

ASHCROFT INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Providing the best start in life for all children



Attendance Policy

Headteacher: _____

Person Responsible for Policy and Review: Headteacher

Policy Type: Statutory

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Contents

- 1 Aims
- 2 Legislation and guidance
- 3 Roles and responsibilities
- 4 Recording attendance
- 5 Authorised absence
- 6 Strategies for promoting attendance
- 7 Supporting pupils with poor attendance
- 8 Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school
- 9 Attendance monitoring
- 10 Monitoring arrangements
- 11 Links with other policies
- Appendix 1 Attendance codes

1 Aims

This policy demonstrates our commitment to meeting our obligations for school attendance, including those set out in the Department for Education statutory guidance *Working together to improve school attendance*. We aim to create a whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance by:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and explaining its benefits
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early when patterns of absence or lateness emerge
- Building strong and respectful relationships with families so that pupils receive the support they need to attend school

We also promote and support punctuality because arriving on time helps children to feel settled, secure and ready to learn.

2 Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education statutory guidance *Working together to improve school attendance* and *School attendance parental responsibility measures*. The guidance reflects the legal powers and duties set out in:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002 for maintained schools
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The School Attendance Pupil Registration England Regulations 2024
- The Education Penalty Notices England Amendment Regulations 2013
- The Equality Act 2010

This policy also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance guidance for schools
- Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit

3 Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure the school fulfils its statutory duties, records attendance accurately and shares required information with the Department for Education and the local authority
- Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to remove barriers to attendance and keeps them informed about individual pupils where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of attendance across school policies and the school's ethos

- Ensuring attendance processes are effective and that staff and resources are prioritised for pupils who need support most
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils while adapting its processes and support to individual needs
- Reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping leaders focus improvement work on the pupils and cohorts who need it most
- Working with leaders to set attendance priorities and providing support and challenge
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the school's attendance systems and improvement work
- Working with school leaders on a comprehensive action plan if attendance is a concern
- Ensuring staff receive appropriate attendance training, including the importance of good attendance, the relationship between absence and wider issues, register requirements and the school's procedures for following up and improving attendance
- Ensuring staff with a specific attendance role receive suitable training in attendance data, intervention and partnership work
- Holding the headteacher to account for implementing this policy

The full governing board monitors attendance through regular reports, considers patterns for groups and individual pupils and challenges leaders on the impact of support and intervention.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy
- Monitoring whole-school absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff to monitor the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of attendance strategies and interventions
- Issuing penalty notices where necessary or authorising another appropriate senior leader to do so
- Working with parents of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities to develop individual support approaches, including where transport is missed regularly or in-school barriers affect attendance
- Informing the local authority when a pupil with an education health and care plan has falling attendance or when barriers relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality through appropriate channels
- Notifying the local authority when a pupil is added to or removed from the admission register outside standard transition times
- Providing the local authority with details of pupils who fail to attend regularly or have 10 consecutive school days of unauthorised absence
- Providing the local authority with details of pupils whom the school believes will miss 15 days of school, consecutively or cumulatively, because of sickness

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader, also known as the senior attendance champion, is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for maintaining and improving attendance
- Evaluating attendance expectations, systems and processes

- Maintaining oversight of attendance data and analysis
- Monitoring and evaluating progress regularly
- Making sure systems for responding to absence are effective and consistently followed
- Liaising with pupils, parents and external agencies where needed
- Building productive relationships with families to understand and address attendance concerns
- Creating support, intervention or reintegration plans with pupils and their parents
- Delivering targeted support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Jayne Fellows, Headteacher. She can be contacted through the school office on 01827 213760 or at office@ashcroft.staffs.sch.uk.

3.4 The attendance officer

The attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance and punctuality data
- Benchmarking attendance data and identifying priorities for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to staff and raising concerns with the senior attendance champion and headteacher
- Working with education welfare services to address persistent and severe absence
- Advising the headteacher when a notice to improve, penalty notice or other formal action may be appropriate

The attendance officer is Sam Bowyer, Office Manager. She can be contacted through the school office on 01827 213760 or at office@ashcroft.staffs.sch.uk.

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance accurately for the morning and afternoon sessions each day, using the correct national codes and submitting the register electronically at the beginning of each session. Any known information about absence or lateness must be passed promptly to the school office.

3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Receive calls and messages from parents about absence and record the information on the school's system
- Follow up unexplained absence and seek further information where necessary
- Refer calls or concerns to the headteacher, designated safeguarding lead, SENCo or another appropriate member of staff where further support is required

3.7 Parents

In this policy, parent means the adult whom the school or local authority considers most appropriate to work with. This includes all natural parents, whether married or not, anyone with parental responsibility and anyone who has day-to-day responsibility for the child.

