

# Student Attendance Policy



<b>Governors' Committee Responsible:</b>	Student Experience Committee
<b>Nominated Lead Member of Staff:</b>	Assistant Headteacher
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## Introduction

The staff of Ash Manor School are committed, in partnership with parents, carers, students, governors and the Local Authority (LA) to building a school which serves the community and of which the community is proud. We aim for an environment that enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence and achieve their goals.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that students attend school regularly and all students should be at school, on time, during term time unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly, this Policy sets out how, together, we can achieve this.

## Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence can disrupt teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is a joint responsibility between parents/guardians/carers, students, staff and the Local Education Authority.

To help us all to focus on this we will endeavour to:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all students, at least twice daily.
- Monitor every student's attendance.
- Contact parents/guardians/carers as soon as possible when a student fails to attend, where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Celebrate good attendance/punctuality in assemblies;
- Reward good or improving attendance, with certificates, rewards etc;
- Where appropriate initiate the Attendance Panel's procedures for students whose attendance falls below 90%.
- Invite you to discuss persistent absence with the appropriate person – Attendance Officer/Academic Progress Manager/Senior member of staff and/or the local Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

### **Understanding types of absence**

Each day is marked as two sessions, am and pm. Each session of absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/guardians/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/guardians/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after close of registration 09:15am – “U” code.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents/guardians/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A student becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level may cause considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents/guardians/carers’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. 10% absenteeism in the five years of secondary education is the equivalent of missing over half of one whole year of schooling.

### **Absence Procedures**

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school before 9.00am to report a student’s absence and phone each day the child is absent from school. 01252 353900 x 225
- Ensure a letter of confirmation is sent to the Form Tutor/Attendance Officer when the student returns to school
- Contact the school promptly whenever a problem occurs that may keep the child away from school

If your child is absent we will:

- Contact you on the first day of absence if we have not received any form of communication
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer / APM, or Assistant Headteacher if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the (EWO) if, despite the school’s best efforts to work with parents/carers, the student’s attendance remains a concern.

## **Telephone Numbers**

There are many occasions when we may need to contact parents/guardians/carers about many things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number.

## **The role of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)**

Parents/guardians/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer your child to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanction such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents/guardians/carers or children may wish to contact the Local Authority themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority. The EWO meets weekly with the Attendance Office and half termly with the Assistant Headteacher responsible for attendance.

## **Punctuality**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day they can miss work. Students who arrive late disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

## **How we manage lateness (*see appendix A*)**

The school day starts at 8.35am and we expect students to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by 8.40am and students will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. At 9.15am the register will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a student arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but late after close of registration and this will be classified as an unauthorised absence unless reasons for absence are provided by the parent and school accept them as reasonable. If the absence is unauthorised this may result in a referral to the EWO and legal sanctions if the problem persists.

If a student has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Tutor and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

## **Holidays in term time**

Taking holidays in term time will affect a student's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/guardians/carers to help us by not taking children away during term time. The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and we strongly advise that you book family holidays during the school holidays. Surrey Secondary Heads have agreed that requests for holiday absence will not be granted, except in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Headteacher.

## **Leave of Absence**

On occasions, where it is felt to be impossible to avoid the need for absence during the school term, parents must request a Leave of Absence form from the Headteacher by completing an 'Application for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances' form. However, unless the reason is deemed as acceptable for very special circumstances, or the trip is an educational one, run by an official club or activity e.g. scout expeditions, golf tournaments etc. the absence will not be authorised. If students are taken out of school without the Headteacher's authorisation the absence will be marked as unauthorised and the matter referred to the Education Welfare Office who would investigate and consider overall attendance. This may result in prosecution or the issue of a penalty notice for parent's failure to ensure regular school attendance.

Absence during examination periods is subject to additional measures nationally. If a student is absent from an examination, a medical note from a medical professional is required confirming the inability to attend. If this is not supplied, parents/guardians/ carers will be billed for the cost of the examination(s) missed and risk a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

### **Absence due to illness/appointments**

Students may have dental or medical appointments in school time. However, parents/ guardians/carers should try to make routine appointments during the school holidays or after school hours. If a student needs to leave the premises during school time they must bring a note from home or an appointment card to be initialed by the Form Tutor. They must sign out at Student Reception before leaving and sign in on their return. These are important procedures in helping to ensure the safety and welfare of all our students.

Where there is an excessive amount of absence due to sickness the school may request that medical evidence be provided and, if this is not provided, such absence will not be authorised and the school is likely to refer the matter to the EWO to investigate further.

### **Penalty Notices**

The EWO, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carers for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carers for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

### **Circumstances when a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued**

- A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are failing to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or EWO
- Where a child is taken out of school for holiday during term time for 5 days or more without the authority of the Headteacher, each parent is liable to receive a Fixed Penalty Notice for each child. In these circumstances a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised.
- Students identified by Police and EWO's engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- Late arrival after the close of registration on 5 occasions during a half term, where the student's attendance falls below 90%. The lateness will be recorded in accordance with the 'Registration and Lateness' section of this policy.
- Unauthorised absence 'O' code or 'U' code with at least 10 sessions could be liable for a penalty notice.

With the exception of unauthorised holidays taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Staff Responsible For Attendance Matters In This School Are:

Assistant Headteacher

Attendance Officer

Form Tutors

## **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/guardians/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/guardians/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents/guardians/carers and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the students at all times. Parents/guardians/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education. In addition to this, the school has the following responsibilities:

**Governors:** Adopt the whole policy

Headteacher/staff responsible for attendance:

- Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that resources are provided.
- Maintain a scheme for contacting parents on the first day of absence.
- Ensure that key staff have time-tabled periods for liaison and follow-up work with the Education Welfare Services (EWS) and appropriate access to attendance data.
- Consult and liaise closely with the EWS on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate students are identified and referred without delay.
- Work in close collaboration with the EWS during their half termly register analysis.
- Monitor an attendance award scheme with assemblies, certificates and rewards.
- Ensure that attendance percentages/graphs are displayed around the school and to set whole school attendance targets.
- Monitor and evaluate attendance with the EWS.

## **Head/Assistant Head of House**

- Oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually.
- Celebrate good attendance at Assemblies, notice boards etc.
- Share with the EWO any Form Tutor concerns regarding the early identification of disaffection of a tutee.

## **Form Tutors to:**

- Complete registers accurately and punctually at tutor time.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer to chase up any unexplained absence.
- Record all reasons for absences in the register with the correct code.

## **Teachers to:**

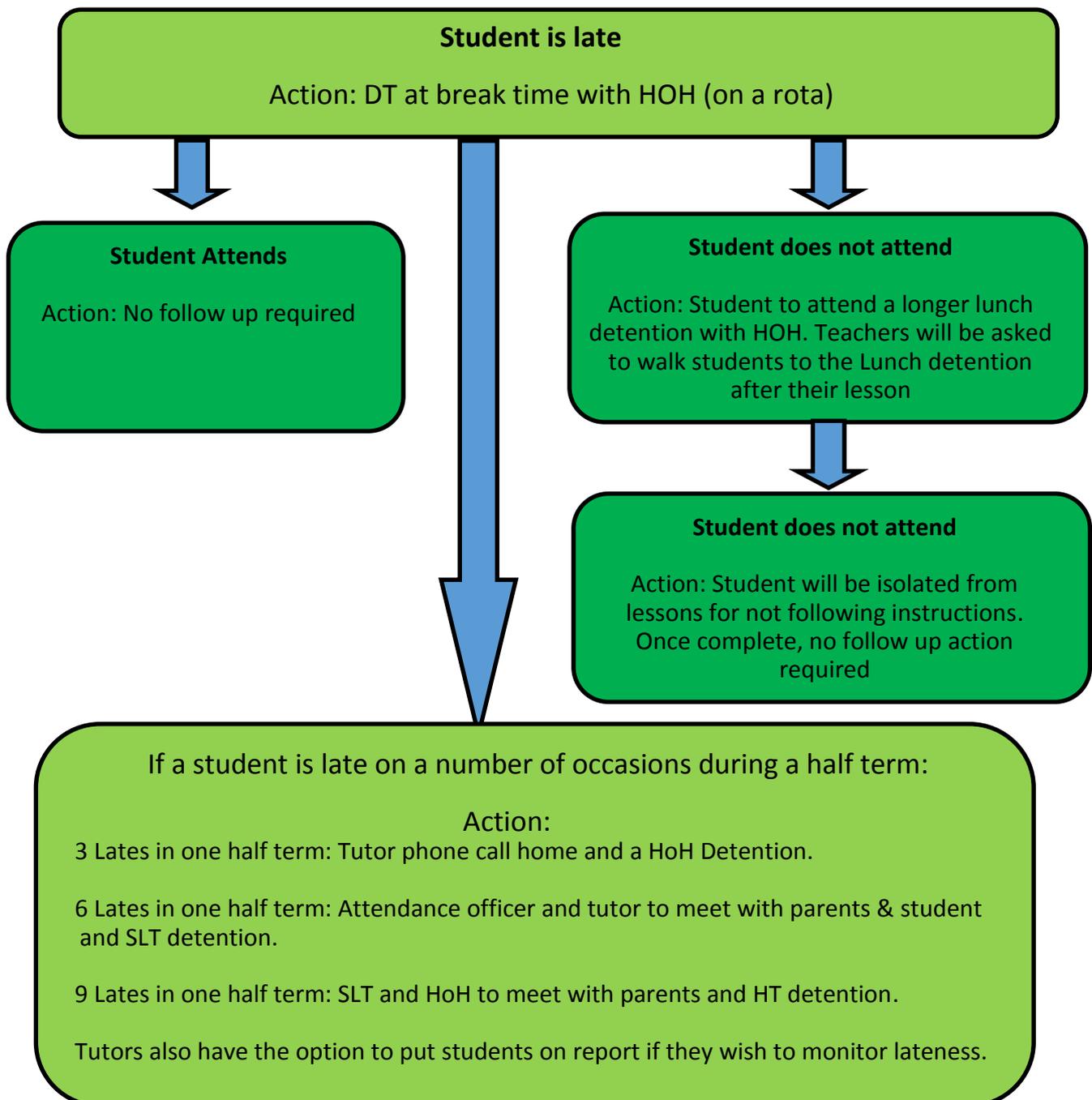
- Complete registers accurately and punctually every lesson.

## LATES PROTOCOL

Students who arrive late (before Register Closes) should sign in at student reception. Student reception will then mark them with an L code for AM Reg only and when the student arrives at the lesson. Teachers should check they have yellow slip to show they have signed in. If they do not have this slip they should be sent back to student reception to sign in. Registers close at 09.15 and students signing in after this time will be marked with a U.

Class teachers must notify the Attendance Officer immediately if any student fails to attend a lesson having previously been marked as present on that day. The missing students protocol will then be actioned. **(See appendix B)**

### Persistent lates



## STUDENTS MISSING LESSONS PROTOCOL

