



**Aletheia**  
Academies Trust

# Attendance Policy

**November 2023**

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# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Principles.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Aims .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Legislation and guidance.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. School procedures.....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 Attendance register.....	7
3.2 Unplanned absence .....	7
3.3 Medical/dental and Optician's appointments.....	8
3.4 Lateness and punctuality .....	8
3.5 Following up absence .....	9
3.6 Reporting to parents .....	9
Children Missing Education .....	9
<b>4. Authorised and unauthorised absence.....</b>	<b>10</b>
4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence.....	10
4.2 Legal sanctions .....	11
<b>5. Strategies for promoting attendance.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>6. Attendance monitoring.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Timeline of School Action for Poor Attendance .....	13
<b>7. Roles and responsibilities .....</b>	<b>14</b>
7.1 The governing board.....	14
7.2 The Headteacher .....	14
7.3 The Attendance Officer.....	14
7.4 Teachers .....	14



7.5 Office/reception staff .....	15
8. <i>Monitoring arrangements</i> .....	15
9. <i>Links with other policies</i> .....	15



# Principles

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

This policy is guided by our vision; 'At the heart of our vision is the belief in inclusive, educational excellence; the belief that we are called to serve all pupils, staff, parents, and the local community by providing places where all develop and thrive intellectually, socially, culturally, and spiritually to live life in all its fullness'. Sutton-at-Hone CE Primary School is dedicated to ensuring that our school environment supports learning and the wellbeing of pupils and staff through a strong sense of community cohesion where we value all God's children, regardless of need, ability, race, gender, or wealth. Cooperation, support, and respect are the foundations of our community, and we work hard to provide a safe school where pupils feel included in every aspect of school life and comfortable to voice their opinions.



# 1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- ▶ Promoting excellent attendance and reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- ▶ Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are legally entitled
- ▶ Acting quickly to promote good attendance habits

We support parents and carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually.

## **We expect the following from all students:**

- ▶ A minimum of 96% attendance to school
- ▶ Arrival at school by 8.40am in good time for morning registration
- ▶ They are appropriately dressed in school uniform and prepared for the school day

## **As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils and families:**

- ▶ Comply with the school's attendance rules. This will be communicated to them through the school.
- ▶ Speak to their Teacher, Family Liaison Officer, or a trusted member of staff, if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.
- ▶ Communicate with the school before 9.00am, in order to explain any absence.

**Parents/carers 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.**

- ▶ Follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. Students must report to the School Office and sign in stating their name, time, and reason for lateness. In Primary



schools, where a child arrives late for school a parent or carer must sign the pupil in at the school office.

- ▶ Ensure that their child attends school punctually every day
- ▶ Arrange medical appointments outside of school hours – the school appreciates that some appointments with consultants will be during the school day.
- ▶ Arrange family holidays to take place outside of school time.
- ▶ Provide medical evidence for absences of three or more days or when requested.



## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- ▶ [The Education Act 1996](#)
- ▶ [The Education Act 2002](#)
- ▶ [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- ▶ [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- ▶ [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- ▶ [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- ▶ [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- ▶ [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- ▶ [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- ▶ [KCC Penalty Notices Code of Conduct \(January 2016\)](#)
- ▶ [Working together to improve school attendance 2022](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent and severe absence thresholds.



## 3. School procedures

### 3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- ▶ Present
- ▶ Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- ▶ Absent
- ▶ Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- ▶ The original entry
- ▶ The amended entry
- ▶ The reason for the amendment
- ▶ The date on which the amendment was made
- ▶ The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.40am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.40am and will be kept open until 8.45am.

The register for the second session will be taken in the afternoon after lunchtime.

### 3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

All absence must be reported to Mrs Fern, Attendance Officer on 01322 862147 or email [absence@sutton-at-hone.kent.sch.uk](mailto:absence@sutton-at-hone.kent.sch.uk)





Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, or the length of absence is significant.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the period of absence is significant or frequent, the school will ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate forms of evidence.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified.

### **3.3 Medical/dental and Optician's appointments**

Missing school for a medical/dental or optician's appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences along with evidence. However, parents are expected to make medical and dental and optician's appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

*All appointments and medical appointments must be reported to Mrs Fern, Attendance Officer on 01322 862147 or email [absence@sutton-at-hone.kent.sch.uk](mailto:absence@sutton-at-hone.kent.sch.uk)*

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as unauthorised late or absent, using the appropriate code.

If persistent lateness to school is identified, it will be followed up by Mrs Fern, Attendance Officer. We will work with the pupil and their family to identify the reasons for the persistent absence and offer appropriate support.



### 3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

**Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the school.**

### 3.6 Reporting to parents

You will be updated about your child's attendance in various ways throughout the year. You will be notified on each report that your child receives and at Parent Consultations. This information is always available for you to access via the Arbor app. Please contact Mrs Fern, Attendance Officer on 01322 862147 should you wish to discuss your child's attendance further or have any technical issues using Arbor.

### Children Missing (in) 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 (CME) referral for the following circumstances: -

- ▶ If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school have failed to locate them.
- ▶ 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.



## 4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers will not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** may include:

- ▶ Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- ▶ Illness and medical/dental and optician appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- ▶ Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

Examples of absence that Sutton-at-Hone CE Primary School **will not authorise** are as follows:

- ▶ Persistent non-specific 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 a very good reason and evidence
- ▶ Child's/family birthday
- ▶ Shopping trip
- ▶ Family Holidays
- ▶ Taking a sibling to school

Attendance is monitored rigorously at Sutton-at-Hone CE Primary School and we will act swiftly when attendance is poor. This may be in the form of meetings, letters, Penalty Notices, or a referral to the Kent County Council School Liaison Officer for more intensive intervention.

## 4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. The school will not receive any part of this payment. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may consider:

- ▶ Several unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- ▶ One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- ▶ Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason



## 5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Excellent attendance is expected of all students attending Sutton-at-Hone CE Primary School. We use rewards as well as interventions to promote the importance of attendance. A variety of strategies are used to work with both parents/carers and our students.

## 6. Attendance monitoring

The Attendance Officer monitors pupil absence daily.

Parents and carers are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to contact the school every day before 9:00am if their child is absent from school.

The school will always contact parents/carers on the first day of absence (first-day calling).

If after contacting parents/carers a pupil's absence continues, we will consider involving a School Liaison Officer from Kent County Council.

Local Authority Action may include:

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

**The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.**

**The severe absence threshold is 50%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 50%, the pupil will be classified as a severe absentee.**

**At this point, contact will be made with external agencies and Children's Social Services.**



Pupil-level absence data is collected and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors.

Attendance data is used for monitoring and tracking to identify individual pupils or groups whose absence may be a cause for concern. This enables us to monitor closely and support necessary improvement.

### **Timeline of School Action for Poor Attendance**

- ▶ 90 - 96% attendance - Attendance Officer to investigate and notify parent/carers of concern. 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.



## 7. Roles and responsibilities

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

### 7.1 The Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Attendance information is shared regularly to our Local Governing Body. Our attendance link Governor is James Stubbs.

### 7.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### 7.3 The Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer:

- ▶ Monitors attendance and lateness data at the school and individual pupil level
- ▶ Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- ▶ Works with School Liaison Officers to tackle persistent absence
- ▶ Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- ▶ Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

### 7.4 Teachers

Teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.



### **7.5 Office/Reception staff**

Office/Reception staff take calls from parents/carers about absence and record it on the school system. First day calling is carried out for children where no reason for absence has been provided.

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed yearly by the Board of Trustees. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Local Governing Board.

## **9. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.