Alderbrook School | Alderbrook Sixth Form

Attendance Policy

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Why Attendance Matters

1 Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of the whole Alderbrook School community, enabling and encouraging all students at the school to achieve excellence. At Alderbrook School, we strive to provide each student with the highest standard of education. Attendance has a direct relationship with the attainment of individuals and groups of students and the standards thereby achieved by the Academy.

2 Attendance also underpins the five Every Child Matters outcomes:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well being

3 To enable students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and on time every day that school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable, as poor attendance results in lower achievement.

Legal requirements

4 Parents/carers of registered students have a legal duty, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure regular and punctual attendance of students of compulsory school age and students who attend the school for post 16 education. At Alderbrook we work within the guidelines on attendance laid down by Solihull LEA. Unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents/carers may be referred to the Local Authority Enforcement Team which could result in a penalty notice being issued.

Alderbrook School's Aims and Expectations for Attendance

5 At Alderbrook School we aim to achieve 100% attendance but expect all students to meet or exceed our target of 95%. Some students are given an individual target, based on improving their percentage attendance.

6 We aim to improve all students' attainment through good attendance.

7 We expect parents and carers to

- ensure their child attends school regularly
- ensure their child is punctual to school and lessons.
- support and encourage their child by attending parents' consultation evenings and other events.
- contact their child's tutor in the first instance to discuss any concerns regarding their child's attendance.
- work in collaboration with Alderbrook School to resolve any issues that are impacting on their child's attendance and attainment.

8 We aim to ensure that attendance and punctuality is a priority for everyone associated with Alderbrook School including parents/carers, students, staff and governors.

Poor attendance

9 All students' attendance will be monitored on a regular basis by Form Tutors, the Attendance coordinator and the Attendance Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) link.

10 Alderbrook School will employ strategies to help improve the attendance of students who fall below the 95% target. This may include monitoring, meeting with the student, written contact with home, or meeting with the student and parents/carers together. If students' attendance does not improve following support, further action may be considered.

11 The Government classes a student as a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level can do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

12 We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority, a referral will be made to the School Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

13 All students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

14 Any student with attendance difficulties will be closely monitored by our pastoral team. We acknowledge that every student must be considered individually to properly understand the context of any absence. Our pastoral team will plan, carry out and record a series of actions that are considered to be appropriate to the context of the situation. These actions may include:

- a phone call from the Attendance Coordinator; EWO; Pastoral Manager; Head of Year to discuss and plan a way forward
- a meeting with the Attendance Coordinator; EWO; Head of Year or Pastoral Manager to discuss and plan a way forward
- a student being monitored using our Report System
- a letter which requests medical evidence to be submitted every time a student is absent from school
- a home visit from our Pastoral Team and/or EWO
- a Pastoral Support Plan to help the student reintegrate into school over a defined period of time
- intervention sessions with our Pastoral Manager to address any underlying difficulties that may impact attendance
- a police safe and well check
- an information letter which details the attendance data for an individual
- an attendance concern letter which confirms when a student has moved into the PA category
- a warning letter to the parents which details the risk of legal proceedings from Solihull Local Authority's Education Enforcement Team
- an official warning letter which activates legal proceedings, this may include a sanction such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court
- an official final warning letter which confirms legal proceedings

15 All our PA students and their parents may be subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through, the EWO, a mentor, external agencies or individual programmes personally designed to support better attendance.

16 In cases where a student's poor attendance is due to repeated vague or minor illnesses, we will write to the parent/carer informing them that future absences will be marked unauthorised unless the absence is confirmed by a form of medical evidence (i.e. Alderbrook medical appointment card that has been stamped, doctor's note or appointment card, copy of prescription).

17 In all other cases of unauthorised absence accrued over time and following a referral from school, a warning letter will be issued by the Education Enforcement Team prior to a penalty notice. The trigger for a warning letter will be at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence. There are two sessions per day, a morning session and afternoon session. As a school we are required to provide two possible sessions per day, morning and afternoon, to all pupils.

18 If fifteen sessions of unauthorised absence are accrued a penalty notice will be applied for.

19 In the event of a child's absence on the first or last day of any half term and on Life Ready Days, medical evidence may be requested where a pattern of non-attendance has been noticed, to enable us to authorise that absence.

Registration

20 The following documents should be referred to for statutory requirements and guidance in regard to completing and maintaining an attendance register:

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2016 amendment of the 2006 regulations
- School Attendance DfE
- Keeping Pupil Registers DCSF

21 Schools have a statutory duty to maintain two legal documents

- An Admissions Roll
- An Attendance Register, which must be kept accurately. The school has an electronic registration system.

22 Registers taken during periods one (8:30 am) and four (12:15 pm) are a legal requirement.

23 Attendance and lateness are also recorded for each of the five periods in the school day.

24 On each occasion, the school must record whether a child is present, absent or present at an approved educational activity.

25 Every half day of absence from school must be classified by Alderbrook School as either authorised or unauthorised and the regulation codes must be used.

- **Authorised absence** is where the Head Teacher or Attendance Coordinator has given approval in advance for the student to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence

- Examples of authorised absence include religious observance, medical appointments, orthodontist appointments or illness. All of these require written confirmation from a parent/carer.
- Where possible, medical appointments should be arranged outside of school time. Normal dental appointments must always be outside of school time.
- **Religious observance**: Students may take one day due to religious observance and this will be marked as an authorised absence with an R code for that day.
- Alderbrook School can authorise a maximum of two school days in the academic school year for religious observance. Parents/carers should always notify school in writing before a religious observance day is taken.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

26 To create a pattern of regular attendance it is important a whole school approach is taken by parents/carers, students and all members of school staff.

27 Parents/carers will receive regular attendance updates via the school twitter feed.

28 The school will celebrate excellent attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.

29 The school will reward 100% attendance by issuing certificates termly and organising prize draws each half term.

Absence and Punctuality Procedures for Parents/Carers

30 Parents/carers must inform the school of their child's absence on the first day and each subsequent day of absence and provide their child with a note explaining the absence upon their return to school.

31 To report an absence please phone the school on: 0121 704 2146, followed by option **1**, then option **2**, or email absence@alderbrook.solihull.sch.uk

32 If your child is absent the school will:

32.1 check our attendance line and log the reason for absence;

32.2 telephone or text you on every day of absence if we have not heard from you, failure to give a reason for absence will result in the absence being unauthorised.

32.3 visit your home if we are unable to establish contact over a period of days; this is to safeguard the student;

32.4 request support from the police if we are unable to establish contact following an unsuccessful visit.

33 If there is an issue, please contact the school Attendance Administrator on the number above and your message will be directed to the correct personnel in school.

34 While some delays are unavoidable, students should be punctual to registration and lessons to receive a present mark.

35 Students arriving to school after the beginning of school day at 8.30 am must report and sign in at the Student Office. Failure to do so may result in an unauthorised absence.

36 Students arriving between 8.45 and 9.30 am require a note from a parent/carer giving a reason for the lateness. The student will then be given a late but present mark.

37 Students arriving after 9.30 am must have a note giving a reason for the lateness. They will then be marked as an authorised absence for the morning session. Failure to provide a note will result in an unauthorised absence mark.

38 If a student is consistently late to school period one, Alderbrook School may decide to use the 'U' code. The 'U' code is recorded as an unauthorised absence. Regularly arriving late can result in legal action for failing to ensure regular attendance. If ten sessions of unauthorised absence are then accrued a penalty notice warning will be applied for.

Leave of Absence during Term Time:

39 From September 2013, it is no longer lawful for students to be granted leave of absence for holidays during term time and therefore the Head Teacher will not be able to give you permission.

40 The Head Teacher can consider requests made by parents/carers in advance for a leave of absence from school for students in ***exceptional circumstances,*** as guided by the Solihull Local Authority.

41 Should you believe that your request may fall into this very rare category of **'exceptional circumstances'** then you will need to make a written request for leave of absence to the Head Teacher.

42 Parents/carers should be made aware that if they do take holiday in term time and it does not fall into the category exceptional circumstances it will lead to the student being automatically marked as an unauthorised absence. If ten sessions of unauthorised absence are accrued the school will refer the matter to the Local Authority Enforcement Team, where consideration will be given to the insufficient of a penalty notice. The School will then consider whether to refer the matter to Solihull Local Authority Education Welfare Service to take appropriate legal action.

Procedure for Requesting a Planned Absence during Term Time:

43 All leave of absence requests will be unauthorised unless the circumstances are exceptional. A parent/carer should complete an absence request form (Appendix 1) and submit this to the school at least two weeks prior to the date required. The school will respond to the request at least one week prior to the requested date. If the school is aware of any language difficulties that may preclude a request form being completed, appropriate support will be offered to the parent/carer.

44 If a parent/carer desires their child to have a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances they should complete an Absence Request Form which can be obtained from the school office (Appendix 1) or follow the Absence Contact Form on the school website. Parent/carers must provide evidence of the exceptional circumstance and may be required to meet with the Head Teacher and/or the Attendance Coordinator.

45 If the Head Teacher deems that the reasons for the request ***are*** exceptional and authorises the absences, a letter confirming that the request has been authorised will be sent to the parent/carer.

46 If the Head Teacher deems that the reasons are ***not*** exceptional, or has additional concerns such as the timing of the absence and the student's attendance record, the leave of absence will not be authorised. A letter informing the parents/carers of this decision for each child and warning of the legal implications of the absence being taken will be sent to each parent/carer.

47 If an absence is taken without having been requested or authorised it will be marked as an unauthorised absence on the students register. If ten or more unauthorised absences (sessions) are taken, these will be referred immediately to the Solihull Local Authority Enforcement Team for consideration and could result in the issue of a penalty notice.

Overseas Extended Trips

48 Parents/carers may wish to take their child/children on an extended overseas trip during term time – for example, to enable their child/children to meet members of their extended family overseas. Whilst it is important to recognise the educational and cultural significance of such visits the leave of absence during term time ruling of September 2013 also applies in these circumstances.

49 The Education Regulations 1995 state that where a student has been granted an extended leave of absence and subsequently fails to return to school within 10 school days of the expiry of the agreed period of absence, and the failure is not due to sickness or any other unavoidable causes, his/her name may be deleted from the admissions register. This would only be considered following consultation with Solihull Local Authority.

The School's Policy

50 The school considers that all absences from school will disrupt a child's continuity of learning. As a consequence it believes that absences should be kept to a minimum in order to maximise your child's potential.

51 The school requires you to complete this form for any planned absence, whatever the circumstance. Should you wish to attach a supporting letter, this will also be considered when determining whether the absence would be deemed authorised/not authorised.

What the Law says

52 From 1 September 2013, The Pupil Registration (2006) Regulations have been amended to make it clear that parents/carers do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term-time holiday. Holidays during term time should be seen as an exception to the norm.

53 It is the decision of the Head teacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term-time absence will be considered on an individual basis. A Head teacher will not accept as an exceptional circumstance the fact that a holiday is cheaper during term time.

54 An exceptional circumstance is much more likely to be a one-off. The Head teacher will also look very carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should he or she have concerns, for example, should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that the Head teacher will agree to authorise any further absence.

55 Other factors will include the likely impact on the child's education, particularly in terms of continuity of learning; there is a strong link between the amount of absence in a school and

the qualifications that its pupils achieve; whether the holiday falls during a year in which the child is due to take a public examination or be involved in Government tests (e.g. SATs/Exams).

Applying for Leave of Absence during Term Time

56 Parents/carers are advised to apply for leave of absence before they confirm their holiday arrangements. Applications should be made using the reverse side of this form at least 4 weeks in advance of the proposed holiday dates.