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day and arrives on time
- Contact the school by 9:30am on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day, giving the reason for absence and the expected return date

- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number
- For a child in the Early Years Foundation Stage, provide more than two emergency contact numbers where possible
- Arrange appointments outside the school day wherever possible
- Work with the school and local authority and keep to any attendance contract that has been agreed
- Seek support early by contacting the headteacher, attendance officer or another appropriate member of staff

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to attend school every day and arrive on time. Staff will help children understand why attendance and punctuality matter in an age-appropriate way.

4 Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils on it. We take the register at the start of each morning session and once during each afternoon session. Using the national attendance and absence codes, the register records whether each pupil is:

- Present
- Attending a place other than school
- Absent
- Unable to attend because of an unavoidable cause

Any amendment to the register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date it was made and the name and position of the person who made it. Appendix 1 contains the national attendance codes.

For pupils of compulsory school age, we also record whether absence is authorised. Where relevant, we record the nature of an approved educational activity or the circumstances that make attendance impossible.

Every register entry is retained for six years from the date on which it was made.

Reception and Key Stage 1 school day: 8:40am to 3:10pm. Nursery sessions: 9:00am to 3:00pm.

The gates are open from 8:40am until 8:55am. Pupils must arrive by 8:55am. The morning register is taken at 8:50am and remains open until 9:00am. The afternoon register is taken at 1:00pm and remains open until 1:10pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

A parent must notify the school of the reason for an unplanned absence by 9:30am on the first day and on each subsequent day, or as soon as reasonably possible. Parents should telephone 01827 213760 or email office@ashcroft.staffs.sch.uk and give the reason for absence and the expected date of return.

Absence caused by physical or mental ill health will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Where there is genuine doubt, the school may ask for

proportionate evidence such as a prescription, appointment card, medical letter or another appropriate form of evidence. We will not request medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied that an absence should be authorised, it will explain this to the parent and record the absence using the appropriate code.

4.3 Planned absence

A medical or dental appointment will be authorised when the parent notifies the school in advance. The school may ask for evidence where it is reasonably needed. Parents should arrange routine appointments outside school hours wherever possible.

Where an appointment must take place during the school day, the pupil should be absent for the minimum time necessary, attend school before or after the appointment where possible and wear school uniform so that returning to school is straightforward.

For any other planned term-time absence, parents must submit the school's leave of absence request form as far in advance as possible and, where possible, at least one week before the proposed absence. Section 5 explains the circumstances in which absence may be authorised.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil arriving after 8:55am but before the register closes will be marked late. A pupil arriving after the register has closed will be marked absent for the session using the appropriate unauthorised absence code unless another code applies.

The school monitors punctuality weekly. Where lateness is repeated, we will contact parents to understand the cause, explain the effect on learning and agree practical steps to improve punctuality. Continued concern may lead to a written attendance or punctuality plan, a meeting with the headteacher and support from relevant services. Unauthorised late arrival after the register closes contributes to the national threshold for considering formal action.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

When a pupil who is expected to attend does not attend and no reason has been provided, the school will:

- Contact the parent on the morning of the first day to establish the reason
- Try all available emergency contacts if the parent cannot be reached
- Consider a safe and well visit to the child's home and, where there is an immediate or serious safeguarding concern, contact children's social care or the police
- Decide whether the absence is authorised and enter the correct code as soon as the reason is established and no later than five working days after the session
- Contact the parent on each day that unexplained absence continues and take appropriate safeguarding action
- Report unexplained absence to the pupil's social worker or other lead professional where relevant
- Offer support to the pupil and family and make timely referrals to wider partners where needed
- Consider a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention where support is inappropriate, unsuccessful or not engaged with

4.6 Reporting attendance to parents

The school informs parents regularly about their child's attendance and punctuality through reports, letters, meetings and individual communication. We will explain concern in clear terms, including the

number of days and learning experiences missed, rather than relying only on percentages. Parents will be contacted promptly when attendance falls or a concerning pattern develops.

5 Authorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will grant leave of absence during term time only when the request meets a circumstance set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview for employment or admission to another educational institution
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

The headteacher decides whether leave is granted and, if so, for how long. Ashcroft defines exceptional circumstances as rare, unavoidable and unexpected events that are unlikely to recur. Examples may include a medical or family emergency, the death or serious injury of a close relative, attendance at the funeral of a close family member, homelessness or serious disruption caused by crime. Each request is considered individually in light of its facts, circumstances and relevant context.

