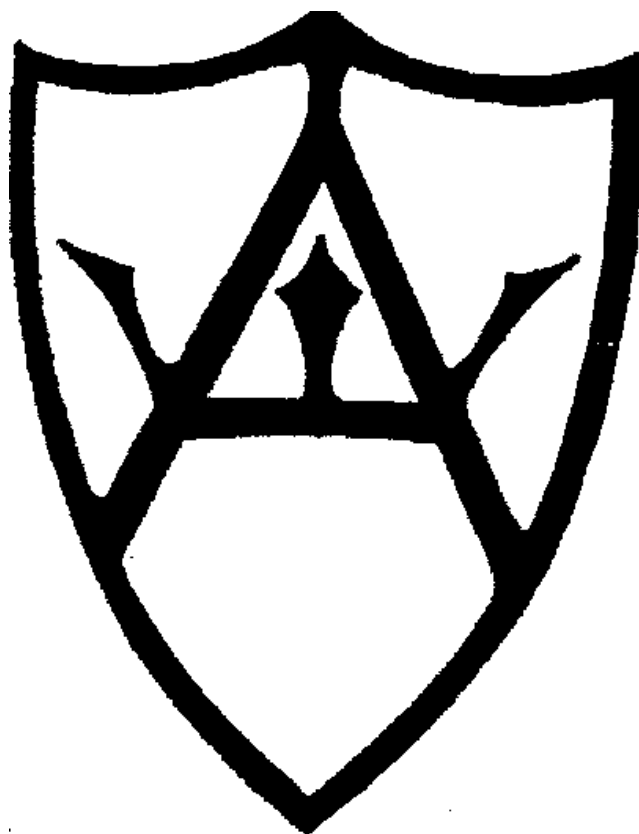


# Alfriston School



# Attendance Policy

Reviewed: Jan 2017

Approved by Governors: Jan 2017

This policy reflects the vision and aims of Alfriston Primary School by

- ❖ Encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential.
- ❖ Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.

## Principles

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost for *all* children when children are absent or late.

Most parents want their children to get on well in life. Children only get one chance at school, and their chance of a successful future may be affected by not attending school regularly. Poor attendees may not be able to keep up with school work or miss out on parts of the curriculum. This can affect their rate of progress and overall level of attainment.

It's not only the academic work: missing out on the social side of school life can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships.

Setting good attendance patterns from an early age will also help children later on at secondary school.

Being on time is also vital. Arriving late at school can be very disruptive for the late child, the teacher and other children in the class.

Children must attend every time the school requires. The only exceptions are the ones set out in the legislation: sickness, unavoidable causes, religious holidays, authorised absences, local authorities' failure to make statutory travel arrangements, or, where the child has no fixed abode, the parent's need to travel for business (subject to certain conditions).

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required in writing.

## What are my rights?

Guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) on 1st September 2013 applies to **all** requested absences in term-time. An absence during term-time, including family holidays, is not a right.

Therefore, the DfE only allows a headteacher the discretion to authorise an absence if they believe that there are **exceptional circumstances**.

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school

during term time and any absence from school will disrupt your child's learning.

You may consider that a holiday will be educational, and sometimes they can be, but this should be in addition to the education they receive at school. Time away from school due to unavoidable illness is already taken into account and so to choose to withdraw your child for a reason that is not an exceptional circumstance on top of this means that your child has even less education. There are already 175 non-school days throughout the year so every day of the school term counts. Your child will still miss out on the school teaching that their classmates will receive.

Children returning from a term time holiday are also unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed. Teachers then have to give more time to help individual children catch up on missed work. This poses a potential risk of the under achievement of other children in the class. This is something we *all* have a responsibility to avoid.

We hope you will support our efforts to raise attendance and attainment at our school.

### **How do I request an absence?**

The school will provide you with an absence request form which you should complete and return **at least 14 days before the proposed absence**.

### **What are exceptional circumstances?**

The guidelines used to determine these are:-

- ❖ Bereavement of an immediate family member.
- ❖ To attend the funeral service of a close family member.
- ❖ To visit a seriously ill relative, in particular if they are not local.
- ❖ Time together to recover from a trauma or crisis.
- ❖ Service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time. A letter from the employer is required to confirm this.

The circumstances detailed above are not exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. This might mean that only part of the absence may be authorised. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

### **Examples of what is not exceptional circumstances?**

- ❖ Taking additional days at the beginning or end of a scheduled school holiday.
- ❖ A birthday.
- ❖ Availability of cheaper holidays.
- ❖ Tickets to sports/culture events.

**What if my request is not authorised?**

If you feel you have exceptional circumstances, have you ensured that the school are fully aware of these?

Have you supplied all required information and any supporting documentation?

If you have any queries in relation to why your absence was unauthorised you must refer these to either Mrs Hudson or Mrs Fitzgerald.

**What if the unauthorised absence is taken?**

You may be issued with a Penalty Notice. This is a fine of £120 per parent for each child – the fine is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the fine is unpaid court action can follow.

**If there are issues with your child attending school**

If parents are having problems getting their child to attend school they are expected to contact us at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school will contact the parent and ask for a meeting where the absences will be discussed and a target for attendance will be set. If this does not resolve the problem, the school may refer the child to ESBAS (Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service) from the Local Education Authority. ESBAS will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

**Arriving in the morning**

In the morning all children should arrive in the school playground by 8.42am for when the bell rings so that children are actually in the building at 8.45am. If a child arrives after this time, they will be marked down as late.

**Absences due to illness**

If a child is ill, the parents must contact the school on the first day of absence and on each day of absence thereafter. When the child returns to school the parent must also put the reason for absence in writing.

**Procedures when there are attendance concerns**

1. Where a child's attendance falls below 95%, this is likely to affect progress and parents will be informed of this and offered support.
2. Where attendance falls below 90%, parents will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher and/or Bursar and an attendance target will be set.
3. Where attendance falls below 85%, it is likely the Education Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service will be involved.
4. Unauthorised absence of 5 days or more may result in a fine administered by the County.
5. Pupils arriving late after the playground door has closed will have this recorded.
6. Pupils arriving late for 10 sessions or more may make parents liable for a fine or

may result in the involvement of the attendance support service or social services.

**Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives**

The school's target for attendance is +96%.

The school has adopted Cool Cat and Fang as incentives for good attendance.

100% attendance certificates are awarded for every term, and for the whole academic year.

**Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are**

The Headteacher

The Bursar

**Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.