



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

This policy which applies to the whole school including boarding is publicly available on the school website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the School Office. All employees should read this policy in conjunction with our Safeguarding – Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying, Whistleblowing Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and The Teachers' Standards.

Legal Status:

- Complies with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations currently in force

Applies to:

- all staff and volunteers working in the school along with the Proprietor.
- Designated Member of Staff responsible for Attendance: The Member of Staff with overall responsibility for Attendance of Students in the whole school is Amanda Woods, however Kathryn Baker-Buckley as the Head of Attendance and Student Management Coordinator (SMC) has direct responsibility within this area with Rachel Hassanyeh as the Head of Education authorising absence from school.

Monitoring and review: This policy is subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by Amanda Woods (Principal). The Proprietor will undertake a full annual review of this policy and procedures, inclusive of its implementation and the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged. This discussion will be formally documented in writing. Any deficiencies or weaknesses recognised in arrangements or procedures will be remedied immediately and without delay. All staff will be informed of the updated/reviewed policy which will be made available to them in either a hard copy or electronically.

Date Reviewed: November 2018

Date of Next Review: November 2019

Signed:

Amanda Woods

Amanda Woods

Principal

Statement of Purpose:

At Ashwicke Hall School we believe that regular attendance and excellent punctuality are the foundations for academic achievement and personal development. They establish a responsible attitude towards the opportunities available at school and underpin the basis for the world of work. Attendance and punctuality are strongly linked to students' academic success.

Context: As part of our Attendance and Punctuality policy all students and adults have the right to live in a supportive, caring environment in which students feel safe. Ashwicke Hall School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all students fulfil their potential. Our policies, working practices, documentation and record keeping support the implementation outlined above.

Introduction

There is overwhelming research evidence, that poor attendance at school significantly reduces the life chances of a student through a marked impact on academic success. There is also strong evidence to suggest students with poor attendance at school are much more likely not to be in education, employment or training when they leave school. This is reflected in the significant focus on improving school attendance at national, local and school levels.

Responsibilities

The Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their children receive a full time education appropriate to their age, aptitude and ability. Parents/carers must ensure their children attend school and are punctual on a daily basis. The school has a legal responsibility for accurately maintaining school registers, and for taking the register at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions. The school also has a responsibility to share this data with the Local Authority and Department for Education.

Students are encouraged to become independent young people, including taking responsibility for their own attendance and punctuality.

Aims

- To improve the overall percentage of attendance for all students. The expectation is for all students to attend school for a minimum of 95% for each academic year
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school, including students, parents, teachers and governors
- To implement a system of rewards and sanctions
- To recognise the needs of individual students

Absence from School

There are two categories of absence from school:

Authorised - approved

Unauthorised – not approved

Absences will be recorded using the registration codes recommended by the Department for Education.

Types of Authorised Absence:

- Medical Appointments – with hospitals or orthodontists. (Non-urgent, routine check-up appointments should be made outside of school hours, or during school holidays). Students attending medical appointments are expected to be absent from school for the least amount of time possible, and not for the whole day.
- Illness
- Exclusions

- Religious observance – where it has been authorised by the Head of Education in advance.
- Leave of absence – where the Head of Education has authorised a request for absence in advance.

Types of Unauthorised Absence:

- Any request for absence that has not been authorised by the Head of Education in advance
- Truancy
- Late arrival to school after the registers have closed
- Illness not supported by medical evidence where this has been requested

All absence, authorised and unauthorised, will be analysed and subject to challenge to ensure that any concern regarding frequency, pattern or validity is acted upon swiftly. Parents/Carers are expected to contact the school on the first day of absence, and each day thereafter informing the school of the reason for absence, and the expected date of return to school. SMC will contact parents when we have received no prior notification of a student's absence. If parents/carers fail to respond to this, the student's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Punctuality and Registration

The school applies the following procedure:

- Students are expected to be on site by 8.15am.
- School starts promptly at 8.15am. Students should go straight to Tutorial where registration for the morning session takes place.
- Any student arriving after 8.15am is considered late 'L' and will be marked as such by the school.
- If a student arrives late to school, without genuine reason, they will be given a 30 min after school detention on the same day. Parents will be informed via email or a telephone call, and it will be logged on the SABIS School Management System.
- Students arriving after 8.30am when the registers are closed, will be recorded as 'U' on the registers. As well as being classed as Late, this is also classed as an unauthorised session absence and will impact on the student's overall attendance percentage. These students will be given a 60 min after school detention on the same day. Parents will be informed via email or a telephone call and it will be logged on the SABIS School Management System (SSMS).

