

Attendance Policy

Alford Primary School



Date of last Review	Signature
September 2024	Chair

MISSION STATEMENT

We are committed to providing a full, enjoyable and effective education for all pupils. The school believes sincerely that all pupils benefit from the education it provides and therefore from daily school attendance. To this end, the school will do as much as it can to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted upon as quickly as possible.

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will be reviewed annually by staff and governors.

AIMS:

It is recognised that

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.

In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as required by law.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/popularquestions/a005530/are-parents-responsible-for-their-child's-school-attendance?>

- Many pupils and their parents may need to be supported at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities. School will aim to support wherever possible, with the agreement of parents, this may be

working with external agencies or completing home visits to encourage children to attend or support parents/carers who may for their own personal reasons are unable to facilitate bringing their child to school.

- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities. It is our aim that school will ensure that no child is disadvantaged from attending due to circumstances out of their control.

EXPECTATIONS:

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- That they attend school daily unless they are unwell
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

We expect the following from parents:

- To ensure their children attend school on time every day.
- To ensure that they contact the school at the start of the school day either by telephone (01507 463414) Parent hub message or Voicemail. The reason for the absence must be clearly stated. It may be necessary, upon receipt of the message, that a member of staff may call for further clarification as to the reason for non attendance.
- Where possible Medical appointments are arranged out of the school day. If this is not possible their child should attend prior to or after the appointment to reduce time lost out of school. Copies of appointment letters should be emailed or handed to a member of office staff for reference. Should the appointment require travel then a reasonable amount of travelling time needed will be taken into account.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their home learning.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us.
- Recognition and reward for good attendance.
- A quality education
- To receive a warning letter at least 2 days prior to an unauthorised holiday being taken. This will regard a fine being issued. Parents will be invited in to discuss this. (In line with L.A. guidance.)

TERM TIME "LEAVE OF ABSENCE"

In line with the DfE 2013 Attendance Regulations "head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances." If a parent feels they have exceptional circumstances as a reason for absence they should complete the online form, found on our website. This will then be submitted to the Head Teacher for consideration. A letter will be sent to parents informing them of the Head Teacher's decision regarding the request for absence. A meeting with the head teacher may follow. It is important to note that any requests should be made at least 14 days prior to the absence.

AUTHORISED OR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE:

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as unauthorised. The following may be reasons for authorising absences.

- Illness – evidence may be requested
- Family bereavements
- Medical and dental appointments where proof is available.
- Days of religious observance.
- Where school may need to close due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Fixed term suspension
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

The following may be deemed to be at the discretion of the Headteacher to be an exceptional circumstance but each case will be treated individually and other information be taken into consideration before the final decision is given.

- Immediate family bereavement or close friend bereavement.
- Other compassionate grounds.
- Immediate family wedding/civil partnership taking part on a school day.
- Family crisis.
- Examinations off site.
- Educational Opportunity – Sport and Performance.
- Visit to a new school.
- Family re-location visit.

It is the Headteacher's discretion to determine the number of days a child can be away from School if leave of absence is granted. All requests for absence due to exceptional circumstances must be made by completing the 'Request for Absence' form which can be obtained via the Parent Hub Link on the Primary School website. The headteacher will then review each request and decide if it meets the criteria for authorisation.

Parents should keep their copy of the authorisation in case they are required to prove their child has authorised absence during term time.

Absences not allowed under any circumstances (unauthorised)

- Family holiday no matter what length.
- Sickness/illness (no evidence of appt/ medication of four days or more)
- To attend sibling/parent medical appointments (Wrap around care will be offered in such cases)
- Family trips/attending concerts.
- Leaving early to travel to an event.
- No evidence of an appointment with doctor/dentist.
- No explanation of absence is forthcoming.
- Birthdays.
- Shopping trips.
- Dropping siblings off.

Please be aware that the local authority has been given jurisdiction to impose fines for unauthorised absence and the School may be asked to report unauthorised absence.

