



## Ashlands Primary School Attendance and Punctuality Policy

### EVERY CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO SHINE

#### 1. Intent

Ashlands Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality to all its pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We recognise that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance.

For a child to reach their full educational potential they must attend school regularly and punctually. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children.

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring excellent school attendance and all have important roles to play. The school will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if and when a problem is identified.

We believe that the foundation to good attendance is a strong relationship between school, parents and pupils.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school Attendance and Punctuality policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

#### Aims and Objectives

- To achieve and maintain a target of at least 95% attendance for the whole school
- To ensure that attendance that falls below 90% is addressed as outlined in this policy
- To reduce the % of lateness across the school
- To support families where attendance is a concern by removing barriers that may be contributing to their low attendance
- To work with outside agencies where attendance becomes a safeguarding concern

#### Parents' Responsibility

As a parent, carer, you can help us by:

- Ensuring your children attend school regularly;
- Contacting the school, either by phone (01943 609050), email ([office@ashlands.school](mailto:office@ashlands.school)) or visiting school on the first day of absence. Unless circumstances make it unavoidable, contact should always be made by 8:45 am. A message should be left on the answer phone if there is no one available to answer. If the school have not been made aware of the absence then parents will be contacted by telephone to explain the reason for absence;
- Keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- Understanding that we cannot agree to holidays in term time;

- Ensuring your children arrive in school on time, properly dressed, rested and fed and with the right equipment (e.g. PE kit);
- Arranging medical and dental appointments outside of school hours
- Contacting the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's lives that may impact on attendance;
- Ensuring all contact details that are held by school are correct and up to date.

## **2. School's roles and responsibilities**

All staff have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued and look forward to coming to school every day.

The School Business Manager along with the Headteacher will oversee, direct and coordinate the school in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance and Punctuality policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

To promote a pattern of regular attendance and punctuality the school will:

- provide a welcoming and safe learning environment for children;
- report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance record through the annual report;
- remind parents and children of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality through assemblies, letters, the school prospectus and the Home/School agreement.

### **Schools Procedure for Absence Concerns**

If there are concerns around a child's attendance we will

- ✓ Follow up on unexplained absences each day
- ✓ Document and monitor all children with absences on a daily basis through Arbor (our MIS system).
- ✓ Monitor all children with significantly low attendance (below 80%) and inform the Headteacher (or SLT in their absence).
- ✓ Add any safeguarding concerns to CPoms (our safeguarding system)
- ✓ Carry out home visits where there is persistent absence and/or general safeguarding concerns
- ✓ Scrutinise the attendance data for those below 80% and 93% every half term and following these meetings send out the following letters to support an improvement in attendance (see appendix)
  - o Letter 1 - Children are persistently late (more than 3 times in a half term)
  - o Letter 2 - Children have attendance below 93%
  - o Letter 3 - Children continue to not improve their attendance
  - o Letter 4 - Children have significantly low attendance below 80%
  - o Letter 5 - Children with unauthorised absences

## **3. Types of Absence**

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once at the start of the afternoon session. Every half-day absence from school is classified as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

### **Authorised absences**

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as authorised absences. For example, if a child is ill, family bereavement or religious reasons which unavoidably fall in school time. For other absences to be authorised by the Headteacher these must be in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are decided at the Headteacher's discretion on a case by case basis.

### **Unauthorised absences**

Some absences are not permitted by law. These are known as unauthorised absences. Examples may include

- Waiting in on a delivery
- Family Day out
- Family holidays
- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Looking after other children
- Arriving too late to get an attendance mark

In some cases here there is a continued issue with a child's attendance, school may decide to unauthorise all absence unless medical evidence is provided. In these circumstances it is important that parents/carers work with school to improve a child's attendance to avoid further action being taken.

All unauthorised absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. School in the first instance and then the education social work service may contact you and consider taking legal action if your child continues to have unauthorised absences.

Any child may be off school because they are ill. However, children can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent feels that their child is reluctant to attend the school then we will work with them to try to understand and resolve the underlying problem. The school can make use of outside agencies i.e. the school nurse, health visitor or parental involvement worker.

A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

### **Persistent Absence**

It is the duty of the school to monitor the attendance record of all pupils and will act if a child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level can do considerable damage to a child's education and the school will require the parent's fullest support and co-operation to improve matters. The school recognises the links between attendance and attainment and attendance and safeguarding children. Inappropriate authorisation can be damaging to a child's education and can send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and could render children vulnerable to harm.

