

# Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust



## Attendance Policy

**December 2017**

**Review Body: Trustees**

**Type of Policy: Statutory**

**Review Period: 1 Year**

**Reviewed: December 2017**

**Next Review: December 2018**

## PRINCIPLES

At Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust schools, parents and staff work together to encourage and promote excellent attendance to school. Students' absence during term time can seriously disrupt the continuity of learning. Not only do students miss valuable learning on the days they are absent, they are also less prepared for lessons on their return. There is a direct correlation between under achievement and poor attendance. Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts students at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust is committed to providing full-time education for all students. The Trust is proud of its inclusivity and the strong partnership formed with parents.

## EXPECTATIONS

We expect the following from all students:

- Excellent attendance to school – **96%** is a minimum requirement
- Arrival at school in good time for morning registration.
- They are appropriately dressed in school uniform and prepared for the school day

We expect the following from all parents/carers:

- To insist that their child attends school punctually every day
- To contact the school before 9.00am whenever their child is unable to attend school. **Parents are expected to contact on the first day their child is absent and each subsequent day of absence. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that the child is safe. Parents should regularly update the school and inform on when their child is returning. Failure to do so may result in a home visit from school staff.**
- To contact the school whenever a problem occurs that may keep their child away for school.
- To arrange medical appointments outside of school hours – the school appreciates that appointments with consultants will be during the school day.
- To arrange family holidays to take place outside of school time.
- To collect your child if he /she is taken out of school for any reason (i.e. illness/medical appointments). Students are not permitted to leave site alone during the school day.
- To provide medical evidence for absences of three or more days or when requested.

## The Role of the School Staff

At our schools there is a whole school approach for encouraging excellent attendance to school, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006) Teachers mark students present, absent or late. **\*FOR SECONDARY**[Community Leaders notify the Family Liaison Officer of students whose attendance is a cause for concern] **\*FOR PRIMARY** [The Attendance officer monitors the attendance of all students and takes action as necessary].

It is the responsibility of staff to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by Parent Call or telephone call.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes)
- Parents informed termly of child's attendance figure

## Timeline of School Action for Poor Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance - class teacher to investigate and notify student of concerns. Staff to contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention including letters and meeting with parents along with considering Penalty Notice or Early Help Notification.
- Below 90% - Where the absences have not been authorised, consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer and a referral to PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service may be considered.

## Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school have failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

## **Lateness**

\*AMEND FOR EACH SCHOOL - At Saint George's Church of England School the register is taken at **8.40am** and **1.50pm**. Pupils arriving after these times must report to the member of staff at the gate, Student Support or the main school office where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at **9.00am** and **2.00pm**. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

### **Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness**

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016.

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions for a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

### **Authorising Absence**

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (leave) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays
- Taking a sibling to school

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

**Local Authority Action may include:**

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

**Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance**

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of persistent unauthorised absence or where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- Absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive.
- The PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

**Exceptional circumstances could include:**

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a family member.
- To attend a funeral.
- Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 per parent to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 per parent if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

## Leave of Absence/Holiday

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

By law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

## Truancy

Although it is a rare occurrence for a student to truant, if there is a concern that a student might be truanting then action is taken straight away. Students are not permitted to report themselves absent from school under any circumstances.

If truancy is suspected, **the Community Leader/Family Liaison Officer/SLT (\*AMEND AS APPROPRIATE)** is notified, they will then contact the parent/carer. Following an incident of truancy the student will be sanctioned accordingly.