

Arunside Primary School

Attendance policy and procedures



Approved by: Headteacher

Date: 17th October 2022

Last reviewed on: New Policy

Next review due by: November 2025

1. Aims

As a school are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance. We will therefore:

- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Build strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the necessary support in place to achieve good attendance
- Promote and support punctuality and good attendance through targets, data and strategies
- Act early to identify patterns of absence and reduce persistent and severe absence

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school 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:

- 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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [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.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the importance of school attendance is promoted across the school's policies and ethos (see letter from the headteacher in appendix 1)
- Ensuring that school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Ensuring attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced and staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Monitoring, reviewing and challenging the school's attendance data presented in reports prepared by the link governor for attendance; comparing the data on a termly basis with the 'national average'.

3.2 The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy
- Monitoring and evaluating the impact of implemented attendance strategies
- Authorising absences for 'exceptional circumstances'
- Referring unauthorised absences to the local authority so that intervention may be considered

3.3 The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school and providing a clear vision for improving attendance, the strategy for which is documented in our school development plan
- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicating this regularly to pupils and parents
- Devising specific strategies to address any areas of poor attendance identified and supporting pupils and families in their achievement of targeted intervention.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is our Family Support Worker (FSO) who can be contacted via the main school phone number, (01403 263919) or by emailing fsw@arunside.school

3.4 The Attendance & Welfare Officer is responsible for:

- Communicating with the pupil's parent/carer on the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- Ensuring that the correct attendance code is used once the reason for absence is ascertained (see appendix 2)
- Monitoring and analysing all attendance data (see section 6) and benchmarking data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the headteacher and the welfare team including the possible need for fixed-penalty notices
- Working with the Local Authority and School Family Support Officers to tackle persistent absence

The Attendance & Welfare Officer (AWO) can be contacted via the main school phone number, (01403 263919) or by emailing welfare@arunside.school

3.5 Class Teachers are responsible for:

- Recording class attendance at morning and afternoon registration by using the present mark (/) or the not present mark (N)
- Submitting the above attendance information to the Attendance and Welfare Officer at the close of class registration.

3.6 Parents and Carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school for the whole day when open
- Notify the school office to report an unplanned absence following point 4.3 below
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that where possible, medical and dental appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Accompany their child to the school office to sign their child into the late signing-in book if they are arriving after the registers have closed

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

The school will maintain an admission register for all pupils, who will have their attendance recorded twice daily in the attendance register. Pupils should arrive at school by 8.45am when the school is open. The morning registration period will close at 8.55am. The afternoon registration period will close at 1.00pm for those pupils in EYFS and Year 6 and at 1.10pm for pupils in Years 1-5.

Pupils will be given a mark to confirm they are either:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity (the nature of the activity being attended will also be recorded)
- Absent (whether or not the absence is authorised or unauthorised for children of compulsory school age will also be recorded)
or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (the nature of circumstances and the number of days absence approved by the headteacher will also be recorded)

Any subsequent amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

The attendance register will be kept for three years from the date on which the entry was made.

4.2 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives after the main gates have been shut, but before the registers close, will be marked as late (L). A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will receive an unauthorised absent (U) mark. The school has a signing-in book to monitor children who arrive after 8.50am and parents/carers are required to accompany their child to the school office to record the reasons for the lateness in this book. The reasons will then also be captured on the electronic register to ease monitoring purposes.

4.3 Unplanned absence

On the first day of an unplanned absence, the pupil's parent/carer must notify the school by 8.30am or as soon as practically possible. This can be done in person at the school office, by telephoning the school office, (a message can be left on the answerphone) or electronically by emailing absence@arunside.school. Parents/carers are expected to call the school on each subsequent morning during their child's absence unless they are able to provide an accurate length of absence during the initial notification.

The school will mark any absence caused through illness as 'authorised'. If the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, the pupil's parent/carer will be asked to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate documentation. Medical evidence will not be requested unnecessarily. If the school is dissatisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. Parents/carers will be notified of this action in advance.

