



Attendance Policy 2024-2026

The School's Attendance Policy is set in consideration and consequence of the provisions of the following:

- *The Education Act 1996*
- *The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013*
- *The Education (Penalty Notice) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended by The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013*
- *Department For Education Guidance as from time to time issued in respect of school attendance matters*

It also refers to School census guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education and Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Introduction

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. The Education Act of 1996 states that a parent is responsible for ensuring their child attends regularly and punctually. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them.

The Court has determined that "Regular" attendance means that which is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school" (Isle of Wight Council -v- Platt (6th April 2017) [Supreme Court] [2017] UKSC 28 (on appeal from [2016] EWHC 1283 (Admin)).

Ascot Heath Primary School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school. Every child at Ascot Heath Primary School is expected to attend **100% of the time**, unless absence is authorised by the Headteacher.

Aims of this policy

Ascot Heath Primary School is committed to meeting its obligation with regard to school attendance through its whole school culture and ethos that values good attendance and punctuality, including:

- Promoting 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
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school



Roles and Responsibilities

The **Governing Board** is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Ensuring staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for implementing this policy

The **Headteacher** is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy within 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 any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The **Designated Senior Leader for Attendance** is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader currently responsible for attendance is Mrs Rachel Bradley, Headteacher, and she can be contacted via the school office on 01344 882631.

The **Attendance Officer** is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data

Ascot Heath Primary School

"Preparing our children for all of their tomorrows"



- 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 (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The Attendance Officer is Mrs Nicola Jones and she can be contacted via the school office on 01344882631 or by email: secretary@ascotheathprimary.school

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the Attendance Officer. Attendance codes can be found in Appendix 1 of this policy.

Office staff are responsible for taking calls from parents/carers regarding absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system as well as transferring calls to the Attendance Officer in order to provide parents/carers with more detailed support on attendance

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Ensure children are at school ready for teaching by the start of the school day
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9:30am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence) and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure, where possible, that appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

Recording Attendance

An attendance register is kept with all pupils placed on the register.

The attendance register is taken at the start of the first session of the school day and once during the second session. At Ascot Heath Primary School, the first session of the day begins at 8:50am and registers are taken immediately. The second session begins immediately after lunch at 1pm.

On the attendance register, each pupil will be marked as one of the following:

- Present

Ascot Heath Primary School

"Preparing our children for all of their tomorrows"



- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of the amendment and the name and position of the person making the amendment. DfE Attendance codes can be found in Appendix 1.

In addition, the following information is recorded:

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

All entries on attendance registers are kept for 3 years after the date on which the entry is made.

Registers are taken at 8:50am daily. Any child not in the classroom by 8:50am will receive a late mark 'L'. Registers remain open between 8:50am and 9:30am; any children arriving after 9:30am will receive an unauthorised mark 'U'.

Absence

This school expects its Pupils to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there are good reasons for the absence and the absence is authorised.

There are two main categories of absence:

Authorised absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification of the absence, or given approval in advance for the absence.

Unauthorised absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence after a parent's request.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of unplanned absence by 9:30am by calling the school office, leaving a message, or emailing the Attendance Officer secretary@ascotheathprimary.school

Absence due to physical or mental illness is marked as authorised unless the school has genuine



concern about the authenticity of the illness. It is not acceptable to keep a child off school for a minor ailment such as a headache or cold.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are concerns 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. The school will not request medical evidence unnecessarily and does not expect a parent to incur a charge for this information and therefore will not be liable for any costs involved.

Planned absence

Attendance at a medical or dental appointment will usually be authorised as long as the parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Evidence of appointments may be requested by the school.

Application for leave of absence is to be made in writing in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides, using the form 'Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time' which is available from the school office.

Wherever possible, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, the child should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

There are 190 school days (380 sessions) a year which every child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. Parents should ensure that family holidays are taken during school holiday periods only.

Lateness and punctuality

A child who arrives in the classroom after 8:50am is considered to have arrived late.

A child who arrives late but before the registers close (at 9:30am) will be marked as late, using the code 'L'. A child who arrives after registers close (at 9:30am) will be marked as absent, using the code 'U'.

Any child who arrives in school late will need to enter through the main entrance and will then be sent to class or asked to walk down to the lower gate with their parent. Parents are not permitted to accompany their child to the classroom as this disrupts the learning of the class. Punctuality is a vital life skill and children arriving late not only miss out on essential information given at the start of the day but may also feel embarrassed walking into a classroom when the other children are already settled. In addition, facilitating late arrivals means staff are taken away from their teaching schedule.