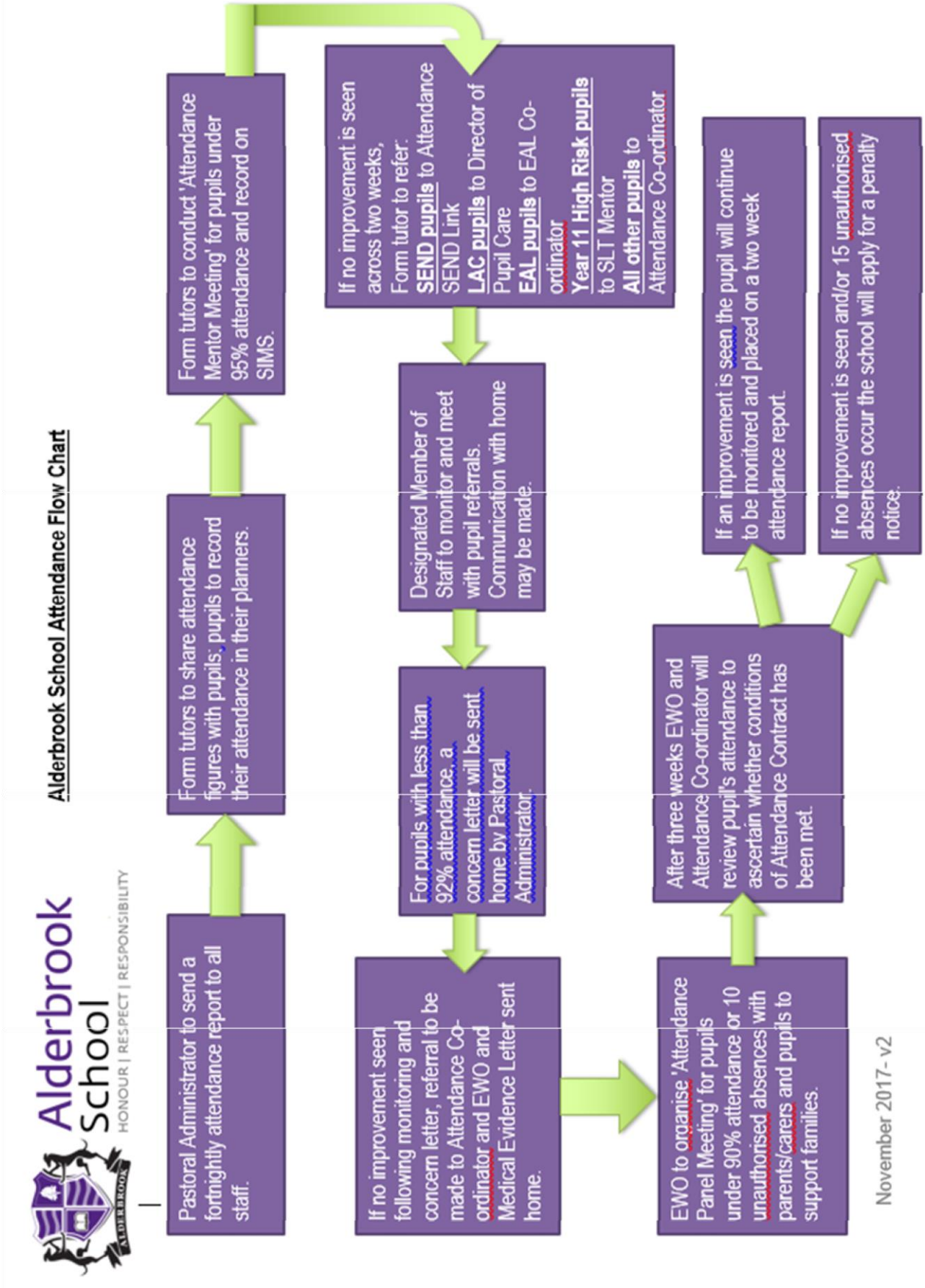
57 Parents/carers will be informed, in writing, of the outcome of their application for leave of absence.

Appendix 1 - Leave of Absence Request Form

Leave of Absence Application		
Child(ren)'s name		Class/Form
Office Use Only: Level of attendance during last academic year……, current academic year…….. Other relevant information e.g. tests planned, out of school learning planned. ……..		
Date for which leave of absence is required		
From: **(first day of absence)**	**To:** **(last day of absence)**	**Number of School Days:**
Destination:		
Please give the reasons for requesting this leave of absence in term time …… …… …… (You may wish to attach a separate letter to support your request) Date: …….. Signed: …… (Parent/Carer)		
Siblings at other schools Name: ……. School: …….. Name: ……. School: ……..		

To be completed by Head Teacher (or nominated person)

Leave of absence **authorised/ not authorised** (delete as appropriate)

Date: …… Signed: ……..

Appendix 2- Attendance Flow Chart