For absence relating to illness of five days or more, School may request a doctor's note to confirm the absence. We hope that parents will understand that we are bound by the changes in government legislation and make every effort to comply with the attendance regulations.

RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS:

When a pupil does not attend or is persistently late, the school will respond effectively. If a note or telephone call is not received from parents by 9:15am, the parents will be contacted on the first day of absence by telephone. The head teacher will be informed of any absence which:

- Is 90% or below (From September 2015 this will be the trigger for persistent absenteeism as opposed to 85%)
- Shows regular patterns e.g. repeated absence on the same day(s) of each week or random days every week
- Is unexplained (unauthorised)
- Home school visits may be undertaken if there is
 - no parental/carer contact regarding the absence or
 - a child has not been seen in school for a period of 4 days, a home visit will be completed on the 5th day of absence
 - if there are any additional safeguarding concerns (refer to safeguarding policy)

The Head teacher will meet with the attendance officer on a regular basis and discuss issues such as the above which may be causing concern. Attendance letters will be sent to families when a child's attendance is hitting 90% or lower and Attendance Panel meetings may be held to discuss concerns. In extreme circumstances, where the school is very concerned about a child's attendance, we will try and persuade parents/ carers to engage in the TAC process. If there is no engagement, the school will request the service of an EWO (Educational Welfare Officer).

Where these measures are not effective a Governors Attendance Panel maybe requested.

LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

Research has shown that schools in partnership with the full range of support services have a greater impact on school attendance than when they act alone or when the support services are uncoordinated or disjointed. Poor school attendance may be a symptom of a wide range of circumstances. Many of these circumstances will demand expert support beyond the remit of the school or the EWO. It is therefore vital that strong partnerships are established with all agencies that work with children and young people.

Other Agencies that may be used:

- Educational Behavioural and Support Services
- Educational Psychologists
- Parent Support Adviser/ Early Help Workers
- Special Educational Needs Service
- Social Services
- Youth Service
- Local police

SUPPORT AND MONITORING

Alford Primary has dedicated staff to support and monitor attendance throughout school. This includes working closely with teachers, support staff, pupils and families ensuring that achieving good attendance is a focus for everyone. The attendance of every child will be monitored to ensure that any concerns regarding absence are addressed and early intervention put in place.

Although home visits will usually take place on the 5th day of absence the Designated Safeguarding team may request this to be carried out at any time during a period of absence.

Support and the welfare of the family and children is at the fore of this decision.

It is the requirement of the Headteacher and Attendance Champion for Alford Primary to safeguard the education of all pupils.

This may, when necessary, follow the Lincolnshire County Council criteria for absence and request a fine to be issued for persistent absence or lateness. School will work collaboratively with parents/carers to resolve this before this action is deemed necessary, but where this intervention is not successful the legal process will be followed.

School will ensure that they follow the Notice to Improve pathway as outlined in Lincolnshire County Council guidance, giving parents the opportunity to engage and to support improved attendance before legal action is taken. The 2024 update states that 10 sessions missed will result in FPN. Where the sessions are due to low attendance, and not a holiday, we will issue a notice to improve before the 10th session in order to work with families and support attendance improvements.

School will work with Lincolnshire County Council and the Department for Education in the collection and analysis of attendance data, this will be used to gain insight in the attendance results according to genre, age, Pupil Premium and SEND need, it is our aim to ensure that the rate of these pupils remains above National average.

CHANGES IN LAW WITH EFFECT FROM SEPTEMBER 2024

In August 2024, the Government's White Paper on Working Together to Improve Attendance comes into effect. An attendance rate of 96% is required, unless absence is due to medical reason or otherwise. 95% attendance means that your child will have missed 10 school days over the year, which is a significant amount. In the Supreme Court case of R v Platt, regular attendance is defined as attending on time, and on the days that school have designated, and that even a minute late is an offence. This applies to all children enrolled at school and there is no exception for Nursery and Reception students.

What's changed:

10 sessions (a session is half a school day) of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period will be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice (see above for notice to improve guidance)

First time Fixed Penalty Notice for term time leave, or irregular attendance is £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second time offence for term time leave or irregular attendance is £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days.

Third offence, and any further offence within 3 years, of term time leave or irregular attendance, a Fixed Penalty will not be issued. The case will be submitted straight to Magistrate's court and fines can be £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in court can show on a parent's DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education.'

While we understand that children become ill, minor illnesses will not be authorised.

These are:

Headaches

Tiredness

Minor colds.

Absences due to illness that requires a period of isolation will be authorised in accordance with the guidance of Public Health England. Details can be found following the link below.

https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Guidance_on_infection_control_in%20schools_poster.pdf

School may request for medical evidence to support absence. This could be a copy of an appointment letter, prescription or NHS text. It is expected that Parents will update school daily by call or parent hub message.

REQUEST FOR ABSENCE DUE TO HOLIDAY

In September 2013, the government released new legislation preventing Head Teachers from authorising term time holidays other than in exceptional circumstances.

We do not accept;

- Letters from employers as a reason for approval, including employers of seasonal workers.
- Holidays taken due special offers, gifts or prizes.

Consideration will be given to each request but cannot be approved retrospectively.

If you wish to apply for a leave of absence, please complete a form which is available on our website or alternatively, use the link at the bottom of this page to download a leave of absence form.

If the school does not authorise a leave of absence and you take your child out of school, or keep your child off longer than was agreed, the absence will be unauthorised and the local authority may issue a penalty notice.

THE LAW

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parent of every child of compulsory school age has a duty to ensure that the child receives efficient full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability and any special educational needs they may have. This duty can be met by:

- child regularly attending a school or alternative educational provision made by the LA or the school, or
- by the parent providing other suitable educational provision

The parent may be guilty of an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 if they fail to ensure:

- their child's regular attendance at a school at which they are a registered pupil, or
- other educational provision is made for their child

Where a child has not attended regularly at school, the LA have the options of:

- issuing a Penalty Notice in respect of the parents of the child
- bringing proceedings before the family courts for an Education Supervision Order or
- prosecuting the parents under Section 444 before the Magistrates Court

Non-school attendance includes any day when a child should be in attendance at school, and they are absent without the authorisation of the school. This includes:

- unauthorised holidays during term time
- persistent late arrival at school beyond the registration period

Penalty Notices can be issued for persistent lateness where the child arrives after the closure of registration. This is coded U in the register.

Section 444 (1)(a) of the same Act states that where a parent of a child who knowingly and without reasonable justification fails to ensure regular attendance of a registered pupil at that school, the parent of the child shall be guilty of an offence against that Section. The Local Authority may, where necessary, institute legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under this section of the Education Act 1996 against those parents concerned. Alternatively, Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Education Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of up to £160.00 per parent, per child.

This letter is a formal Fixed Penalty Warning should you cause your child to be absent from Alford Primary School without authorisation.

ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE THROUGH GOOD PRACTICE AND REWARD

Attendance can be encouraged in the following ways:

- Accurate completion of the registers at the beginning of each session and within 30 minutes of the start of the session.
- Attendance checks each term.
- Whole school and individual rewards for good attendance.
- A 'Gold' Award, using the Lincolnshire County Council's Certificate, for 100% attendance achieved throughout the year. (Attendance is 100% if there has been no absence).
- Identifying and supporting pupils who have attendance problems in advance of the transition between KS2 and KS3. This should include the sharing of relevant information with the destination school.
- Establishing a mechanism for working with those parents who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school.
- Each half term the class with the highest attendance will receive a treat of "Betty's Afternoon Tea."
- 100% unauthorised absence for the week for each class attaining this will be rewarded at the discretion of the class teacher, in most cases this will be Popcorn and film time.

Alford Primary school remain committed to expect excellent attendance from all pupils ensuring they receive the best possible chance of future achievements and success.

Please follow the link below for information on Lincolnshire County Council website highlighting why school attendance is so important.

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/council-councillors/school-attendance-strategy/3>