ASHLAWN
SCHOOL

July 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Working Together for Strong School Attendance

Every moment matters. At Ashlawn School, we know that consistent school attendance is the single most powerful factor in your child's academic success, emotional well-being, and future career path. School is where vital life skills are built, lifelong friendships are formed, and gaps in learning are prevented.

While we understand that illness and emergencies happen, missing even a few days of school disrupts your child's progress. To support your family in achieving excellent attendance, this letter outlines our current procedures, expectations, and the statutory legal framework.

Our Attendance Thresholds: Where Does Your Child Stand?

At Ashlawn School, our target is for **every student to maintain an attendance level of at least 95%**. We closely monitor attendance patterns every week using the following thresholds:

- **95% to 100% (Good / Expected):** Your child is secure, maximizing their learning, and maintaining strong social bonds.
- **91% to 94% (Weak):** Your child's progress is at risk. We will contact you via telephone or a **Stage Letter** to alert you and monitor improvement.
- **Below 90% (Poor / Persistent Absence):** Your child is now classified by the Department for Education (DfE) as "persistently absent." This triggers intensive weekly tracking.
- **Below 85% (Serious Concern):** Severe learning gaps are forming. Failure to show rapid, sustained improvement at this stage can result in legal prosecution.

Authorised vs. Unauthorised Absence

Every single missed day—regardless of the reason—reduces your child's overall attendance percentage and represents lost learning. However, the law requires us to formally categorise every absence:

- **Authorised Absences:** Granted only when the school accepts the explanation as valid and unavoidable.
- **Unauthorised Absences:** Recorded when no reason is given, or when the reason is unacceptable to the school.

Strict Medical Evidence Rule: If your child's attendance falls to **95% or below**, we can no longer authorise absences for illness on parental word alone. To authorise any further medical absence, you must provide formal evidence, such as a copy of a prescription, a labelled medication box, or an official medical appointment card.

Strictly Unauthorised Absences

To ensure fairness and consistency across our school community, the following reasons **cannot** be authorised under any circumstances:

- Family holidays taken during term time (including long weekends on Fridays or Mondays).
- Leisure days out (e.g., family trips to theme parks, concerts, or theatre shows).
- Adjustments made for parents' work commitments or business travel.
- Disruptions caused by parental illness.
- Routine administrative tasks (e.g., passport application appointments).

We Are Here to Support You

Our primary goal is to help your child succeed, not to penalise families. If your child is facing barriers to attending school, please reach out to us immediately so we can help close learning gaps and provide the right support. You can contact your child's Form Tutor, Head of Year, Key Stage Lead, or our Attendance Officer at any time.

Please take a moment to review the statutory, legally binding changes to attendance law (implemented in August 2024) detailed on the following page, along with our Attendance Policy on the link below.

Ashlawn Attendance Policy 2025 2026

Thank you for your continued partnership in safeguarding your child's education and future.

Yours sincerely,

The Attendance Team

Ashlawn School

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HOW TO REPORT YOUR CHILD ABSENT

If your child is unable to attend school, you must inform us on the first day of absence before 8.30am. This should include the reason for absence, pupil's name and your relationship to the pupil. You are required to call on every day of your child's absence.

ILLNESS

Login into the Studybugs app and 'Report an absence due to illness'

OR

Ashlawn's attendance telephone number is **01788 532831**– select **option 1** for the absence line.

MEDICAL

Medical appointments, where possible should be booked around the school day between 09:30am - 11:30am.

Pupils should come into school before and after appointments.

All appointments should be reported via Studybugs under **'Send other message'**

If you haven't already, please get the free Studybugs app, or register on the Studybugs website, and use it to tell us whenever your child's ill and unable to attend school.

Get the app or register now

REQUESTING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Permission from the Head of School must be sought for all other 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. Schools 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.

PUNCTUALITY

Pupils must be onsite by 8.40am ⇨ Lessons start promptly at 8.45am ⇨ Registers close at 9.15am ⇨ Pupils arriving after 9.15am will be recorded as unauthorised (U Code). Unless evidence or reason for lateness is given

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Transforming Lives Educational Trust

Ashlawn School, Ashlawn Road, Hillmorton, Rugby, Warwickshire. CV22 5ET
Principal: **Paul Brockwell BEd NPQH**
T: **01788 573425** E: **info@ashlawn.org.uk** W: **www.ashlawn.org.uk** **@AshlawnSchool**

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LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

UPDATED INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Supreme Court 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 the parents' 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

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

The law relating to Penalty Notices changed with effect from 19 August 2024. Therefore, Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absence taken from September 2024 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.

Did you know, arriving after the register has closed (30 mins from school starting) = an absence?

STEP 1 -Identify, Assess & Prevent

Our daily actions & processes aim to promote relationship building with children & families to prevent absence. This involves monitoring data trends & absence patterns to inform our conversations with you (& your child where age allows). The trigger for conversations is where absence is at risk of reaching the new National Threshold ***(10 sessions (10 half days/5 days) within a 10 week rolling period)***. Other daily actions involve promoting attendance positively, using praise & incentives, swift absence follow up, email &/or letter communication to raise your awareness of emerging concerns, processing requested or unrequested 'Term Time Exceptional Absence' & doing Home Visits to meet our safeguarding duties as required.

Did you know, 90% attendance = approx. 95 missed lessons/hours of learning?

STEP 2 – Early Absence Support

We move to this step if the National Threshold for absence is met (authorised or unauthorised) to prevent further absence occurring. Discussions & meetings will be offered to identify if early support or reasonable adjustments are needed. This will be done using discussions &/or meetings to create a supportive action plan. An Early Help Assessment (EHA) may be required for some support to be accessed along with a Team Around the Family (TAF) Meeting Process

Did you know, 90% attendance = 4 weeks of absence over a year?

STEP 3 – Formalised Support

Where absence continues & initial support needs to be increased an Attendance Contract (AC) will be offered to formalise support. This is a 3-6 month nurturing plan of improvement to prevent further escalation. Achievable & individual targets will be set & reviewed regularly. Medical &/or other information will be actively sought at this point if required to work collaboratively with you & other agencies. An AC can run alongside other meetings e.g., TAF meeting.

Please talk to us about how we can support you &/or your child at any time.

Did you know, good attendance increases academic success?

STEP 4 – Warnings – Concerns Remain

Where STEP 2 or STEP 3 support has been unsuccessful &/or declined, a 'Formal Warning' if AC has failed, or a 'Notice to Improve' Letter if no AC appropriate, will be issued to reinforce the need for immediate improvement. A Family Court Order such as an Education Supervision Order will also be considered as an alternative to prosecution.

STEP 5 – Legal Action – No Improvement

Legal action (Penalty Notice or Prosecution) MAY be requested from the Local Authority (LA) if Unauthorised Term Time Absence is taken, or if overall absence continues to occur & reaches or exceeds the National Threshold for absence, despite STEPS 1-4 being attempted. Statutory Guidance States a Referral to Children's Social Care for children with 'Severe Absence' (less than 50%) should be considered to obtain 'Intense Support'.

PENALTY NOTICES & LEGAL ACTION

1st Offence (after 19th August 2024) of Term Time Leave &/or Irregular Attendance (10 sessions of Unauthorised Absence or more) = Fine of £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. If paid within 21 days fine is reduced to £80 per parent, per child.
2nd Offence within 3 years (from 19th August 2024) = Fine of £160 per parent, per child payable within 28 days, no reduction available.
3rd Offence within 3 years (from 19th August 2024) NO PENALTY NOTICE considered. The case will be presented to **Magistrates' Court** under s444(1) or (1a) of the Education Act. If found guilty, a fine of up to £2500 per parent, per child can be issued.
Convictions for s444(1a) offences will show on DBS record.

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