

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## ALEXANDRA SCHOOL

### ATTENDANCE (FPN) POLICY applicable from September 2019

#### Introduction

Alexandra School aims to work together with parents in order to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality for all children. Regular attendance is crucial to children achieving their full potential in learning, in making friends and feeling more settled and happier in school. Regular school attendance is essential for children to make the most of the educational opportunities that are available to them. Good attendance ensures better progress both academically and socially, improves children's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. We closely follow the Local authority guidelines on attendance.

#### Aims

To promote regular attendance thus offering all children equal access to learning.

#### Parent Responsibility in the Law

The Education Act 1996, Part 1, Section 7 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives efficient full time education.

Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence have to be reported to the School's Governing Body, the Local Authority (LA), and the Department for Education (DfE).

Parents and carers must ensure that they support the school's attendance policy as any absence will have a large impact on their child's learning.

#### The offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1966. Since 2001, a more serious offence has been introduced, which requires proof that the parent was aware of the child's non-attendance and failed to act. Under this higher offence a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court. Prosecution under section 444(1A) can lead to a custodial sentence.

#### Categorisation of absences

Absences may be categorised as **authorised** in the following circumstances:

- If the school is satisfied that the child is ill
- If the child has to attend an urgent hospital or therapy appointment. Evidence must be provided, and where possible, these should be arranged out of school time
- Where the school is satisfied that unavoidable circumstances prevented attendance, e.g. extreme weather conditions resulting in school closure
- Where there has been a family bereavement
- For 1 agreed day of religious observance
- Where a child has been temporarily excluded.
- Any other **exceptional** reasons [An appointment must be made with the head teacher to discuss this in advance]
- Any applications for a 'Performance Licence' to the Local Authority Educational Welfare Service are not an indication of absences being authorised. With such applications, the child's current overall attendance and attainment will be considered. For a request to be authorised, the child must maintain satisfactory attendance with each request for absence. If a child falls into the Persistent Absent category (PA = attendance below 90%), the request for performance related absence will not be authorised.

Absences will be regarded as **unauthorised** in the following circumstances:

- Where a pupil is absent without prior notification and no explanation is provided for absence
- Where the explanation is unsatisfactory and the absence could have been avoided, e.g. woke up late, or sibling was ill
- Where the school has reason to doubt the validity of parental explanations.
- Holidays and trips abroad will be unauthorised
- Leave taken during term time which is not deemed exceptional

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**If a child is absent from school for more than 20 days, without prior permission from the Headteacher, their name may be taken off the school roll and their place offered to another child.**

### **The School's Responsibilities**

- To communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school.
- To maintain accurate registers twice daily and to monitor attendance regularly
- To complete official returns on pupil attendance
- To record individual children's absences on their records of achievement, and maintain in children's personal files
- To acknowledge and reward good attendance and punctuality
- To inform parents if their child's attendance rate falls below 90% (Persistent Absence or PA)
- To work to support families and pupils with difficulties affecting regular school attendance e.g. through an Attendance Agreement
- To follow up continual pupil absences, patterns of absence or lateness with parents, and record and report concerns to the Education Welfare Service
- Unexplained absences are followed up by texts, phone calls and/or letters as soon as possible after the registers close
- To make home visits where no contact has been established and an absence remains unexplained
- To report to the Education Welfare Service any children whose attendance falls below 90% (PA) or pattern of absence is a cause for concern.

### **Parents' Responsibilities**

- To ensure that children attend school regularly and are on time. Starting times are 8.45 and 12.30 for Nursery, 9.00 for the rest of the school.
- To inform the school by 9.30 a.m. by telephone or email, on the first day of a child's absence, with an explanation for the absence.
- To ensure that prolonged periods of absence are avoided. This includes any trips during term time.
- Only in exceptional cases, where leave of absence is required, a parent can make an application in writing on the school's 'Application for School Absence for Exceptional Circumstances' form, giving the reason for the request. This must be done at least a month in advance and may be followed up by a meeting with the Headteacher and/or the school's Attendance Governor.
- To avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day.
- To work with the school and EWO to improve lateness and attendance.

### **School's Procedures**

- Children who arrive after the registers have closed (9:05) should report to the school office where parents will be required to complete a late form.
- If your child is late because they have been attending a medical appointment, please provide evidence in the form of an appointment card or hospital letter. Their absence will be authorised.
- We aim to contact parents by phone or parentmail by 9.45 a.m if they have not informed the school of the reason for their child's absence. If we can't contact you and we do not hear from you within 5 days, we have a legal obligation to make a referral to Social Services as your child has become a Child Missing from Education [CME].
- When an explanation for absence has not been provided, parents will be parentmailed. If a response is not provided by the given date, the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- When a child's attendance falls below 95%, parents will initially receive a letter advising them of the school's concern. Attendance will continue to be monitored.
- If attendance falls below 90% a second letter will be sent. After 2 letters have been sent and we do not see an improvement in attendance, you will be invited in for a meeting with the Headteacher. Should attendance continue to cause concern, the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer will be requested by the school.
- Children whose attendance falls below 90% are identified as 'Persistent Absentees'. This level of attendance immediately prompts the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer. The Educational Welfare Officer will meet with parents or may carry out home visits where attendance is a concern.
- If a holiday is taken, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the Educational Welfare Officer will be notified and Fixed Term Penalties considered.