Leave will not be granted for protest activity during school hours. Because leave is granted only in exceptional circumstances, a family holiday will not normally be authorised.

Requests should be made as soon as the need is known and, where possible, at least one week in advance using the leave of absence form available from the school office. The headteacher may request evidence to support an application.

5.2 Other reasons for authorised absence

Other reasons for authorised absence include, but are not limited to:

- Illness, including mental ill health, and medical or dental appointments as described in sections 4.2 and 4.3
- Religious observance on a day exclusively set apart by the religious body to which the parent belongs. The school may seek advice from the religious body and pupils should attend on the surrounding school days
- Occupational travel by a mobile child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and travels with a parent whose trade or business requires travel from place to place
- Suspension or permanent exclusion where no alternative provision has been made

5.3 Absence from the school site that is not classified as absence

The headteacher may allow a pupil to be away from the school site for an approved activity or to attend another school or setting. This includes:

- An approved off-site educational activity, sporting activity, visit or trip
- Attendance at another school where the pupil is also registered
- Provision arranged by the local authority
- Approved work experience
- An unavoidable cause such as emergency disruption to travel, lack of access arrangements or closure of the school premises

6 Strategies for promoting attendance

We want pupils to succeed, feel that they belong and benefit fully from school. We therefore promote attendance positively while making sure recognition does not disadvantage children whose absence is linked to disability, ill health or another significant barrier.

At Ashcroft, we promote good attendance by:

- Recognising the class with the highest attendance in Friday assembly and displaying this on the hall board
- Sharing class and whole-school attendance in the weekly newsletter
- Teaching children, in an age-appropriate way, why attendance and punctuality matter
- Contacting parents promptly when attendance falls below expected levels or a concerning pattern emerges
- Working constructively with families and partners to identify and remove barriers
- Recognising improvement and sustained engagement, not only perfect attendance

7 Supporting pupils with poor attendance

The school will use the full range of support and, where necessary, formal measures to address poor attendance. Decisions will be proportionate, consider the individual circumstances of the pupil and family and take account of the Equality Act 2010.

7.1 Attendance contracts

Where appropriate, Ashcroft may use an attendance contract in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council as a form of attendance support. An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school or local authority to address irregular attendance. It is not legally binding but provides a structured route where earlier support has not worked or would not have been suitable.

A parent cannot be compelled to enter into an attendance contract and the school will not agree one in the parent's absence. Where a contract may help, the school will meet the parent and, where appropriate, the pupil to agree actions, support, responsibilities and review dates.

If a parent does not comply with an agreed contract, the school will first discuss the reasons and decide whether the contract remains useful. Further non-compliance may lead to different support or formal action.

7.2 Education supervision orders

Where voluntary early help and attendance contracts have been unsuccessful, the school may work with the local authority to seek an education supervision order. The local authority will write to the parents and arrange a meeting before an order is pursued.

An education supervision order is a formal intervention but is not a criminal prosecution. It initially lasts for one year and may be extended within its final three months for periods of up to three years. A parent who persistently fails to comply with directions under the order may, on conviction, be fined up to £1,000.

7.3 Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but parents do not engage, the school may issue a notice to improve as a final opportunity to engage. The notice will follow Staffordshire County Council's local code of conduct and will include:

- The pupil's attendance record and details of the relevant offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the parent's duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of support provided so far
- Further support available or another opportunity to access support that was not taken up
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance does not improve
- The improvement expected and a clear improvement period of between three and six weeks
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the improvement period ends

7.4 Penalty notices

The headteacher, another appropriately authorised senior leader, the local authority or the police may issue a penalty notice for the unauthorised absence of a child of compulsory school age. If the school issues a notice, it will first check with the local authority and send the local authority a copy.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider:

- Whether the national threshold has been met, which is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available way to improve attendance
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention is more appropriate
- Whether the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 make a penalty notice inappropriate

Each liable parent may receive a penalty notice, although this will usually be the parent or parents who allowed the absence. Payment is made directly to the local authority. If payment is not made within 28 days, the local authority may prosecute or withdraw the notice.

- For a first penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days
- For a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 within 28 days
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same child within three years of the first notice. If the threshold is met for a third time, alternative action will be considered

A penalty notice may also be issued if a parent allows a pupil to be in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a suspension or exclusion after being notified that the pupil must not be present in a public place. These notices fall outside the National Framework and do not count towards the three-year escalation process. In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 thereafter.