We will thoroughly monitor all absence as well as the reasons given through our safeguarding systems. Any case that is deemed to have reached an unreasonable level or is at risk of doing so will be investigated. These pupils will then be tracked and monitored carefully to see whether the absence affects their attainment.

## **4. Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and vital information from the class teacher. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. This also applies to lateness in collecting the child at the end of the school day. Good time keeping (and the example of good time keeping) is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life.

The school bell rings at 8:55 am and we expect our children to be in the playground and lined up ready to go into class when the bell is rung.

Registers are taken at 9:00 am and any child who is not in class when the register has been taken will receive a late mark.

Any child who arrives after 9am without prior notification to the school office or the classteacher will be deemed to have an unauthorised absence unless a suitable reason agreed by the Headteacher has been given.

If a child is persistently late (3 times in a half term), letter 1 will be sent and the parent will be invited in to meet with the Headteacher to try to resolve the problem and strategies put in place to improve matters. Again, if there is no significant improvement then the EWO will be contacted.

## **5. Holidays in Term Time**

Headteachers are not able to grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are to be decided at the Headteacher's discretion on a case by case basis. Exceptional circumstances are likely to be one-off situations due to a crisis or bereavement in the family. Parents are urged to apply only when absolutely necessary and to keep the number of requests to an absolute minimum. The school holiday dates are published well in advance of the start of the school year and we strongly recommend that parents book their holidays around the school term.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation has been received and agreed by the Headteacher.

Any child who is persistently absent and then takes a holiday in term time could be fined through the Local Authority.

## **6. Targets & Monitoring**

The minimum level of attendance for any individual child at Ashlands Primary School is above 95%. The target for the whole school is also a minimum level of attendance above 95% because we recognise that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year we will monitor requests for leave, absences and punctuality which will indicate to us where improvements need to be made in order for us to achieve these targets.

## **7. Changing Schools**

It is important if parents decide to send their child to a different school that they inform Ashlands as soon as possible.

Parents are asked to provide in writing:

- The date the child is expected to leave school
- The expected date that the child will be starting at the next school
- The name, address and telephone number of the new school.
- The child's new address if known.

The class teacher will prepare manual records for the parent or the school administrator to forward to the new school. The administrator will prepare and upload the electronic records to the new school. The child will then be removed from the school roll.

## **Appendix**

**Plan for letter dispersal - half termly attendance meetings between the office and headteacher will be used to agree on actions and letters to be sent out on behalf of the Headteacher.**

- • LETTER 1 - Children are persistently late
- • LETTER 2 - Children have attendance below 93%
- • LETTER 3 - Children continue to not improve their attendance
- • LETTER 4 - Children have significantly low attendance below 80%
- • LETTER 5 - Children with unauthorised absences
- • LETTER 6 - Authorising Leave
- • LETTER 7 - Unauthorising holidays
- • LETTER 8 - Authorising religious absence

## **Review**

The governing body reviews this policy and considers any amendments in the light of the annual review findings.

**Approval Committee:** Full Governing Body

**Approval Date:** February 2023

**Review Frequency:** Annual

**Next Review Date:** February 2024

## **LETTER 1 - Persistently Late attendees**

Dear Parent/Carer of [child's name],

I'm writing to you because [name] has been late to school [number] times in [timeframe]. [Child's name] has missed [minutes] of learning time lost.

The school day begins promptly at 8.55am and registration closes at 9am. Afternoon registration takes place at 1.00pm.

Arriving promptly ensures that your child does not miss work, and that disruption to the teacher and other pupils is minimised.

Persistent lateness can lead to a significant loss in learning time.

The school can request that the Local Authority issues a penalty notice related to persistent lateness.

We are committed to working with families to make sure every pupil gets the support they need.

I would now like to meet with you in person to discuss how we can improve your child's attendance and ensure that they get the very best from their education.

**The meeting is arranged for [date at time].**

If you are unable to attend this meeting please contact the school office via phone or email 01943 609050 or [office@ashlands.school](mailto:office@ashlands.school) and we will arrange a more convenient time. If you are able to attend please confirm to the school office via the contact details above.

Yours sincerely, [Name]

## **LETTER 2 – Attendance below 93%**

Dear Parent/Carer of [child's name],

I am writing to express my concern about [name's] recent high levels of absence from school.

### **[Name's] current attendance has fallen to [percentage].**

Falling below 93% attendance will likely have an impact on his/her academic achievement.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child. Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment. We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help him/her to address gaps in learning due to absence.

I would like to reassure you of our continued support for your family. If you would like to discuss any issues that may be affecting your child's attendance or would like further information or support, please contact the school office on 01943 609050 or office@ashlands.school to arrange a mutually agreeable appointment.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

## **LETTER 3 – Absence has not improved**

Dear Parent/Carer of [add child's name],

I wrote to you on [date of previous letter] to express my concern regarding [name's] attendance.

**[Name's] previous attendance of [add previous attendance percentage] has not improved and currently stands at [current attendance percentage].** Persistent absence will likely have an impact on his/her academic achievement. We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

I would now like to meet with you in person to discuss this absence. This meeting will be to discuss how we can improve your child's attendance and ensure that they get the very best from their education. **The meeting is arranged for [date at time].**

If you are unable to attend this meeting please contact the school office on 01943 609050 or office@ashlands.school and we will arrange a more convenient time. If you are able to attend please confirm to the school office via the contact details above.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

#### **LETTER 4 – Significantly Low Attendance (less than 80%)**

Dear Parent/Carer of [add child's name],

I wrote to you on [dates of previous letters] to express my concern regarding [name's] attendance. The previous attendance of [percentage] has not improved and it is now below 80%. [List any other significant figures]. We will now need to seek advice from the Local Authority. It will be necessary for all absence from now on to be supported by medical confirmation/evidence of any illness.

Your child has missed [number of days lost] and this will have an impact on their learning.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

**I would like to urgently meet with you on [date at time]** to discuss how we can support you to improve your child's attendance. This meeting will also be attended by the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

#### **LETTER 5 – Unauthorised Absence from School**

Dear Parent/Carer of [add child's name],

I am writing to express my concern at [name's] recent unauthorised [absence/absences] from school. [Name] has been absent from school for a total of [number] unauthorised sessions [(number of school days)].

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

Please note that unauthorised absences can result in a penalty notice being issued if your child has missed at least 6 sessions (3 school days) due to Unauthorised Absences within a 6 week period.

Please contact the school office on 01943 609050 or office@ashlands.school as soon as you can so that we can arrange a mutually agreeable appointment to discuss this.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]



## **LETTER 6 – Authorising Leave**

Dear [add parent's names],

**Application for Leave of Absence from School from [date] to [date] inclusive [number school days] for [child's name][child's DOB]**

]

Thank you for your application for leave of absence.

I am writing to confirm that due to the exceptional circumstances, I am able to authorise your request. The absence will show your child's attendance record as 'Authorised Absence/Authorised Family Holiday'.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

## **LETTER 7 - Unauthorising Leave**

Dear [add parent's names],

**Application for Leave of Absence from School from [date] to [date] inclusive [number school days] for [child's name][child's DOB]**

I regret that I am unable to authorise your holiday/trip request.

My reasons are as follows:

- The school policy does not allow for holidays or trips to be taken during school term time.

Should you, however, choose to take the trip, their attendance record will show an Unauthorised Absence/Unauthorised Family Holiday.

Trips during term time will be referred to the local authority who may issue a fixed penalty notice.

A full copy of our Attendance Policy is available on the school website, alternatively, you can collect a copy from the school office. Bradford Council's policy on Family Holiday during School Term Time can be found on their website. Alternatively, you can telephone Bradford Council's Education Social Work Service on 01274 439651 for information and advice.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

## **LETTER 8 – Authorising Religious Observance**

Dear Parent/Carer of [add child's name],

Thank you for your request to take [name(s)] out of school on [date] because of [religious occasion]. In this case, I am prepared to agree to your request and it will be considered an authorised absence. The absence will show your child's attendance record as 'Religious Observance'. Each request for an absence is considered on its merits at the time. We recognise that a family's religious beliefs and traditions are intrinsic to their sense of identity.

However, please note that my decision in this instance does not set a precedent, and does not necessarily mean I'll agree to a similar request, from you or other parents, in the future.

Yours sincerely,  
[Name]

Headteacher