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### **Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)**

Since 2004, Local Authority officers (Education Welfare Officers or EWO), Headteachers (or Deputy/Assistant Headteachers) and the Police have had the power to issue fixed penalty notices for unauthorised absences. A fixed penalty notice (FPN) can also be issued if a parent or carer fails to ensure their child is not present in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion. Alexandra school reserve the right to issue FPNs according to the 'Penalty Notices Practice Guidance for Schools' issued by AfC in 2014.

There are two levels of fixed penalty notices which will be issued by the local authority to **each parent/carers for each child** absent from school:

- £60 fine if paid within 21 days
- £120 fine if paid later than 21, but within 28 days

FPNs may be considered appropriate when input from the EWS has failed to affect a return to school and in the following specific circumstances.

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence in any 5 week period;
- Parentally condoned absence;
- Unauthorised term time leave (includes holidays): any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave of more than 10 sessions, not authorised by the school (Under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a penalty notice;
- Unauthorised delayed return from extended holidays;
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed) equivalent to 10 occasions in any 5 week period (even where attendance for the whole academic year is above 90%).

### **Who receives a Fixed Penalty Notice?**

FPNs are issued to any parent whether married or not, to each parent/carers for each child.

Any parent who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children's Act 1989 for a child.

Please see Education Welfare Service guidance in Appendix 1, 'Fixed Penalty Notices: Information for Parents and Carers'

### **Child Missing Education (CME)**

As a school we follow the guidelines as set out in AfC's 'Educational Welfare Information and Guidance for Schools' which in turn follows 'Children Missing Education' – statutory guidance for schools September 2016 which can be found [here](#). please refer to the PDF at the bottom of the page

### **Encouraging attendance and punctuality**

Alexandra encourages regular attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- By responding promptly to a child or parent's concern about the school or other pupils
- By informing parents in writing of irregular attendance, including lateness by accurate and punctual completion of registers during morning and afternoon registrations
- By publishing attendance statistics
- By celebrating good attendance and punctuality through certificates and awards
- By educating our children through assemblies, through lessons in relation to the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality as a crucial part of becoming successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens
- By presenting attendance certificates at the end of each term, and 100% badges at the end of each academic year
- A termly certificate for those achieving 100% attendance and 100% punctuality for a whole term.

## Appendix 1

### Fixed penalty notices: information for parents and carers

#### Education Welfare Service

##### What is a fixed penalty notice?

Since 2004, local authority officers (typically education welfare officers), headteachers (or assistant headteachers and deputy headteachers) and the police have had the power to issue fixed penalty notices for truancy/unauthorised absences. A fixed penalty notice can also be issued if a parent or carer fails to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during the first five days of exclusion.

There are two levels of fixed penalty notices:

- £60 fine if paid within 21 days
- £120 fine if paid later than 21, but within 28 days

Parents or carers who pay the fixed penalty notice within the time limit cannot later be prosecuted for the offence to which the fixed penalty notice relates.

##### Who receives a fixed penalty notice?

Any natural parent whether married or not.

Any parent who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the children's Act 1989 for a child or young person.

##### What if I don't pay?

Should a parent not pay the notice within 28 days, the local authority will prosecute for the offence to which the fixed penalty notice relates rather than for non-payment of the fixed penalty notice.

The disposals available to the courts will generally include, for example, a fine of up to £1,000 or a conditional discharge. You may wish to seek your own independent legal advice in respect of this.

##### Can I appeal against a fixed penalty notice?

There is no right of appeal against the fixed penalty notice, however if you believe it to have been wrongly issued, you should contact the school immediately. Once issued, the fixed penalty notice will only be withdrawn in the following circumstances.

- Proof has been established that the fixed penalty notice was issued to the wrong person.
- The fixed penalty notice did not conform to the terms of the code of conduct.
- The fixed penalty notice contains a material error.

Should the fixed penalty notice not be withdrawn and you do not pay, you may be prosecuted under s444 of the Education Act 1996. A court will consider the evidence and determine the appropriate punishment.

Council website

[https://www.kingston.gov.uk/downloads/file/2286/fixed\\_penalty\\_notice](https://www.kingston.gov.uk/downloads/file/2286/fixed_penalty_notice)

Children missing education

<https://kingstonandrichmondscb.org.uk/news-resources/policies-and-procedures-87/children-missing-education-196.php>