8 Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

8.1 Complex barriers to attendance

Where a pupil faces complex barriers, we will listen to the pupil and family, identify the barriers and agree a practical support plan. This may include changes within school, help from the SENCo or designated safeguarding lead and referrals to appropriate services. We will maintain contact, review

progress and adapt support. If barriers relate to the pupil's needs, we will involve the local authority where appropriate.

8.2 Mental or physical ill health

We will work sensitively with pupils and families where mental or physical ill health affects attendance. Depending on need, support may include a named adult, reasonable adjustments, a quiet arrival, adapted transitions, support with missed learning, liaison with health professionals and a time-limited reintegration plan. Support will be reviewed regularly and will aim to secure the greatest attendance that is appropriate for the pupil.

Parents should use the NHS guidance *Is my child too ill for school* when deciding whether a child needs to stay at home. We will share this guidance and help families understand it so that children attend whenever it is safe and appropriate.

8.3 Other barriers to attendance

We recognise that pupils may face barriers connected with SEND, disadvantage, involvement with children's social care, caring responsibilities or other family circumstances. We will identify need early and coordinate timely, appropriate and well-targeted support. This may include:

- Reasonable adjustments and SEND support planned with the SENCo and family
- Pastoral, practical or financial support where disadvantage affects attendance
- Close liaison with the designated safeguarding lead, social worker, virtual school or other professionals where a child is known or was previously known to children's social care
- Flexible, individual support for young carers and pupils experiencing significant family pressures

Where a pupil has an education health and care plan and attendance falls, or barriers relate to the pupil's needs, we will inform the local authority and work with it to review provision and support.

8.4 Returning after a lengthy or unavoidable absence

Before or as soon as a pupil returns, we will speak with the family and pupil, identify any barriers and agree a reintegration plan. Support may include a phased return where appropriate, a familiar adult, adjusted routines, a plan for missed learning and regular review meetings. A phased return will be time limited, recorded and reviewed, with the aim of returning to full-time attendance as soon as it is in the pupil's best interests.

8.5 Prolonged absence for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

When a child in Nursery or Reception is absent without notification, or absence becomes prolonged, we will contact the child's parents and alternative emergency contacts. We will consider:

- Patterns and trends in the child's absence and the child's individual circumstances
- The vulnerability of the child and parents and the circumstances of home life

The school will follow its safeguarding procedures, record concerns and take proportionate action. This may include a home welfare visit, consultation with or referral to Staffordshire children's social care and, where necessary, a request for a police welfare check. The fact that a Nursery child is below compulsory school age does not reduce the school's safeguarding responsibility.

9 Attendance monitoring

9.1 Monitoring attendance

The school monitors attendance, absence and punctuality weekly, half-termly, termly and annually at whole-school, individual pupil, year-group and cohort level. Specific pupil information will be shared with the Department for Education when required.

Attendance data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the Department for Education's school absence statistics. The school benchmarks whole-school, year-group and cohort data against local, regional and national information and shares key findings with the governing board.

9.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils and groups needing additional support
- Identify pupils whose absence is a cause for concern, particularly where persistent or severe absence is emerging
- Complete detailed half-termly, termly and annual analysis to identify patterns and trends
- Use historic and emerging information to shape attendance priorities and action

9.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions for individual pupils, groups or cohorts where analysis identifies a pattern of absence
- Provide targeted support to pupils whose absence causes concern and to their families
- Provide regular reports to class teachers and relevant leaders, including the SENCo, designated safeguarding lead and pupil premium lead, and to the governing board
- Use data to evaluate interventions and amend them where necessary
- Work with other schools, the local authority and partner agencies when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe

9.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence means missing 10 per cent or more of school sessions. Severe absence means missing 50 per cent or more. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to our attendance work.

The school will:

- Use data to identify patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider safeguarding concerns and act in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Meet regularly with the parents of pupils who are vulnerable, at risk of persistent or severe absence or already persistently or severely absent
- Discuss engagement, listen to barriers, explain available help and the possible consequences of continued absence and review existing actions
- Provide access to wider support services with the local authority where relevant
- Consider alternative and individualised support to remove barriers and re-engage pupils

- Use formal measures where support is not effective, appropriate or engaged with

10 Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed whenever relevant Department for Education or local authority guidance changes and at least annually by Jayne Fellows, Headteacher. Each review will be approved by the full governing board.

11 Links with other policies

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Early Years Foundation Stage Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy

Appendix 1 Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the Department for Education guidance on school attendance.

Co de	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
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend

Co de	Definition	Scenario
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: In police detention Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes

Co de	Definition	Scenario
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
⌘	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays