



# Allerton Grange School

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Designated Lead: Sarah Whittingham, Assistant Headteacher

Updated January 2025

Review cycle: 1 year

Next review: November 2025



## **Aspire, Grow, Succeed**

At Allerton Grange we are committed to:

- Working together to achieve our full potential
- Celebrating our diverse school community and fostering tolerance and respect for all
- Developing active citizens within the school community and beyond
- Developing confident, creative and independent learners

## **1. Legislation and guidance**

Good attendance at school is a prerequisite to pupils' attainment, wellbeing and wider development. The pupils with the highest attainment have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance Working together to improve Attendance 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
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold and is linked to our child protection and safe-guarding policy.

## **2. Rationale**

- To ensure that every student succeeds whilst at school
  - To ensure that every student has access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school
  - To ensure that every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
  - To ensure that every student uses every school day to gain knowledge and understanding
  - To promote students' welfare and safeguarding
  - In order to achieve those goals, it is the view of school that it is essential that students are not absent from school.
- 2.1. There are 195 statutory school days per year and there are then 170 other days available for holidays which would not have a negative effect on a student's education.
- 2.2. School is of the view that taking a student on holiday in term time inevitably conveys to the student the unspoken message that school is not important.

## **3. Categorisation of Absence**

- 3.1. When a student is absent from school, the law categorises that as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

- 3.2. The law states that it is for the school to determine into which category any absence fits, it is for the school to decide whether any absence is 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

#### **4. The Need for Parental Explanation**

- 4.1. All absences must be explained in communication by a parent or carer. However, this in itself does not automatically authorise the absence. Where a parent/carer anticipates in advance that his or her child will be absent then as much advance notice as possible should be given.
- 4.2. It is for the school to decide whether or not to accept the explanation offered. You may be maybe asked to provide evidence of a doctor's visit (e.g. appointment card or prescription). Absences for students with attendance below 90% will automatically be unauthorised without medical evidence.
- 4.3. Attendance below 90% is classed as persistently absent by the Department of Education and will trigger intervention by the school attendance team and if necessary further intervention from the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Team.
- 4.4. The school will identify children missing education and work to get these children back into education

#### **5. Authorised Absence**

- Examples of the type of absences which may be authorised:
- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (although these should be made wherever possible out of school hours.)
- Religious observance (maximum 2 days per school year)
- Exceptional family circumstances (at the discretion of the school)

#### **6. Unauthorised Absence**

- Examples of the type of absences which will not be authorised are:
- Shopping
- Looking after/translating for family members
- Birthdays

#### **7. Holidays during term time**

- 7.1. Parents and carers are reminded that they do not have any right or entitlement to take their child out of school for holidays.

- 7.2. The law states that even if a written application is submitted as required, authorised leave for holidays will only be granted if school considers that there are special circumstances. ***Please refer to Appendix 1 at the end of this policy***
- 7.3. It is up to school to decide what amounts to special circumstances.
- 7.4. In considering whether there are special circumstances, school will look at each case upon its own individual merits.
- 7.5. In order for school to properly consider an application, it should be made to the head in writing as soon as possible, preferably at least two weeks before the start of the proposed period of absence detailing details and reasons for absence. Retrospective requests will not be authorised.
- 7.6. Examples of circumstances which by themselves are very unlikely to be considered as special and thus leading to a grant of permission include:
- To fit in with parental working patterns;
  - Economic reasons, such as cheap flights and/or accommodation;
  - To overlap with beginning or end of term;
  - To overlap days either side of a day of religious observance.
- 7.7. If a student has requested a holiday during term time which has been refused and the holiday is still taken (for 5 days or more), a Fixed Penalty Warning Notice will be issued by Children's Services, Leeds which could lead to a fine or further prosecution.

## **8. Punctuality**

- 8.1. Students should be in the building at 8.25 am every day and in their form ready to learn by 8.30 am. If they are late, the time will be recorded and parents will be notified by text. Parents should always notified the Attendance Team via a note in their planner if they know their child is going to be late that morning because of appointments or transport problems and a late authorisation card may be issued. Students arriving late to school without prior authorisation they will be issued with a social time detention to be served the same day.

## **9. Deletions from the Admissions Register**

- 9.1. Parents and carers are reminded that the law states that in certain prescribed circumstances, unauthorised absence from school shall result in the removal of the child's name from the school register.

## **10. Legal Interventions**

- 10.1. New regulations announced by the Department for Education in August 2024 have standardised the use of fines for unauthorised absences. Parents will face increased fines if their child misses five days of school without permission. The fines have been raised from £60.00 to £80.00 if paid within 21 days, and from £120.00 to £160.00 if paid within 28 days.

Revised and Ratified by Governors

October 2024

## **Appendix 1**

### **Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances**

#### **Guidance for Parents**

The information below is designed to help parents understand how and when leave of absence in exceptional circumstances may be granted.

The decision to authorise absence is at the headteacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Headteachers will rightly prioritise attendance. Generally, absences **will not** be granted during term time and **will only** be authorised by the headteacher in exceptional circumstances.

Penalty Notices for term time leave are issued based on information and referrals received from schools. The Local Authority cannot override the decision made by the Headteacher not to authorise the absence. If you have any reasons to believe the Penalty Notice should not have been issued, please contact the school within 10 working days. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What are exceptional circumstances?**

Exceptional circumstances are one off events which are unavoidable, examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

#### **I explained my exceptional circumstances to the school yet I was still issued with a PN fine. Can this be reviewed by the local authority?**

No. Only the headteacher of a school can authorise any absence under exceptional circumstances. The local authority cannot override any decisions made by the headteacher.

If a request is sent to the local authority then a PN fine will be issued based on the information received.

#### **My child's attendance record is generally good, can I still be issued a fine for short time unauthorised holiday?**

Schools MUST consider a penalty notice for 10 unauthorised sessions (usually 5 school days) within a rolling 10 school week period of time (these sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of any unauthorised absences and can span different terms and school years).

**Which parent receives the fine?**

Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per child (For example, if there are 3 children in a family, each parent may receive 3 separate penalty notices).

**Who is fined when parents do not live together?**

The situation can become complicated where parents do not live together and both wish to remove their child from school at separate times during the same academic year. Where parents are separated, if an absence request is submitted by the parent not involved with the absence, then both parents may be fined.

**Who is considered to have parental responsibility?**

The definition of a parent is anyone who has parental responsibility for the child and/or any adult with day-to-day care and responsibility. (**Section 576 Education Act 1996**). This will include stepparents and cohabiters, partners of older pupils if the partner is over 18 years of age and they are living together, other relatives with residency orders.

**What happens if I am a self-employed worker e.g. an employee with fixed holiday dates, or on a holiday rota set by my employer?**

It is advisable for parents to discuss this with their child's school prior to making any arrangements for absence during school term times. Legislation no longer allows Headteachers to authorise 10 days absence from school for a term time holiday. If you are self-employed then you are able to select when you take your annual leave.

**We want to go on a trip of a lifetime and will be an educational experience for my child/ren. Could this be an authorised absence?**

No, this would constitute a family holiday. Headteachers cannot authorise term time holidays, unless they accept the reason for the leave of absence is exceptional.

**I have a significant number of relatives abroad and may need to spend an extended period in another country. Could this be an authorised absence?**

Headteachers are bound by law to discourage families from taking trips during term time, whatever the reason given.

**The Primary school authorised the absence but I received a PN fine for my secondary school aged child. Is there no consistency?**

The Government has given the authority to individual headteachers to make their own decision based on the explanation provided by the parents. What is exceptional has not been defined by the government and therefore individual opinions may differ between headteachers. However, the local authority does encourage schools to work together but at the same time take into account circumstances of the individual child's needs.

**Could an absence to attend a religious observance or festival be an authorised absence?**

The day should be marked as authorised where there is an element of worship associated with the religious observance. The religious observance days are set apart by the religious body of the individual religion, not determined by the parents.



# Attendance and Punctuality

<b>% Attendance</b>	<b>Days absent</b>	<b>Potential risk</b>
<b>97-100%</b>	<b>0-6</b>	<b>You will reach your full potential</b>
<b>95-96.9%</b>	<b>7-9</b>	<b>Risk of Underachievement</b>
<b>93-94.9%</b>	<b>10-13</b>	<b>Serious Risk of Underachievement</b>
<b>90-92.9%</b>	<b>14-19</b>	<b>Severe Risk of Underachievement</b> Research suggest that 17 days absence over a school year causes <b>the loss of one GCSE grade.</b>
<b>Less than 90%</b>	<b>20+</b>	<b>Extreme Risk of Underachievement</b> <b>Risk of Court Action</b> 90% attendance is equivalent to missing <b>four weeks.</b> 90% attendance is equivalent to missing <b>one half-day every week.</b> Continued 90% attendance over five years in school is the equivalent to missing <b>one half of a school year.</b>

## **ALLERTON GRANGE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES FLOW CHART**

Parents/carers have the legal responsibility to ensure their child's good attendance and we will ensure that we work together with other professional and agencies that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. The procedures below are following to ensure this happens. Attendance is monitored weekly by the Attendance Team overseen by the Assistant Head Teacher for Attendance

