



# Aston St Mary's Primary School Policy



**Subject:** Attendance

**Author:** HT, Staff, Pupils, Governors

Adapted from model policy

**Effective Date:** Jan 23

**Next Review Date:** Jan 25

## Mission Statement

At Aston St Mary's Primary School we believe all of God's children should feel safe at all times and being in school plays a part in this. Every child is a treasure – small in size, growing in God's love. In our school, our Christian values will support us to keep our children safe and to allow them to grow up surrounded by God's love. This policy, along with the others in school, will help us to do this.

Aston St Mary's Primary School aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them, underpinned by our Christian values.

## Attendance Aims

- To keep whole school attendance above 96%.

## Statutory Framework

Under the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised, (see below).

Government legislation make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to allow up to 10 days in a school year for a family holiday or to agree to extended leave for parents to visit their country of origin.

If there are exceptional circumstances behind a request it should be discussed with the Headteacher. If a child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed, this will be classified as an unauthorised absence and a fine or legal action may be taken.

## Rights and Responsibilities

Improving attendance at Aston St Mary's Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents and all staff.

## Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their class teacher, and if the need should arise, from the Headteacher.

## **Parents**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school as soon as possible, by phone call. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent. Parents will be promptly informed of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents whose child's attendance is a cause for concern will be written to by the head teacher at the end of each term. Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical or dental appointments for their child during school hours.

Parents whose first language is not English or have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication.

## **School**

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff. The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

## **Registration**

Registers will be called promptly at 8.55 am and at 1.00 pm and will be marked present in accordance with the list of symbols as set out in the register.

Registers will close at 9.15 am and at 1.15 pm. If a pupil fails to arrive before the registers close, he/she will be marked as 'absent'. Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the office. If a pupil is persistently late, the class teacher will contact the parents.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

## **Authorised/Unauthorised Absence**

It is vital that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- the pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the Headteacher due to exceptional reasons')
- the pupil was ill or attending a medical appointment

- the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- there is a family bereavement
- the pupil is attending an interview in connection with an application for a place at another school
- the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition
- the pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit
- the pupil is participating in an approved public performance
- the pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion (e.g., if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling).

Absence should be **unauthorised** if:

- no explanation is forthcoming
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances)
- the pupil is shopping during school hours
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (e.g. a birthday, day trip)
- the pupil is away from school on a family holiday
- the pupil is on a family holiday without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday and instead seek retrospective approval on their return.

## Holidays

Parents are strongly urged to avoid taking family holidays during term time. Indeed, parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday. Recent changes to legislation make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to allow up to 10 days in a school year for a family holiday or to agree to extended leave for parents to visit their country of origin.

## Procedures for Following up Absence

- If a pupil is absent for more than three consecutive days (without an explanation being forthcoming,) and the absentee is a pupil about whom there are already concerns, the office will make every effort to contact the parents. Teachers will inform the office of these absences.
- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Headteacher will contact the parents.
- If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence and fails to record on Arbor or if the explanation offered by a note is unsatisfactory, the school office will send an absence letter to the parents. This will occur three times per absence and if there is no response then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If a pupil is persistently absent or late and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer during his/her consultation visit.
- Messages from parents will be kept by the school office.

## Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- Aston St Mary's Primary School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupils' needs.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice.
- Pupils whose attendance is a cause of concern will be set targets for improvement. The class teacher will monitor and review these targets.
- Parents will be regularly reminded (via home/school agreement, newsletters, parents' evenings, etc.) of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be re-integrated back into school upon their return.
- Pupils who have been absent for whatever reason for an extended period of time will (when appropriate) have individually - tailored reintegration programmes prepared for them.
- The Headteacher will make an annual report to the school's governing body on attendance matters.
- The Headteacher will, when appropriate, liaise with other agencies - Educational Psychology Service, Social Services, Child and Family Guidance, etc. - when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The Headteacher will have regular meetings with the school's Education Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

Our school follows Hertfordshire County Council's Penalty Notice for Truancy Code of Conduct and procedures.

- We expect parents/carers to work with us to address attendance problems.
- If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half-day = 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term (including unauthorised holidays), the headteacher may ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice.
- The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days.
- There is no right of appeal by parents against a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- If the penalty is not paid the Local Authority may prosecute parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance.

**The guidance followed can be seen on HCC Grid when considering a Fixed Penalty Notice - <https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance/penalty-notices-for-unauthorised-absenceholiday>**

