



Andrews Lane Primary & Nursery School

Attendance Policy

Reviewed October 2017

Introduction

Andrews Lane Primary School adopts the Hertfordshire County Council policy on attendance. We continually strive to make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents/carers, teachers and governors. We aim to work in partnership with parents and the Local Authority's (LA) Attendance Team in order to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils.

Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually, they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

This Attendance Policy is intended to support us to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils, by providing a clear framework within which consistent practices and procedures can be applied.

Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school. Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school on a regular and full time basis.

Parents should:-

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non attendance
- notify their child's school if he/she is absent. This should be done on the first day of absence. If their child needs to see the doctor please provide the school with a doctor's appointment card. If their child has a serious medical condition please send in all medical letters in order that a copy may be taken.
- ensure the school office is notified immediately of any change to contact details
- do their best to avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- ensure family holidays are never taken during term time

Responsibilities of School

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance.

Schools should:-

- ensure a legal register is taken at designated times during the school day (am and pm)
- ensure accurate records of attendance and punctuality are maintained on each school day
- differentiate in the registers between absences which are authorised and absence that is unauthorised
- work actively to encourage good attendance and punctuality
- have clear attendance policies in place which are consistently applied and address persistent absence and issues of poor punctuality
- keep parents/carers informed of their child's attendance and punctuality record
- support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance
- monitor attendance and punctuality levels and report these to the Governing Body on a termly basis
- liaise regularly with the LA appointed Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) over attendance and punctuality issues relating to individual pupils.

- notify the Local Authority of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason

Responsibilities of Local Authority Attendance Team

The LA Attendance Team fulfils the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities. Each maintained school in Hertfordshire is allocated an Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who will work in close partnership with the school. In working closely with schools the AIO will offer the following services:-

Consultation Visits

Consultation visits by the AIO will be allocated according to need. Needs will be identified using the school annual DfE Absence data. The purpose of the consultation visit will be to:-

- work with the school to identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties
- agree on focused, time-limited action which needs to be taken by the school and/or the AIO. Before accepting a referral the AIO will expect school staff to have first undertaken some preliminary work themselves, eg contact with parents, action by class teacher etc
- feed back and exchange information in relation to work which has been undertaken by the AIO and/or the school
- identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters
- advise the school on strategies for improving attendance

Casework

AIOs may undertake early intervention (pre-referral) work prior to a case being accepted. This may include the following:

- telephoning or writing to the parents about their child's absences or lateness
- attending a meeting with parents arranged by the school to emphasise the need for good attendance and the possibility that, if there is no improvement, the AIO will become formally involved.

Once a case has been accepted, the AIO will undertake direct work with pupils and their parents. This can include:

- arranging meetings between the school, parents and pupils
- making home visits to assess the situation and determine what action needs to be taken
- offering specific support to parents and individual pupils, either at school or elsewhere
- facilitating meetings
- enabling the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies through the use of Integrated Practice/Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process.

The AIO may also arrange for the pupil to receive specialist support such as counselling or group work.

Attendance Improvement Officers will usually work with children whose absences have not been authorised. However, AIOs may work with children whose absences have been authorised (see appendix 1).

Registration/Lateness

The school doors are opened at 8:50am and pupils are then expected to enter the school building through their classroom door. Children who arrive after 9:00 am must be taken to the school office by their parent/carer so they can be signed in school. Pupils arriving between 9:00 am and 9:10 am will be marked with an 'L' indicating they are late for school. Pupils arriving after the register has closed at 9:10 am, will be registered with a 'U' (unauthorised absence). A 'U' shows they are present in school but were late enough to miss learning which disrupts their lessons and affects their learning. Collecting your child before 3.00pm will also result in the register being marked with a 'U' showing the child was present in school but not for the full session which can affect their learning.

Absences

Parents are responsible for informing the school if their child is absent. This should be done as early as possible by one of the following methods:

- telephoning the school to speak to the office staff
- emailing the school at admin@andrewslane.herts.sch.uk
- informing the school office in person
- sending a written note to the school in advance of the absence
- providing the school office in advance with an appointment card for medical appointments

If your child is absent from school and we have received no explanation why, a phone call will be made. Where there is still no explanation, the absence will be marked as 'unauthorised' on the school register. For children who are absent for more than 2 days without any medical evidence, the third day onwards will be marked as unauthorised.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, in itself, oblige the school to accept it. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence will be treated as 'unauthorised'.

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause. If the child is ill for more than 2 days, medical evidence must be provided.
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school
- attending the funeral of an immediate family member
- leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application. (Parents should be reminded that they cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence)
- involvement in an approved public performance

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable. Unauthorised absences include:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, lack of transport where child lives close to school, lack of appropriate clothing, etc)
- family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances)
- days off to celebrate birthdays
- days off to visit relatives (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances)
- bringing children in late because they or family members have overslept

Persistent Absence

Persistent Absence occurs when a child's attendance rate falls below 95% at any time during the school year, for whatever reason. Absenteeism at this level will considerably damage a pupil's educational prospects and it is best for the school to work alongside parents/carers to tackle this issue. Where attendance levels fall to an unacceptable level, parents/carers will be asked to provide medical evidence for any further absences due to illness. If no medical evidence is provided then the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

All absence is monitored thoroughly by the school. Any case that is seen to have reached a persistent absence level or is at risk of moving towards that level is taken seriously and the parents/carers will be informed immediately.

Requests for Leave of Absence

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time, as it has a detrimental impact on learning. Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which came into effect on 1st September 2013 remove all references to family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional' circumstances. It is for the head teacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Any applications for leave of absence must be made in writing in advance to the headteacher.

Part time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances, following discussions between school and parents/carers, there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs. A part time timetable must be time limited and must not be treated as a long term solution. The school marks the sessions where the pupil is not expected to attend as authorised absence. (C)

Fixed Penalty Notices

Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others. The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/ carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance.

At Andrews Lane Primary if a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day = 1 session) of 'unauthorised absence', a letter will be issued outlining a breach of the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007. If the pupil's attendance does not improve a Penalty Notice may be issued. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days. Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted.

The Use of Legal Action

If a pupil, who is registered at a school, fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the Local Authority will take legal action.

A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance. If 'exceptional mitigating

circumstances' are not deemed to exist then cases which remain open for more than 24 weeks will be referred for legal action. Legal action will, however, be taken earlier when appropriate.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the AIO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.

In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to cooperate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Team will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

Promoting Attendance and Rewards

At Andrews Lane Primary we aim to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/ carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality. Children will be encouraged to attend school regularly and to be punctual.

The school will celebrate good attendance in school assemblies and by the award of certificates. The Best Class Attendance will also be published on the school newsletters.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and subsequent amendments in 2010, 2011 and 2013 is available at www.legislation.gov.uk

Updated Oct 2017

To be reviewed Oct 2018

Appendix 1
HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Policy for Attendance Improvement Officers working with children whose absence has been authorised

- if the AIO becomes concerned (through checking the attendance register) that a pupil has accumulated significant amounts of authorised absence this will be discussed with the relevant member of school staff
- if it is agreed that there is a concern about the pupil's attendance the school should share this concern with the parents
- if concerns about the pupil's attendance remain, the AIO will consider accepting the case
- AIO will give priority to those cases when the absence has been unauthorised

(Note: if a pupil's absence has been authorised by the school the LA cannot cite that absence as evidence of non attendance under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.)

Appendix 2**ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS CODE DESCRIPTION MEANINGS**

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Present at off site educational activity	Approved Education Activity
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Authorised absence
D	Dual registered at another educational establishment	Not expected to attend this session
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Holiday authorised by the school	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence
P	Supervised sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study Leave	Authorised absence
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational reasons	Authorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Not required to be in school (non-compulsory school age pupils)	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to all pupils (Planned)	Not counted in possible attendances

Detailed advice on the use of these registration codes can be found at:

www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance