



September 2024

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing this letter to inform you about attendance expectations and to provide you with a clear outline about attendance procedures at Ashlawn School. As you may be aware there have been some important changes to the law regarding attendance. Please take the time to read through the changes at the end of this letter.

Good attendance at school is extremely important for learning. However, there will be times when absence is unavoidable. This letter explains the approach we are following to manage attendance.

As we are sure you are aware,

Types of Absence

Each absence is classed as authorised or unauthorised, both of which affect a pupil's attendance percentage to reflect the lost learning. Absences are coded as authorised where reasons are considered valid and unauthorised where no explanation or unacceptable reasons are given. **Pupils with attendance of 95% or below will be expected to provide medical evidence for absence relating to illness/ injury such as a copy of a prescription or a medical appointment card etc.**

The following are a few examples of unauthorised absences:

- Days out to theme parks or to attend concerts/shows
- Parents' work commitments or business trips
- Holidays taken in term time (including long weekends taken on Fridays and/or Mondays)
- Parental illness
- Passport appointments

Absence and First Day Call

If your child is unable to attend school you should inform us on the first day of absence before 8.30am via Studybugs or Voicemail, you will need to state the pupils name, your relationship to the pupil i.e. parent/ carer etc. and the reason for absence. Parents/ carers are required to call each day a pupil is absent. Ashlawn's attendance telephone number is 01788 532831– select option 1 for the absence line.

Medical Appointment

Where possible, appointments should be made out of school hours or in school holidays. However, we realise this is sometimes not possible. Pupils should come into school before and after appointments to ensure they miss as little lesson time as possible. If possible we ask that if these appointments are made during the school day please try and book the appointments between 09:30-11:30. Pupils should sign in at Reception and sign out at Students Services.

Emergency Occasions

There are some occasions e.g., bereavements, family problems, etc. where it may be inappropriate for children to attend school; we will be sympathetic to such needs; they will be dealt with on an individual basis.



Punctuality

Please ensure that your child arrives at school so that they are present and ready for lessons; this begins at 8.45am each day. The attendance team together with form tutors and Head of Year will monitor lateness and punctuality. Sanctions and parental contact will be used as appropriate.

Requests for absence in term-time

Permission from the Principal must be sought for all absences that occur during term-time. A 'request for leave of absence form' must be completed in advance of the absence taking place (these are available by clicking this link [Absence Request Form](#) or can be collected from Reception. Only the Principal can decide if the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. Under current regulations, schools cannot authorise any holidays taken in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. School will require evidence of exceptional circumstances, which should be attached to the 'request for leave of absence form' and the judgement about what is exceptional will be made by the Principal.

What is considered as poor attendance?

Anything below 95% is weak, under 90% is poor and if attendance falls below 85% we will have serious concerns. Below 90% is regarded as persistent absence by the DFE. At Ashlawn, we are aiming for every pupil to achieve attendance levels of at least 95%. Throughout the terms, we identify all those pupil's whose attendance has fallen and issue a Stage letter and/or make a telephone call informing parents. We then monitor the pupil's attendance on a weekly basis and hope to see a pattern of improving attendance. Failing to improve on this, this can lead to prosecution, which we want to help families avoid.

If you have any Attendance queries throughout the academic year you can speak to the Attendance Officer, your child's Form Tutor, Head of Year or Key Stage Lead. We are here to support you and your child whilst at Ashlawn. We want to make sure that we can support each pupil's education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help them to address gaps in learning due to absence.

Please read through our Attendance Policy which you can find on the below link. This is a draft policy awaiting ratification by the Governors: [Attendance Policy \(Draft\)](#)

We look forward to seeing you soon and hope you enjoy a restful summer break.

Yours Sincerely

Attendance Team



LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME UPDATED INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Supreme Court clarified has clarified the law on unauthorised leave, including holidays, during term time (Platt v Isle of Wright 2017). The Supreme Court has made clear that attending school 'regularly' means that the children must attend school on every day that they are required to do so. As such, the parents of any child who is absent from school without authorisation for any length of time are likely to be considered as committing an offence under s444 of the Education Act 1996.

The law states a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if it considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school.

When making an application for Leave of Absence parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify parents of their decision. The school may also request further information on the application and supporting documentation where appropriate.

It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.

The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the 'resident' parent ie the parent with whom the child normally resides.

Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Where a leave of absence is requested, but additional days taken either prior to or after the request may be considered as part of the leave of absence.

Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'.

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service, part of Warwickshire County Council. Penalty Notices are issued



in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings.

Leave of Absence taken in the academic year 2023-24

It is important to note, Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 per child if paid within 21 days).

Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within the required timeframe as set out on the notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal proceedings under S444 Education Act 1996.

Leave of Absence taken in the academic year 2024-25

The law relating to Penalty Notices is due to change with effect from 1 September 2024. Therefore Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absences taken after this date will be issued in accordance with the updated legislation.

- Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices – 4 in total).
 - First Leave of Absence offence: The Penalty Notice amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.
 - Second Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount,
- Payment plans will not be offered and/or payments received outside of the 28 day period will not be accepted. Where a penalty notice expires unpaid the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider criminal prosecution.
- Third Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice) A penalty notices will be not be issued and the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Your child's progress academically as well as socially is our shared priority.



Attendance Roadmap

In line with the DfE Statutory Guidance (in force from 19th August 2024) we offer a supportive, stepped, attendance approach. We will offer a welcoming ethos with high expectations for all. We will assess data to identify absence trends & use preventative discussions/meetings with families to listen, understand & support to remove barriers. Where needed, we will formalise support to nurture improvement with Attendance Contracts & as a last resort we will consider intensifying support &/or enforce legal sanctions.