Holiday in Term Time

Parents do not have a legal right to take their children out of school academics. It is always the Head of Education's decision whether or not to allow parents to take their child out of school during term time, this does not include weekend days. If permission is not requested in advance, or permission is declined and parents take their child out of school anyway, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

The Head of Education may authorise an absence from school during term time if there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances may include:

- the death or terminal illness of a person in the immediate family
- medical reason or appointment by parent request
- a family occasion at parental request

Any request for leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, and it must come from the parent the child normally lives with.

Children Missing Education

The school has a duty to inform the Local Authority of any child who is on the school roll, not in attendance and whose whereabouts we have not been able to confirm. A child is considered to be missing from education once they have missed 10 days of school and there has been no contact from parents/carers. This is detailed further within our Children Missing in Education Policy.

Medical Evidence

Where a student's attendance has fallen below expectations, the school has the right to request that parents provide medical evidence to support any future absences. Medical evidence can be an appointment card from the doctor's surgery/hospital, the label from any prescribed medication which shows the student's name and the date the medication was prescribed, a photocopy of the prescription or a letter from the GP or other medical professional. Once medical evidence has been requested, if it can't be provided each time the student is absent, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Monitoring Attendance

Attendance for all students is monitored on a weekly basis by the school's Head of Attendance (SMC). Parents of students whose attendance falls below 95% will be notified in writing of the school's concerns. Attendance will then be monitored for 3 weeks. If there has been little or no improvement, parents will be invited to attend a School Attendance Meeting (SAM) with the school's Head of Attendance (SMC). There will be a 3 week monitoring period following the SAM. If there is little or no improvement a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service who can either prosecute, or issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for non-attendance.

Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence

A penalty notice is an alternative to parents/carers being taken to court by the Local Authority for non/poor school attendance. If a child has 10 or more sessions (a session is either a morning or an afternoon, total of 10 sessions per week) of unauthorised absence within a six month period, the school will inform the Education Welfare Service who can issue a fixed penalty notice (FPN) for each child to each parent.

Anyone who has day to day care of a child is considered a 'parent' and legally responsible for making sure the child attends school. The cost of a FPN is £120.00 per child, per parent. This cost can be reduced to £60.00 per child, per parent if the FPN is paid within 21 days.

The only statutory defenses under Section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act are:

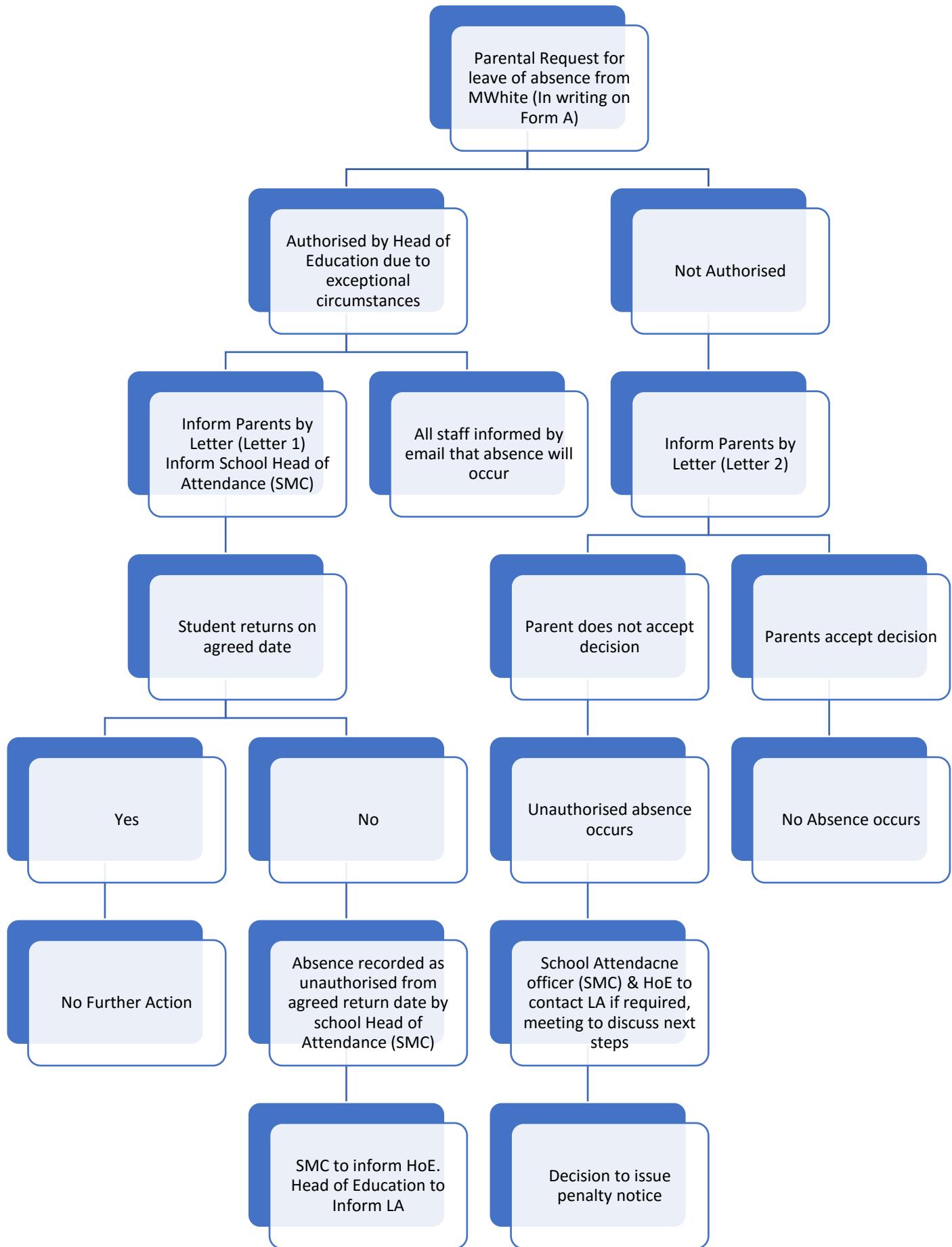
- The student was absent for medical reasons (needs evidence from GP to support this)
- The Local Authority failed to provide transport when they were required to do so
- The absence was authorised by the school

Fixed Penalty Notices will also be issued for unauthorized holiday absences where this totals 10 or more sessions.

Summary

Concerns about absence from school and the likely negative impact on a student's progress will be communicated to both students and parents. The school has a legal duty to submit the rates of authorized and unauthorized absence to the Local Authority and the Department for Education three times a year. School staff are committed to working with parents to promote good attendance to help secure the best possible academic outcomes for students.

Unauthorised Leave of Absence Procedure



(APPENDIX 1) Dear Mrs. M. White (mwhite@sabis.net), Executive Secretary

I request consideration for the school to allow my student to have a leave of absence from school during academic term time:

My child (full name): _____

The reason(s) for this request are:

From (date): _____ Time the student will leave school: _____

Until (date): _____ Time the student will return to school: _____

Address where the student will be staying:

Person coming to collect student: _____

Relationship to the student: _____

Phone Number of the Person visiting the student: _____

(This person must have personal photo identification at collection otherwise we cannot allow them to depart with the student ie passport or drivers license)

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Please return completed form to the school via mwhite@ashwicke.sabis.net. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether the request is authorized or not.

For Office Use Only

Current Attendance: _____ % Last or Term's Attendance to date: _____

% Number of school sessions taken as leave during term time: _____

Agreed/Not Agreed Request for leave is agreed/is not agreed for the above student to take leave during term time between the above dates.

Rationale to decline request: _____

Signed (Head of Education): _____ Date: _____

Notification of decision: _____ Date letter sent to Parent/Guardian: _____

Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time

1. Parents who want the school to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully, complete the attached form and send it to Mrs M. White. This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered well before the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any booking arrangements before receiving the school's decision regarding their request. The Head of Education cannot authorise any leave of absence unless the request is received before the period of absence begins.
2. The Department for Education makes it clear that the Head of Education may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances (this does not include weekend days). The Head of Education must also be involved in determining the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
3. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.
4. South Gloucestershire County Council understands the challenges that some parents face when booking holidays particularly during school holidays. However, we believe that, in order to ensure children receive the best education and prospects, they should be in school during term time.
5. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence. In considering a request, the school will take account of: -
 - the exceptional circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
 - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
 - the overall attendance pattern of the child
 - frequency of similar requests
 - whether the parent made the request in advance
 - students/pupils on examination courses or due to take IGCSEs will not normally be granted leave of absence.
6. Where parents have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The Head of Education of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. However Heads of Education may choose to liaise with each other as part of their decision-making process.
7. Should the school decide to grant leave of absence, but the child does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
8. Should the school decide not to grant leave of absence and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent* per child if this occurs on multiple occasions. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.
9. The Local Authority will continue to monitor all school absences during term time and support Head of Education in challenging parents who ignore the law.

* Generally the DfE states that parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.

Authorised absence for "Exceptional circumstances" might include:

- o Birth: Immediate family only; usually 1-2 days.
- o Deaths: Immediate family only; usually 1-2 days.
- o Funerals: Immediate family only.
- o Family occasions: Immediate family only.

NB Any of the above taking place abroad: travel days and event days only – not extended holiday.

- o Religious observance/festival: period of celebration and travel days if out of area/abroad.
- o "Chance of a lifetime holiday": only in exceptional circumstances as agreed by Head of Education.
- o Fixed holidays for parents: only if validated by official letter from employer.

- o Medical circumstances needing certain conditions: only if supported by Doctor.
- o Prize holiday: need written confirmation from competition organisers.
- o Forces child – parent on leave: need written confirmation.
- o Work experience placement: only if agreed by Head of Education - official confirmation of placement required.
- o Representation eg sport, performing arts: official written verification required.

Authorisation will not be given in the following circumstances:

- o Holiday re-arranged due to unforeseen circumstances eg illness, jury service.
- o Cheaper out of school holidays.

School Letter Leave Agreed (TEMPLATE LETTER) APPENDIX 2

(Parent/carer(s) name and address)

Ref:

Date:

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

Re: Child's name, grade and date of birth

Thank you for your letter dated (date) requesting permission for (pupil's name) to be absent from school from
to

They will be leaving with and staying at..... for which we have the phone number.....

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that the Head of Education may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and School Academy Council supports this. Therefore pupils will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances. Having looked at your application, I feel that your request can be supported in this instance. Therefore, the absence to include the dates requested will be authorised.

Our key priority is to ensure that your child(ren) (is/are) as successful as possible and (is/are) able to achieve (his/her) full potential. I would, therefore, ask that you support your child in catching up on the time they will miss in school.

Yours sincerely

Miss Rachel Hassanyeh

Head of Education

School Letter Leave Denied (TEMPLATE LETTER) APPENDIX 3

(Parent/carer(s) name and address)

Ref:

Date:

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

Re: Child's name, grade and date of birth

Thank you for your letter dated (date) requesting permission for (pupil's name) to be absent from school from
to

They will be leaving with and staying at..... for which we have the phone number.....

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that the Head of Education may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and School Academy Council supports this. Therefore pupils will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

I have considered your application very carefully. Although I understand the reason for your request, I am unable to approve leave of absence in this instance, as I believe the circumstances are not exceptional. Therefore, if your child is away from school during this period it will be recorded as Unauthorised Absence. As a school we are obliged to inform you that you may be subject to a Penalty Notice if your child's absence from school is unauthorised. This is in line with Gloucestershire County Council's Code of Conduct.

The Penalty Notice fine would be:

- £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996. I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1,000 per parent, per child.

This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school. Our key priority is to ensure your child(ren) (is/are) as successful as possible, (is/are) able to reach (his/her) full potential and gains maximum benefits from (his/her) educational experience. I would hope that upon reflection you are able to support this decision in line with the Local Authority and Government policy, that leave should be restricted to the 13 weeks school holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Miss Rachel Hassanyeh

Head of Education