# Attendance and Punctuality Policy
# VERSION: January 2026
# NEXT REVIEW: January 2028

Ashby Hill Top Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. Our school has an embedded culture of high expectations of school attendance.

We believe:
The best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly

- Attendance at school supports children's social emotional, mental and physical health and development
- Good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential
- Membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others
- Good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling lifestyle

**Legislation and Guidance**
This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education's (DfE) Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK statutory guidance for schools, which applies from August 2024. It also refers to the new National Framework for issuing penalty notices and reflects changes to the law introduced through the Education Penalty Notices England Amendment Regulations 2024, on school attendance parental responsibility measures. Ashby Hill Top Primary School adheres to the Leicestershire County Council's Local Code of Conduct for Issuing Penalty Notices 2024.) Our policy also draws from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

**Safeguarding**
A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. Ashby Hill Top Primary School recognises that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse, child sexual and criminal exploitation. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

**Roles and responsibilities**
All staff at Ashby Hill Top Primary School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued as members of the school community, and look forward to coming to school every day.

**Governors' responsibilities**

The governing body has the following responsibilities:

- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Take an active role in attendance improvement, support the school to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.
- Use data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with other local schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed.
- Support the Headteacher to appoint a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils (a Designated Teacher).

**Senior Attendance Champion's responsibilities**

The Senior Attendance Champion leads on attendance Ashby Hill Top Primary School. At our school, this is our Headteacher, **Mrs Sylvie Newman** who can be contacted via slt@ashbyhilltop.leics.sch.uk

The Senior Attendance Champion has the following responsibilities:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Maintain the same ambition of high attendance for all pupils, including those with medical issues or with SEND, and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.
- Ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.
- Have oversight over the accurate completion of attendance registers daily.
- Ensure consistent and robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.
- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Engage with multi agencies to support families in dealing with school related and non-school related absence.
- Work with the Education Welfare Officer and the local authority on legal intervention, as required.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.
- Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.
- Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.
- Make referrals to Children's Social Care where poor attendance persists.

**Parents/carers responsibilities**

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible (on the first day of absence) when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Know and understand the school's stance on term time holidays, in line with the statutory guidance for schools.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.
- Proactively engage with any formal support offered.
- For parents/carers of LAC or PLAC pupils, work with the school and local authority to help them understand the child's barriers to attendance, including the development of Personal Education Plans.
- Contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school

lives. Ashby Hill Top Primary School will endeavour to support parents/carers to address their concerns.

**Pupil's Responsibilities**
All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to a trusted adult in school or at home. The school may hold informal and supportive discussions with pupils regarding their attendance as part of the safeguarding protocols.

**How does the school promote regular attendance?**
Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

Ashby Hill Top Primary School will:

- Detail parental responsibilities for attendance at admission, giving a clear message on the law, times of school day and procedures in cases of absence.
- Inform parents of attendance by letter, newsletter, the school's website and at Parents' Evenings.
- Contact parents/carers on 1st day of absence.
- Monitor all pupils with less than 96% attendance.
- Send letters to parents/carers regarding concerns where attendance falls below 96%
- Monitor attendance patterns and punctuality, using data for comparative purposes.
- Introduce reward and incentives, where the Senior Attendance Champion has felt it is necessary and needed to support particular year groups or individual pupils.
- Share year group attendance on the school's newsletter.
- Keep school governors informed of all attendance matters via termly Headteacher's reports.

**Procedures Regarding Absence from School**
**Attendance Registers**
Ashby Hill Top Primary School keeps an attendance register for all pupils. Class teachers or an authorised member of staff will mark the register. The attendance register is taken at the start of the first session of each school day (9.00am) and at the start of the second session (1:00pm). We will mark whether every pupil is: present or absent.

**Lateness**
Registration closes at 9.20 am and 1.25 pm. Any pupil who arrives after registration closes will count as absent (authorised), before this, we will use a 'late' code to show the pupil was late to registration.

**How does the school record absences?**
All pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. The school uses the DfE codes for recording absence. Parents and carers are encouraged to look regularly at their child's attendance on their Reach More Parents App. The school will also send registration certificates in end of year reports. Parents may request a copy of their child's registration certificate at any time, via the school's office.

**Authorised absence:** this is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.

**Unauthorised absence:** this is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence following a parent's request

**Some examples to support parents and carers:**

| Authorised absence | Unauthorised absence |
|---|---|
| • Genuine illness of the pupil: hospital/dental/doctor appointment/operation for the pupil<br>• Major religious observances<br>• Visits to prospective new schools<br>• External exams or educational assessments | • Shopping/day trip/visit to theme park/a birthday treat<br>• Oversleeping due to a late night<br>• Looking after other children/family members<br>• Appointments for other family members<br>• Holidays during term time<br>• Taking a Friday off 'to avoid traffic' etc when going away for the weekend<br>• Friends/family organizing a holiday without realizing when the school holidays fall<br>• Leaving school early on the last day of term<br>• Flight times not coinciding with school hours<br>• Not realising when the beginning or end of term is |

**No absences will be authorised:**

- During the week of, or the week before; Year 6 SATs for any reason other than genuine illness, the Year 4 Multiplication Check and the Year 1 Phonics Screen Check.
- During winter weather (e.g. snow & ice) when school has managed to stay open, unless school has been previously notified (e.g. hospital appointment), children are expected to attend school as usual

**Reporting an Absence and Absence Types**

**How should I report my child's absence?**

- Parents/carers are expected to telephone or email the school office by 8:45am on the first day of absence, indicating the reasons for absence and likely length of time of the absence.
- If this information is not received, the school has in place a system of first-day contact.

**First-day contact:**

- Check the attendance register
- If no reason for absence has been provided, contact parents/carers as soon as possible, by phone, text, email or other agreed methods.
- Where it is not possible to contact parents on the first day of absence, the school will continue to try to make contact by text.
- Parents/carers should continue to call the school on each day of absence, unless agreed otherwise.

**I am not sure if my child is well enough for school, what should I do?**

If you are unsure if your child's illness allows them to attend school, please see the school's Administration of Medicines Policy on the school's website or speak to the school office for support. The following guidance Is my child too ill for school? - NHS is a useful tool to support parents.

**Medical and Dentist appointments- can these be booked in school time?**

Parents/carers should, where possible, not book non-urgent medical and dental appointments in school time. When appointments are urgent or unavoidable, we ask that parents return their child to school immediately afterwards- or send them to school beforehand. We do not routinely expect to see evidence of appointments. We may on occasion, ask parents for their GP appointment text or hospital letter at the discretion of the Senior Attendance Champion/Headteacher.

**Religious observance**

Where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong, parents/carers may request a leave of absence, by competing the form in Appendix 1.

**Absence through a child participation in public performances, including theatre, film, television work and modelling**

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from the school for their child to take part in a performance. Authorisation will be at the Headteacher's discretion, and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Evidence of Local Authority notification will also be required.

**Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport**

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from the school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. Authorisation will be at the Headteacher's discretion, and they will wish to discuss the nature and frequency of the absence with you and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher. It is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

**Weddings, funerals and other important family life events**

There may be times when a pupil requires exceptional leave during term time for short periods of time e.g. attending a close family/family friend's funeral or wedding. In these circumstances, a 'Leave of Absence' form (found in Appendix 1) should be completed. This application should be completed by the parent with whom the child normally resides. The Headteacher will then formally respond to this request via letter. Prior and current attendance will influence the ultimate school response and decision and if leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the length of time a pupil can have away from school. For weddings and funerals where a holiday is involved, 1 day of authorised absence will be granted for the occasion only. Parents/carers should not expect the entire of the holiday to be authorised.

**Term Time Holidays**

Any requests for time off for a holiday will not be authorised, unless in the most exceptional of circumstances. Ashby Hill Top Primary School follows the statutory guidance for schools which states that Headteachers should not authorise term time holidays. If parents/carers decide to take their child out of school for a term time holiday, it is their statutory duty to inform the school using the Leave of Absence form in Appendix 1.

Parents/carers should send the form to the school in a reasonable amount of time before the holiday. It is not acceptable to place the request the day before the holiday commences or on the morning the holiday commences and expect an immediate response. Parents/carers will be informed if the absence is authorised or unauthorised and any further action as below, in a letter from the Headteacher.

**Penalty Notices for Term Time Holidays**

The school will only seek to use penalty notices through the Leicestershire Local Authority, who are the receivers of any funds raised from the notices, in the most exceptional of circumstances. Leicestershire Local Authority issues the penalty notices to each parent, for each child who is absent from school. See Appendix 2 for more information. Ashby Hill Top Primary School will always seek to work with families before penalty notices are issued. The Senior Attendance Champion/Headteacher will make the final decision, applying the following criteria:

**5 consecutive days of term time leave**

Penalty notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days, and for fewer days where this has happened before.

**Per parent, per child**

Penalty notice fines will be issued to each parent, for each child who is absent.

**First Offence**
The first time a penalty notice is issued for Term time Leave or irregular attendance, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days. This is reduced to £80 per parent per child, if paid within 21 days.

**Second Offence (within 3 years)**
The second time a penalty notice is issued for Term time Leave or irregular attendance, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days. There is no option to pay at the reduced £80 level.

**Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)**
The third time an offence is committed for Term time Leave or irregular attendance, a penalty notice will not be issued. The case will proceed to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrate fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child.

**Collection and analysis of data for managing and improving attendance**
Attendance is monitored by pupil, year group, class group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, language, Free School Meal and Pupil Premium status, special educational needs status, Looked After status, those vulnerable to poor attendance, those with medical conditions and children classed as vulnerable by Social Care. The data collected on attendance will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance. The school proactively uses data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.

**Support First Approach**
The Senior Attendance Champion/Headteacher is responsible for the management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that the school intervenes in non-attendance at an early stage.

Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's absence (or absence falling lower than 95%) the school will send Letter 1 to parents, to seek partnership working to improve attendance. If on the next monitoring cycle (daily and formally in 6-week intervals), attendance has not improved, Letter 2 will be issued. A request may be made to hold a meeting with parents to discuss the reasons for the absence and support that could be offered.

Should attendance not improve despite support being offered, the school may request to see 'medical evidence' of a pupil being unwell for any further absences. This can include a text message from the GP, a prescription or a hospital letter.

Letter 3 will be issued if attendance continues to decline after 4 weeks (or before if necessary) of the parent consultation meeting or following Letter 2. At this stage, a referral to the Education Welfare Officer may be made for further, more intense support. A parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention may be agreed. At this stage, a referral to the Leicestershire Local Authority Inclusion Service may be made.

The Senior Attendance Champion reserves the right to escalate though the process of letters and meetings on a case-by-case basis.

**Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent**
The school will work with each identified pupil and their parents/carers to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, the school will signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, the school will take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the Local Authority and

other partners.

**Pupils whose absence has become persistent**
Where absence becomes persistent (attendance of 90% or less), the school will put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary, this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, the school will hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, the school will work with the Local Authority on legal intervention. Parents will receive a Notice to Improve at this stage. Where there are safeguarding concerns, the school will intensify support through statutory children's social care and may make regular home visits. The school is also committed to working with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended, the schools of any siblings, or feeder secondary schools.

**Irregular attendance- penalty notices**
Penalty notice fines will be considered by the Headteacher, where there have been 10 sessions of absence in a 10-week period. A session is 1 mark for the day e.g. a full day carries 2 marks morning and afternoon. Penalty notice fines will be issued to each parent, for each child who is absent. See Appendix 2 for more information.

**Support for pupils and their parents/carers**
**What can I do to encourage punctuality and good attendance?**
Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that they leave home in the correct clothes and properly equipped, having had breakfast. Show your child, by your interest and the way that you talk about school, that you value their education.

**My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?**
Pupils are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best tackled through partnership with the school, parents/carers, and, in discussion with the child. If a child is reluctant to attend school, excusing their absence or giving in to pressure from them to be excused from school, is rarely a long-term solution. On the contrary, this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make school avoidance more of a problem. Contact the school immediately and be open about your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons- difficulties with schoolwork, friendship issues, family difficulties or worries about what is happening at home while they are at school. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional such as a doctor, Family, or our Education Welfare Officer.

The school has a trained Senior Mental Health Leader who may be able to support pupils struggling with their wellbeing. The school also has a trained ELSA who also may be able to help. Ashby Hill Top Primary School staff are skilled in working with multi agencies and can sign post families to the right service if families are open and honest about the worries and concerns, they may have. Parents/carers can also self-refer to the Family Help team at Leicestershire Local Authority or Family Lives, who offer free support and parent mentoring on any aspect of parenting for those living in Leicestershire.

**Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance**
As an inclusive school, Ashby Hill Top Primary School maintains the same ambition for attendance for all pupils. The school will ensure joined up pastoral support and where required, will put in place additional support and reasonable adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan if applicable. The school will ensure the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed. The school will work with wider services and external partners, making timely referrals, as required.

**Children absent from the Early Years**

Children being absent from Early Years Foundation Stage, whether at school age (age 5 or over) or not, either repeatedly or for prolonged periods of time, may be a vital warning sign for a range of safeguarding issues. New requirements from September 2025 require schools to follow up absence for prolonged periods if there has been no notification from parents/carers about the reasons for absence. Ashby Hill Top Primary School will follow its usual attendance procedures outlined in this policy for pupils in EYFS. If the school has concerns about a child of any age, usual protocols will be implemented, which may include contacting Children's Social Services.

**Appendix 1**

| **REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM**<br>Please complete all shaded boxes on this form | |
|---|---|
| **Name of Child(ren)** | **Year Group(s)** |
| | |
| **Name of Parent/Carer** | |
| | |
| **Date of proposed absence** | **Number of school days missed** |
| | |
| Please state the reason for the leave requested. If this is for a holiday, please indicate why this holiday could not take place during the normal holiday pattern. The Headteacher may request additional information before making a decision. | |
| | |
| **Signature of Parent/Carer with legal responsibility for the child** | **Date** |
| | |
| ***Please return this form to school <u>before any booking is made</u> if this is for a holiday in term time.*** | |

**For office use only**

| **Name of Child(ren)** | | **Current attendance** |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| **Dates requested:** | | |
| **This absence request is:** | **Authorised** | **Not authorised** |
| | | |
| **Signature of Headteacher** | | **Date** |
| | | |

**Appendix 2**

# Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences: What you need to know about the changes.

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for unauthorised absences that occur after 19th August 2024.

### 5 Consecutive Days of Term Time Leave.

Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days, and for fewer days where this has happened before.

### 10 Sessions of Unauthorised Absence in a 10-week period.

Penalty Notice fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of absence in a 10-week period.

### Per Parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice fines will be issued to each parent, for each child who was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave will result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

### First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

### Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.

(No option to pay at £80 level)

### Third offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued. The case will proceed to the Magistrates' court.

Magistrate's fines can be up to £2,500 per parent, per child.

Please consult your school's attendance policy and speak with your school if you are thinking of taking your child out of school during term-time. It is likely you will need to make a written request to take your child out of school and any leave of absence will need to be agreed by your Headteacher before it is taken.

Leicestershire County Council