Where parents do not notify the school of the reason for absence on the first day, the school will contact the parents/carers to ascertain the reason for the absence. If the school is unable to speak with a parent, a voicemail will be left/a text will be sent and the parent will be asked to contact the school as soon as possible. The register mark will remain as "N" (an unexplained absence), until a reason for the absence is received by the school. (See section 4.5 – Following up on unexplained absences).

4.4 Planned absence

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. On occasions where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence provided advance notice has been given to the school. Parents should notify the school office of all such appointments, providing evidence of the appointment wherever possible. A visual sighting of a text is acceptable, but if evidence is contained in a letter or email, then a copy of this will be scanned and attached to the pupil's electronic records that are held on the school's MIS.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 5 – Authorised and unauthorised absence.

4.5 Following up on unexplained absence

Where a pupil has an unexplained absence, the school will (up to a maximum of five days) pursue daily enquiries, to ascertain the reason for absence. The correct code will then be applied to the register. Such follow-ups will also ensure that all necessary safeguarding action can be taken.

If a child's absence for illness has exceeded five-days, the parents may be asked to provide a doctor's note or other medical evidence in support of the absence. If the absence continues, the school will consider involving a Pupil Entitlement: Investigating Officer (PEIO).

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if it is considered that the request constitutes 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion with the agreed number of days specified.

Requests should be submitted in writing (6 weeks in advance where possible, using the template available from the school). The headteacher may require evidence to support any request. Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.4 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' 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, even if it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Legal sanctions

When a child of compulsory school age is recorded as absent from school without authority, their parent(s) /carer(s) can be held accountable for an offence under S.444 of the Education Act 1996. The school has the option to refer such matters to the local authority to consider intervention, dependent on the length and the reason for the absence. This can be through one of two pathways:

- A request for the use of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN)
- A request for the allocation of an Investigating Officer.

Referrals are reviewed and acted upon by Pupil Entitlement: Investigation (PE:I), who finalise which pathway of intervention is to be taken.

6. Monitoring and analysing data

The welfare team will meet on a fortnightly basis to discuss attendance data, trends and concerns. Children falling between 91-95%, will be picked up quickly in these meetings to ensure early intervention. Parents may be invited to a meeting with the attendance & welfare officer and or the family support worker.

Pupil attendance data is discussed each term by the Attendance and Welfare Officer and the link governor for attendance. The data is published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school attendance data is published alongside the national statistics.

6.1 Using data to improve attendance

The implementation of a Pastoral and Welfare team ensures that attendance is regularly monitored to support early help and intervention. Our Attendance and Welfare Officer will regularly look at patterns and trends to highlight any attendance or punctuality concerns, in line with the school's safeguarding procedures. Marvellous Me will be used to reward improved attendance for specific children and parents will be communicated with by a member of the pastoral team to acknowledge the improvements made.

The Attendance and Welfare Officer analyses attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance. Historic and emerging patterns will be identified in order to help with strategy developments. Targeted support will be offered to pupils and their families and the Attendance & Welfare Officer and the Family Support Worker will monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

The school will support pupils with medical conditions or SEND who have poor attendance by:

- Maintaining the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.
- Ensuring join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.
- Considering additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.
- Regularly monitoring data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.
- Informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.

6.2 Reducing persistent and severe absence

A pupil's overall rate of absence between 10 - 51% below possible school attendance is classified as persistently absent. If a pupil's overall rate of absence is 50% or more below school attendance, the school will regard this absence as severe. Where attendance data shows persistent or severe absence, the FSO and AWO will:

- Communicate with parents to discuss the reasons for the absences. The barriers to the child maintaining a high level of attendance will be identified and the school will aim to provide support and strategies to aid improvement, such as an attendance contract (see appendix 3)
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils whom the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Pass the details of any families whose attendance has not improved following telephone calls or meetings to the headteacher in order for formal warning letters to be issued to the parents/carers
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Make a referral to the PEIO with a view to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice, as outlined in section 5.2

7. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated. As the barriers to attendance evolve quickly, the school will also seek the views of pupils and parents to aid policy

updates but as a minimum, the policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the P&R Committee (under delegated authority from the full governing board).

8. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Supporting Pupils in School with Medical Needs

3rd October 2022

Dear families,

You may be aware that back in March 2022 the Government introduced a new 'White Paper for Education'. The main foci of this paper are intended to 'improve standards of learning', 'recruit and retain teachers'; to improve school systems' including 'attendance and behaviour'.

You can find the White Paper here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-for-all-strong-schools-with-great-teachers-for-your-child>

With reference to the improvement of attendance in schools. I thought it would be helpful for you to understand why good attendance (95% or better) is crucial to your child. This is the evidence:

- *'Children with no absence at key stage 4 are almost 2 times more likely to achieve 5 or more GCSEs than children who missed 10-15 percent of lessons. Persistent absence impacts attainment and children's safety',* **Good attendance routines and patterns starts at primary school, it sets the foundation and shows children that education should be valued.**
- *'Persistent absence at primary school puts students at risk of poor school performance and school dropout, which in turn, puts them at risk of unhealthy behaviours as adolescents, as well as poor long-term health outcomes.'* **Persistent absence is any child where attendance is 90% or less, this equates to only 19 school days. Families who take a 2-week holiday in school time are already at risk of this.**
- For every 8 days absent, in a group of 100 children a child will move down 1 place. For example, if your child is ranked 50th, they would move to 51st. This quickly accumulates over time.
- Children who miss school never really catch up and results in gaps in their learning. The primary curriculum contains 13 different subjects, with math's and English being taught in a spiral fashion because of the huge number of objectives that children have to achieve each year. The result of this is **'miss a week – miss that whole area of learning until the next academic year'**. Children who experience this are less likely to cope when the skill level increases.
- Children determine their friendship groups on a number of factors, including trusting that the friend will be in school to play with. The impact of this on children whose attendance is poor is **fewer friends and increased anxiety** on how to interact with established friendship groups.
- Poor attendance **also impacts all other children in their class**, a teacher who needs to spend more time with a child due to lost learning, is not available to support all other children in the class. When the ratio is 1 teacher to 30 children, this often results in children who need support not getting it.
- Children who have a lower level of attendance are **more likely to suffer from emotional based school avoidance (EBSA)**. The same is true for children with poor punctuality as they feel anxious to enter the classroom when all of their peers are there and settled.

We are pleased to hear that the Government will be giving schools more support through agency working (Children's social services) and the Local Authority to ensure that every child, benefits from a full education, acting where this is not the case.

We recognise that the last couple of years have been difficult for everyone and that some have felt a holiday was more important for family well-being. We have some sympathy with this position, but we

must all now focus on children's education and ensuring they reach their potential and are ready for the next phase of their journey, academically and socially.

We need your help to support school attendance. There are always times when a child needs to be at home for illness or other exceptional circumstances, we understand that. However, the best place for a child is in school where we can monitor them, help them and ensure they are not falling behind or having emotional based difficulties.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, for supporting good school attendance and giving your child the best start to their school career.

Regards

Mrs D Jagger

Appendix 2: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance:

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 3: attendance contract template

Date/time of meeting:	
Venue:	

Pupil name:	
Date of birth:	
Address:	
School:	

Present at meeting:	
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Action agreed
<p>EXAMPLES OF ACTION AGREED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil will arrive at school by 8.45 a.m. every day. • Parent will inform the school on the first day of a sickness absence and provide a note upon pupil's return. • Parent will provide medical evidence for every sickness absence pupil may incur. • Are any issues preventing pupil from attending regularly, school staff will be informed?

Attendance target:	95%
Timescale for improvement:	

Date for review meeting:	
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I confirm that this Attendance Action Plan was agreed by all present.

Signed:

..... Parent/carer

..... Pupil

..... School Representative

..... Another Agency