



ATTENDANCE FOR LEARNING POLICY

This policy is updated and approved by the Governing Body every year

This version was approved September 2020

The next update will be due by September 2021

Signed: 

R Williams - Chair of Governors

Attendance for Learning Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:
- Promoting good attendance and seeking to reduce absence from school, including persistent absence
 - Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
 - Acting early to address patterns of absence. We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their compulsory school age children attend regularly, and we will promote and support punctuality to school and to lessons
- 1.2 The School understands that we should:
- Treat attendance as a priority within the whole school community
 - Have a clear policy on attendance
 - Use robust systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality
 - Use data and other information to improve attendance
 - Promote the importance of good attendance to students and their parents/carers – for academic, personal and social development reasons
 - Intervene early when individual student absence or lateness gives cause for concern
 - Have appropriate systems in place to support vulnerable students
 - Recognise good and improved attendance
 - Make use of additional external support for students and parents with greatest need
- 1.3 Every child has the right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents, students and the School share the responsibility for ensuring that attendance at Aylesbury Grammar School is maximised and that rates of unauthorised absenteeism are kept to a minimum, to enable maximum learning opportunities.
- 1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the **Home School Agreement**, the **Behaviour for Learning Policy**, the **Absence Request Form** and the **Pastoral Care Policy**. This policy is available on the School website. Information about absence procedures/attendance can also be found in the Parents Handbook.

2. Ethos and vision statement

- 2.1 The following vision statement, which has been discussed with stakeholders and agreed by the Governing Body, sets down the ethos of the School and this policy should be reviewed within this context:
- We will be true to our foundation as a free school for Aylesbury giving every student, irrespective of background and circumstance, an opportunity to flourish. We will provide an education for each and every student which is unparalleled in breadth and quality of opportunity, striving to become international leaders in academic and pastoral development.*
- 2.2 As part of this vision we believe that excellent attendance is essential for every student to flourish, engage in the opportunities and to fulfil their potential. There must be commitment on behalf of all students, staff, governors and parents to uphold the standards we expect so that all students can 'Respect and Aspire'.

3. Why good attendance is essential for learning and progress

- 3.1 Regular attendance is essential for students to achieve their full potential. Irregular attendance undermines the learning process and can lead to educational and social disadvantage, leaving students vulnerable to falling behind. We seek to promote learning and good attendance as a crucial factor in a student achieving their aspirations.

- 3.2 There is a clear link between good attendance at school and higher academic achievement, as well as improved peer relationships and development of social skills. The target is for every student to be aiming to achieve 100% attendance with 96% or more being our accepted threshold for good attendance.
- 3.3 Research shows that for every 5% below the 96% threshold, that a student is likely to achieve one grade lower at GCSE than expected. Of students who miss more than 50% of school, only 3% achieve 5 or more GCSE grades at levels 9 – 4. If a child is taken out of school routinely for a week every year and has an average number of days off for illness/appointments, then by the time they are 16 they will have missed approximately 6 months of school.

4. Safeguarding and Children Missing in Education (CME)

- 4.1 The School views attendance as a safeguarding issue and in accordance with the School's Attendance Policy, absences are pursued and recorded. The School, in partnership with external agencies where appropriate, will take action to pursue and address all unauthorised absences in order to safeguard the welfare of the students in its care. We will implement the statutory requirements in terms of monitoring and reporting children missing in education (CME) and taking off roll, and we understand how important this is in safeguarding children and young people.
- 4.2 The DSL will be consulted when a fixed term exclusion or permanent exclusion is being discussed and will ensure that any safeguarding issues are considered. Where it is felt that a student is likely to be permanently excluded a multi-agency assessment may be instigated to ensure that there is improved understanding of the needs of the young person and the family.
- 4.3 Children not receiving a suitable education are at increased risk of a range of negative outcomes that could have long term damaging consequences for their life chances. The school follows the Local Authority's policy and KCSiE regarding the protocol for children missing education. The purpose of this is to make sure that children not receiving a suitable education are identified quickly, and effective tracking systems and support arrangements are put in place. Children missing education are:
- “Children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school, for example, at home, privately, or in alternative provision.”* and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more).
- 4.4 We are committed to ensuring that all students who go missing from our school, or who disappear from other counties and may have arrived in Buckinghamshire, are speedily located.
- 4.5 As far as possible we aim to ensure that:
- The whereabouts are known of all students who go missing from our School or who move to other areas from our school and to report this information as required
 - Children missing education are identified and suitable provision is made for the child's educational needs.
- 4.6 Children fall out of the educational system because they:
- Fail to start appropriate provision and never enter the system;
 - Cease to attend due to illegal exclusion or withdrawal;
 - Fail to complete a transition between providers (eg unable to find a suitable school place after moving into a new local authority area or after leaving a custodial establishment).
 - Are removed by their parents.

5. The legislation and legal framework

5.1 This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

5.2 The School highlights that:

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive full time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at that school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

5.3 Since March 2001 it has been an offence for a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend school regularly, fails without reasonable justification to cause him to attend (Education Act 1996, section 444 (1A)). It is clear from the law that parents risk prosecution if their child does not attend school regularly. It is important, therefore, for parents and the school to work closely together to overcome any problems which may affect a student's attendance. Since 2014 the DfE have stated that no term time holidays may be granted and therefore requests for term time holiday will **not normally** be approved. If holiday leave is taken during term time this will be viewed as undermining the good order and discipline of the school and sanctions may be applied.

6. Expectations; roles and responsibilities

6.1 We expect that all our **students** will:

- Arrive by 8.40am for registration and on time for all lessons
- Sign in promptly at the School Office if unavoidably late
- Speak to a member of staff in the School Office, or their Head of Year, if they need to leave School site outside of the normal times of the school day. They should do this BEFORE they sign out.
- Speak to their Tutor or Head of Year if there is a problem which prevents regular good attendance
- Ensure Leave of Absence forms are handed to the relevant Head of Year in advance of the absence
- Inform their academic teacher if they know they will be absent from school, and be proactive about catching up missed work

6.2 We expect that **parents/guardians** will:

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly (target threshold of 96%) and arrives at school by 8.40am
- Provide an alternative means of transport to school if the school bus fails to arrive under reasonable weather conditions

- Contact the School as soon as they realise that their child may be late for school, for whatever reason.
- Contact the school on the first and all subsequent days of absence to inform the school of their child's absence – via the absent child phone line or absent child email (absence@ags.bucks.sch.uk)
- Request permission from the school, in advance, for their child to attend an unavoidable appointment within the school day (ie medical, driving tests, music exams) using the Absence Request Form for 1 or more full days, or the absent child email for half a day or less
- Refrain from taking their child on holiday during term time since it is against the law for schools to grant leave of absence during school time for this purpose
- Inform the School if your child has a medical condition which is likely to affect attendance or punctuality

6.3 **The School** will:

- Write, implement and communicate an Attendance for Learning Policy
- Monitor and review the Attendance for Learning Policy every three years
- Set and monitor attendance and report the data to the Leadership Team and Governors
- Recognise when a student's attendance is good or improved
- Ensure good attendance and punctuality are central to the school ethos and are promoted at assemblies, school events and in communications with parents
- Support and monitor students for whom attendance is a concern

6.4 The **Attendance Officer** will:

- Check and ensure that all registers are completed every morning and afternoon
- Inform the member of SLT with responsibility for attendance of any registers that have not been completed
- Text parents ASAP in the morning if a student is unaccounted for on a day
- Provide regular attendance data to SLT, Heads of Year and Tutors
- Monitor the attendance of vulnerable students or those for whom attendance is a significant concern
- Ensure that parents are contacted on a regular basis with any absences that remain unexplained at the end of each week

6.5 The **Pastoral Support Officer** will:

- Liaise with the Attendance Officer, Heads of Year and Deputy Head in relation to which students should be contacted in relation to regular absence from school (unless the absence reason is well known to the Head of Year/SENDCo)
- Contact parents of students with regular absence to discuss the impact of absence and how the school may support the child/parents

6.6 The **Tutor** will:

- Be a good role model for students by arriving punctually for registration by 8.40am
- Regularly remind students of the need for good attendance and punctuality
- Keep an accurate and prompt register
- Praise students for good attendance and punctuality and talk to students regarding concerns about attendance/punctuality
- Inform the Head of Year if they become concerned about a student's absence or punctuality

6.7 **Academic teachers** will:

- Be good role models for students by arriving punctually for lessons
- Remind students of the link between good attendance/punctuality and attainment
- Maintain accurate electronic lesson by lesson registers and flag (to the Head of Year) if a student is regularly (more than two consecutive lessons) missing from lessons
- Follow up lateness to lessons in line with the School Behaviour Policy
- Inform the Head of Year if they become concerned about a student's absence or punctuality – since attendance is a safeguarding matter, as well as important for good social/academic progress

6.8 The **Heads of Year** will:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality within his/her own year group
- Ensure all Tutors are familiar with and apply the policy consistently
- Monitor attendance and punctuality in the year group, using the data supplied by the Attendance Officer

- Follow up concerns expressed by tutors/academic staff about a student's absence or punctuality
- Support the school by helping to recognise good attendance, support vulnerable students with poor attendance and implement sanctions for truancy and poor punctuality
- Contact parents to discuss concerns about attendance and punctuality
- Inform and discuss with the Head of Section concerns about attendance and punctuality
- Inform and discuss any serious concerns with the Deputy Head responsible for attendance
- Arrange for work to be provided for excluded students and long-term absentees
- Consider applications for leave of absence of up to one day in length
- Liaise with the Attendance Support Officer to decide which parents will be called to provide further explanation for their child's absence

6.9 The **Head of Section** will:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality within his/her own Section
- Ensure the Heads of Year in their section are familiar with and apply the policy consistently
- Monitor attendance and punctuality in the Section, in conjunction with the Year Leaders
- Support the Heads of Year in working with the student, parents and other agencies to improve attendance
- Liaise with the Deputy Head responsible for attendance over issues of attendance and punctuality
- Consider applications for leave of absence for up to three days in length

6.10 The **SENDCO and DSL** will:

- Monitor the attendance and punctuality of all SEND students for whom absence and punctuality is a concern
- Support the Heads of Year in working with students with SEND who have poor attendance
- Liaise with Heads of Year regarding strategies for improving attendance of students with SEND

6.11 The **Deputy Head responsible for Attendance** will:

- Lead the work of the Attendance Working Party in developing, implementing and reviewing the Attendance for Learning Policy
- Monitor data for attendance and report these to the Headmaster and the Governors
- Monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the whole school
- Support the work of the Attendance Officer by following up any registers that are not completed
- Support the work of the Heads of Section and Heads of Year in monitoring absence/attendance and implementing rewards and sanctions

6.12 The **Headmaster** will:

- Review and agree the Attendance for Learning Policy
- Agree and monitor annual attendance data with the Deputy Head responsible for Attendance
- Consider applications for leave of absence of over three days of length

6.13 The **Governors** will:

- Review and approve the Attendance for Learning Policy
- Review and monitor annual attendance data

7. Regular procedures and monitoring attendance

- 7.1 A formal electronic register must be taken daily at the start of the morning session (8.40 – 8.50 am) and at the start of *period 4 (between 12.35 – 1.35 pm)* in the afternoon. It is a legal requirement to register students during the morning and afternoon sessions and teachers must ensure that it is taken accurately. A class register must also be taken every lesson via iSams.
- 7.2 If a student arrives late but the register is still open (*up until 9.10 am and 1.35 pm*) he will get a late mark. If a student arrives after the register is closed he will be marked as absent and will require a reason for this absence from his parents or other agreed person (ie Head of Year)
- 7.3 A student who arrives late and misses registration must report to the School Office and sign in promptly. Lateness will be monitored and will be followed up accordingly.
- 7.4 Students should not leave school without permission from a member of staff. Students who need to leave school during the day (ie for an unavoidable medical appointment) should sign out, with prior

agreement, at the School Office. If the student then returns to school within the same day, he must sign back into school at the School Office.

- 7.5 If any student, including a Sixth Form student, becomes unwell during the school day, he must see the Welfare Officer who will decide whether it is appropriate to contact their parent/carer and ask for him to be collected. Students should never phone home and ask to be taken home without agreement from the Welfare Officer. The Welfare Officer may decide, in conjunction with Sixth Form Pastoral staff, that a Sixth Form student may be sent home even if it has not been possible to contact parents. Read also the Supporting Students with Medical Conditions Policy.

8. Punctuality

- 8.1 Poor punctuality is not acceptable, creates bad habits and can be a precursor to later disaffection and absenteeism. If a student is late for registration or classes, they miss out on important information about school and this disrupts their learning.
- 8.2 Persistent lateness by arriving after statutory registration has closed could amount to evidence of a parent failing to ensure their child attends school regularly. Students who arrive at registration after 8.50am but before the end of the session (9.10am), will be marked as late. Teaching staff and the Attendance Officer will record how many minutes late students are in arriving for registration.
- 8.3 Students arriving at school after 8.50am for whatever reason e.g. having overslept or attended an appointment, must go to the School Office to sign in. In the event of an evacuation it is imperative that there is a record that a student has arrived on site, because if they have not signed in and not arrived in class at the time of evacuation, then they may be assumed to be off site and their absence would not be missed.
- 8.4 We do recognise the difference between a student who persistently arrives late for school/lessons without good reason e.g. due to poor organisation, and a student who is occasionally and unavoidably delayed e.g. car breakdown, buses being late, ill health or family reasons.
- 8.5 It is important that in the case of ill health or family circumstances, that information is shared with the student's pastoral team. When students are persistently late the primary aim of the school is to support the parents/carers and the student by working together to identify the cause of the lateness and offer support.
- 8.6 In the first instance a member of staff will enquire into the reason why the lateness occurred. If the student is rarely late or if it is considered that there was reasonable explanation for the lateness it may be that no further action is taken other than offering advice/support.
- 8.7 Direct contact may be made with a parent/carer by a member of staff if it is felt to be appropriate to discuss the circumstances and to offer support. Students who are regularly late to registration and/or lessons (without good reason) will be sanctioned in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

9. Unplanned absences

- 9.1 Parents/carers should contact the school by phone or email on the first morning of a student's absence (preferably before 8.30 am) **and each subsequent day of absence**. Please note that the email (absence @ags.bucks.sch.uk) and phone line (01296 484545, option 1) for communicating absence are open at all times.
- 9.2 Parents should inform the school if the absence is likely to be for longer than three consecutive days.
- 9.3 Under normal circumstances parents/carers will receive a text message by 10.30am if their child is unaccounted for that day. Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may 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. If satisfactory medical evidence is subsequently provided we will review and amend our records.

10. Planned absences

- 10.1 If a parent/student knows in advance about a planned leave of absence of **a full day, or more**, an Absence Request form must be completed with as much notice as possible **IN ADVANCE** of the absence, or as soon as parents are aware of the expected absence. Please be aware that this is a request for leave of absence from school and that some requests may not be authorised. Absence Request Forms are electronic and can be accessed via the Parent Portal of iSams.
- 10.2 Leave of absence from School will only be authorised if parents/carers have informed the school of the reasons for the absence (in the case of unplanned absence as in point 9) or if authorised by the School.
- 10.3 Authorisation of planned Leave of Absence is delegated by the Headmaster as follows:
- Planned Leave of Absence of less one than day will be considered, and may be authorised, by the Attendance Officer
 - Planned Leave of Absence of one day will be considered, and may be authorised, by the Head of Year
 - Planned Leave of Absence of up to three days will be considered, and may be authorised, by the Head of Section
 - Planned Leave of Absence of over three days will be considered, and may be authorised by the Headmaster
 - All Leave of Absence applications for holiday within School term time will be considered by the Headmaster
- 10.4 Any absences for exceptional circumstances will be decided at the discretion of the Headmaster (see below).

11. Absences that are likely to be authorised and unauthorised

- 11.1 The school considers each application for term-time leave of absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Common reasons for authorised absence include:
- Illness, medical/dental appointments. We ask that, wherever possible, any routine medical or dental appointments are arranged for outside of school time. In general, we would only expect to authorise absence from school for a half day for non-routine medical appointments that are booked within the School day – unless there are exceptional circumstances which should be communicated to the Head of Year
 - Funerals (within reason), driving tests, moving house (1 day), university visits and interviews
 - Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Three days for this purpose over the School year is a suggested guide.
 - Traveller students 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 student is attending educational provision.
- 11.2 Headteachers may not grant leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are where requests are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. See point 5 relating to the legislation.

11.3 There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. If holiday leave is taken without the school's prior approval, this may be viewed as undermining the good order and discipline of the school and could be referred to the County Attendance Team. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education and the School will take no responsibility for missed education during unauthorised holiday.

12. Absence for religious reasons

- 12.1 AGS acknowledges the multi faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration for authorised absence or special leave for religious observance (Code R). It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.
- 12.2 Parents are requested to complete an absence request form if they intend for their child to be absent from school for religious purposes. Although each application will be dealt with on a case by case basis, our recommendation is that no more than three days should be taken out of School for religious purposes in any academic year.

13. Study Leave and Home Study (Sixth Form only)

- 13.1 Study Leave may be granted for Year 11 and Year 13 students during the mock exam period and for external examinations. School will offer in- school study programmes during this period to help reduce absence levels but the school believes that the majority of students make excellent use of this time to support their students and wellbeing.
- 13.2 Sixth Form students are allowed home study on some afternoons if they have no afternoon lesson, have met criteria relating to attitude to learning, and the school and parents have given this permission.

14. Recognising good attendance

- 14.1 Good attendance improves peer relationships, allows students to achieve their potential as well as engage with extracurricular activities and therefore contributes positively to the School community. Students with good and improved attendance receive letters of congratulation from the Headmaster.
- 14.2 Students' attendance is included on all school references and is requested by prospective colleges and employers and is used as part of their admissions and interview procedures.

15. Legal sanctions

- 15.1 In the event of persistent non-attendance, the school works with other agencies to help remove any barriers which may be preventing a student from fully accessing the education to which he is entitled.
- 15.2 Local Authorities can authorise schools to issue fines to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.
- 15.3 The decision on whether or not to recommend to the LA that a penalty notice is issued ultimately rests with the Headmaster in this case the local authority's recommended letters will be sent and their code of conduct for issuing penalty notices will be followed.
- 15.4 The Headmaster may take into account the following when deciding on recommending a penalty notice:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

16. Policy governance and review

- 16.1 This policy will be reviewed by the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and approved by Governors on an annual basis