Following up unexplained absence

When any pupil is expected to attend school but does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to



"Preparing our children for all of their tomorrows"

ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, a home visit may need to be made by the Attendance Officer or a senior leader.

- Identify whether or not the absence is approved
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it in the register as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained - this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer

The staff at Ascot Heath Primary School has an obligation to enquire and challenge the reasons for pupils' absences and/or lateness and do insist on written evidence for any such absences. There is also an expectation that the staff report concerns over absence and lateness to the Headteacher.

Approval for term-time absence

At Ascot Heath Primary School we believe term time absences should be actively discouraged. Our purpose is to ensure that each child achieves their full potential and there is a clear link between poor attendance and underachievement.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence will not be authorised for a holiday request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the School Office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see previous detail)
- Religious observance - where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils 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

Legal sanctions

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. Fines will be requested for absences from 5 days.

Schools will be required to consider a fine:

- When a child has missed 10 or more sessions - 5 days - for unauthorised reasons within a 10 week period. This does not have to be consecutive absence.

Within a 3-year rolling period which will begin from the issue date of the first fine:

- The first FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days - this will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- The second FPN issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third FPN cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the date of issue of the first FPN. In this instance, alternative action should be taken which can include considering prosecution or the use of other tools such as other attendance legal interventions.

Further details on Fixed Penalty Notices can be found in Appendix 3.

Strategies for promoting attendance

At Ascot Heath Primary School we promote good attendance by regular praise of the children and families in the newsletter. We celebrate the class with the highest half termly attendance in assemblies and the class receives a reward. We also celebrate house attendance and individuals that achieve 100% attendance each term and over the year.

Reporting to Parents/Carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels when they are a cause of concern. Attendance is also discussed at Parents' Evenings.

Attendance monitoring

Attendance data and any specific children causing concern are discussed in fortnightly Inclusion meetings. Attendance data and any particular trends or patterns are submitted to the Governors in the Headteacher Report.



Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

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 underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to Class Teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Send letters to families where attendance is becoming a concern
- Set up an Attendance Action Plan for families where attendance needs to improve

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.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Refer to Education Welfare Services



The role of the Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service strives to support schools, parents and pupils with the aim of ensuring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. Details of support levels offered by Bracknell Forest can be found in Appendix 2. However, the Education Welfare Service also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

Section 444 of the Education Act states that "if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence".

Bracknell Forest Council, through the Education Welfare Service, may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly.

A Fixed Penalty Notice when requested by a Headteacher can be issued as long as the evidence for the request is robust and the following criteria are met:-

- Where there is a minimum of 10 school sessions of unauthorised absence (5 school days) in any 10 week period (these do not need to be consecutive)
- Where term time leave is taken without obtaining authorisation from the school
- Unwarranted delayed return from term time leave without authorisation
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed (U code) on 10 or more occasions in a 10 week period
- Parents' or carers' failure to make arrangements to ensure that children who have been excluded from school are not in a public place at prescribed times during the first five school days of any exclusion, without reasonable justification*

*It is incumbent upon the parent(s) in such circumstances to provide proof of reasonable justification, for example, that the child or young person needed to attend a pre-arranged medical appointment, or a medical emergency requiring the child to be supervised elsewhere than at home.

A Penalty Notice will be issued on the first occasion if appropriate.

When a pupil is referred to the Education Welfare Service because of persistent poor attendance there are various actions that can be taken to try to bring about an improvement. The Fast Track Intervention framework promotes early intervention and aims to ensure that appropriate action is taken to tackle non-attendance as soon as attendance problems become apparent. Fast Track involves engaging the parent in specifying what improvements need to be made over a fixed time-frame (usually 8 weeks). Parents have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings may be initiated in the Magistrates' Court.

The first response to a "first offence" might be a written Formal Warning. This allows a parent fifteen school days to improve the attendance of their child. If an authorised absence occurs

Ascot Heath Primary School

"Preparing our children for all of their tomorrows"



within that period a Penalty Notice may be issued.

However, in the following circumstances a Penalty Notice can be issued without a Formal Warning having been issued previously:

- ten sessions or more of absence comprise of unauthorised absence (holiday or suspected holiday) in term time in any ten week period,
- where the pupil has been referred to the Education Welfare Service by the school due to ongoing attendance concerns and there is an open referral

Monitoring arrangements

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

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Document Management and Control

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Review Committee & Approval Date | FGB Autumn 2024 |
| Date of Next Review: | Autumn 2026 |
| Amendments Made at Last Review: | Updated to reflect Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance (DfE) |