



## **INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS**

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Adopted by Governors: Autumn 2017

To be reviewed: Autumn 2018

Signed: S.Dalby

Date: 08.02.18



## ATTENDANCE POLICY



### AIM OF THE SCHOOLS

The aim of The Alderton Infant and Junior School is to provide an excellent education in a safe, supportive learning environment, where people are valued and make positive contributions to the school community, and where pupils go on to become responsible, independent members of society.

- ❑ *To promote, support and reward very high levels of attendance at The Alderton Infant and Junior Schools*
- ❑ *To enable the exchange of information between school and parents about attendance*
- ❑ *To inform pupils, staff, parents, Missing Education and Child Employment Services (MECES) Investigator and governors about attendance and attendance issues*
- ❑ *To meet the requirements of the law on attendance*
- ❑ *To reach at least expected national levels of attendance (96% in 2016-17)*

### Rights and Responsibilities

Attendance at The Alderton Infant and Junior Schools is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - parents, pupils, staff and governors.

Parents and carers have a responsibility under Section 444 of The Education Act 1996 to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

### School

- have to complete the attendance register twice per day - at the start of the morning and afternoon session.
- have to ensure that attendance registers are kept, in accordance with legal requirements and the policy of the school.
- have to inform the Local Authority about pupils who do not attend school regularly or who have been continuously absent for two weeks or more (unless the absence is covered by a medical certificate).
- Schools are legally required to notify the LA of every admission and deletion from their school roll within 5 days

### Procedures

#### First day Contact

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school office early on the first day of absence by 9.30a.m and thereafter on every day of illness.

- If the parent has not contacted the school by 9.30am, then the parents of identified pupils should expect to be contacted by the Office. If first contact is unavailable school office will use other recorded contacts.
- Where parents do not make contact by 'phone or email, they are required to give a written reason for absence.

It is the view of the school that first day contact works by:

- Raising awareness of the importance of full attendance
- Addressing problems before they become serious
- Improving home-school liaison



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- Sending a clear message to parents and pupils that if a child is absent s/he will be missed
- Alerting parents who may be unaware that their child is missing and therefore may be at risk
- Requiring and promoting a high level of communication within the school staff working as a team
- Reducing the number of pupils who have short-term absence, thus reducing the overall absence rate
- Assisting parents and pupils to develop habits that reduce casual absence and encouraging early contact from parents.
- Promoting high expectations that will continue long term into the work place.

### Subsequent Action if no contact has been possible

After day 10 of continuous absence we refer to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service using the Missing Pupil Checklist. The Missing Pupil Checklist should be submitted if:

- a pupil has gone missing and no contact can be made with parent/carer to establish reason for absence.
- Ceased to attend school and forwarding address of family is unknown.
- When a child has not returned from holiday within 10 school days of the expected date of return.

A pupil is deemed to be missing from school when the school do not have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil is unable to attend by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause and have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is.

On receipt of this the Investigation Officer will carry out enquiries on behalf of the Local Authority. If following these enquiries the whereabouts of the pupil cannot be established, the LA will advise the school in writing, to remove the child from roll not before 20 days of unauthorised absence. The school will then be required to upload the pupil's Common Transfer File to the S2S lost pupil database. If the pupil is found to be living at an address which is not of reasonable travelling distance from school he/she may be removed from roll.

Half-termly letters will be sent to those where attendance is below 94%.

### Lateness

Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration. Children arriving between 8.50am and 9.15am are recorded as late and a reason requested and recorded. Children arriving after 9.15am will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

There are three negative results caused by pupils who constantly arrive late:

- The loss of learning suffered by the pupil themselves which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time in school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.
- Can raise levels of unauthorised absence.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:



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- Pupils catch up on lost learning by missing part or all of their playtime if they are frequently late
- Calling parents in to discuss persistent lateness
- The MECES Investigator being notified in the case of persistent lateness.
- Use of Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence. This decision will be taken by the Headteacher in consultation with the MECES Investigator for the school.

### Authorisation of Absence

The decision as to whether an absence will be authorised will be taken by the Head teacher. This may be after a period of absence, a pattern of missed absences or continued lateness.

**Authorised Absence:** an absence agreed by the Head teacher with an explanation from parents

**Unauthorised Absence:** an absence not agreed or unexplained

**Medical:** an appointment such as hospital, doctor or dentist

**Illness:** illness as informed by the parent or, in the case of persistent absentees, the school will require medical evidence such as a GP note (appendix 1), prescription or appointment card.

Full guidance on attendance codes is held in the school office.

Holidays will not be authorised as specified in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) 2006 Regulations from September 2013.

Regulations state that: "The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted."

Parents are required to apply for leave of absence. An ECC application form together with letter of explanation should be sent to the headteacher.

These arrangements are made clear to parents in our prospectus/website and by letters sent home.

### Medical appointments

Parents are asked to ensure that, where possible, any medical appointments are organised before or after school i.e. Dentist, Optician, GP.

A copy of an appointment letter is required for any appointments at hospital. The school may request appointment evidence for other appointments if it is necessary to take a pupil out of school.

### Long term absence

When a child is ill and absent for over five days, the school may send material home, if the child is well enough to concentrate and so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.



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### Repeated absence

If a child has unauthorised absences, or an irregular pattern of attendance, the parents or guardians will be contacted by telephone or in writing, or asked to visit the school, to discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will contact the MECES investigator and complete the paperwork required to trigger Missing Education and Child Employment Service intervention. Low, poor attendance will trigger a School Attendance Meeting (SAM) with the Headteacher and the school's Family Support Worker. Alternatively the school may issue a legal action warning letter if there has been a pattern of unauthorised absence. Thereafter the school will monitor attendance for 18 weeks and refer to MECES if there are 10 unauthorised absences within 10 weeks.

As a safeguarding measure the school may decide to home visit with our FSW if a pupil is absent, we are unable to contact parents and we are concerned about their welfare.

### Penalty Notices

In accordance with Government guidelines, the Local Authority reserves the right to fine parents who take their child out of school for holidays during term time without approval.

**When it is suspected that a child has been taken on holiday and medical reasons are given for the absence, we reserve the right to request a doctor's certificate verifying the illness.**

A penalty notice may also be issued if there are 6 or more unauthorised sessions due to holiday taken during the first two weeks of September.

### Strategies

We will:

Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.

Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. Send a clear message that if a pupil is absent s/he will be missed.

We will strive to raise the profile of attendance through all or some of these strategies:

- Individual certificates for full attendance for the half and whole term.
- Special certificates for those children whose attendance has improved
- Displays detailing attendance figures by year group
- Newsletters are used to promote the importance of attendance
- Each half term all attendance will be monitored and a letter sent home to the parents/carers of those children not attaining 94%.
- Incentives and prizes
- Involvement of the School Nurse, Health Visitor and Family Support Worker
- Attendance guidance leaflet to be given to all new parents

### Monitoring and Evaluation

There are weekly register reviews by the Office / Headteacher when any children causing concern with attendance or lateness are highlighted and necessary action is taken.

Each year the governors will check whether attendance is improving and, if not, try to establish why not.



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Attendance will be reported each term to the Governors as part of the Head teacher's report. This data will include whole school together with groups EAL, SEN, Disadvantaged.

If an absence is not supported by a telephone call, letter or appointment evidence it will remain as unauthorised.

The Missing Education and Child Employment Service will be asked to intervene where absence is in excess of 10 unauthorised sessions in a 10 week period.



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### Appendix 1 – GP note

***Note to parents: please hand this form to your child's doctor/nurse when attending the appointment.***

### **Note to GP/nurse**

The Alderton Infant and Junior Schools and Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES) are working closely together to reduce avoidable absences from school. This child's attendance has been identified as a concern and it is now the responsibility of the parent to provide medical evidence in order for the child's absences to be authorised by the school.

***If you are issuing a prescription, this form is unnecessary as the parent can provide us with a copy of the medication label and this will be sufficient evidence.***

Thank you for your assistance. This information will be held in complete confidence and will be used for attendance records only by the school and/or MECES Attendance Team.

**Name of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_

I have seen the above child at surgery today and confirm the following:-

Brief nature of illness:

Recommended number of days the child should be absent from school:

Name of GP/nurse:

Date seen:

Name and address of surgery/practice (an address stamp/sticker will be acceptable):



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### **Appendix 2 – Letter to parents - below 94% - on green paper**

Dear Parents/ Carers,

I am writing to draw your attention to your child's attendance which is below 94%. This is below the national average of 96%.

I appreciate this may be due to very genuine reasons, but I am obliged to tell you that your child's attendance is low. Missing school means missing out on education:

**20 days off per school year = 90% attendance, which means your child may find it hard to keep on track with their education, seriously affecting your child's life chances.**

It is recommended that you take steps to ensure that your child attends school regularly. If this is not achieved and there are further unauthorised absences a referral will be made to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service and you may be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure regular attendance at school. However depending upon the circumstances, you may be provided with an opportunity to discharge the offence by paying a penalty notice which imposes a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 days and 28 days. Should you fail to pay within the prescribed timescales, you will be prosecuted for the original offence.

I will continue to monitor the situation closely and expect to see an improvement over the next six school weeks.

If your child is absent due to illness, we will need medical evidence. The GP note attached can be used for this purpose. Further copies can be obtained from the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher





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### **Appendix 3 – Letter to parents – below 94% - on yellow paper**

Dear Parents/ Carers,

I am writing to draw your attention to your child's attendance.

To date this academic year, your child's attendance rate is below 94%. This is well below the national average of 96% and therefore a serious cause for concern.

It is recommended that you take steps to ensure that your child attends school regularly. If this is not achieved and there are further unauthorised absences a referral will be made to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service and you may be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure regular attendance at school. However depending upon the circumstances, you may be provided with an opportunity to discharge the offence by paying a penalty notice which imposes a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 days and 28 days. Should you fail to pay within the prescribed timescales, you will be prosecuted for the original offence.

I would like to meet with you in the next five working days to discuss this matter. Following the meeting, I may need to refer to the Family Support Worker.

Where attendance fails to improve significantly, this is referred immediately to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service.

Please telephone the school office to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

### **Appendix 4 – Letter to parents – on red paper**



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**Private & Confidential – Addressee Only**

Our ref:

Date:

### **PENALTY NOTICE / LEGAL ACTION WARNING**

Dear

**Pupil's name:**

**D.O.B:**

It is noted that you are the parent of, or have day to day care of \_\_\_\_\_, a child who is a registered pupil at this school and is not in regular attendance as required by the Education Act 1996, Section 7.

\_\_\_\_\_ has been recorded as having \_\_\_\_\_ school sessions (equivalent to \_\_\_\_\_ school days) lost due to unauthorised absences between the dates of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

It is recommended that you take immediate steps to ensure that the child named above attends school regularly. If this is not achieved and there are further unauthorised absences a referral will be made to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service and you may be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure regular attendance at school. However, depending upon the circumstances, you may be provided with an opportunity to discharge the offence by paying a penalty notice which imposes a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 days and 28 days. Should you fail to pay within the prescribed timescales, you will be prosecuted for the original offence.

Please note: If you have previously been the subject of a prosecution for any child in relation to irregular school attendance and the attendance of \_\_\_\_\_ does not improve to a satisfactory level immediately, you may be required to attend a formal pre-court interview. This interview will be carried out under caution to investigate the circumstances.

When deciding upon the most appropriate action, the Local Authority has a duty to consider if the making of an Education Supervision Order would be appropriate. If an assessment of the situation indicates that this may be appropriate, and no improvement is achieved, you may be invited to a pupil planning meeting.

It is important for you to note that the above absences may be included if any further action is taken against you.

Another parent/carer or someone with day-to-day responsibility regarding the above named child may have also received this letter. Each adult holds separate responsibility and will also be required to take appropriate action to ensure there are no further unauthorised absences.

Further information on school attendance and Essex County Council's policies may be found at [www.essex.gov.uk](http://www.essex.gov.uk). Should you have any queries or wish to discuss your child's attendance, please contact the school.



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The attached 'Legal information for Parents and Carers' provides you with further information on legal proceedings in relation to irregular school attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Telephone:

Fax:

Internet:

Email:

Enc: Legal Information Fact Sheet  
c.c.