance is below 94% with the aim of them not dipping to 90%
- Interventions and target actions include:
  - o letters from school and the EWO
  - o meetings with the EWO, attendance office and families
  - o 'Notice to Improve' contracts
  - o penalty notices

## **9. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## **10. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy