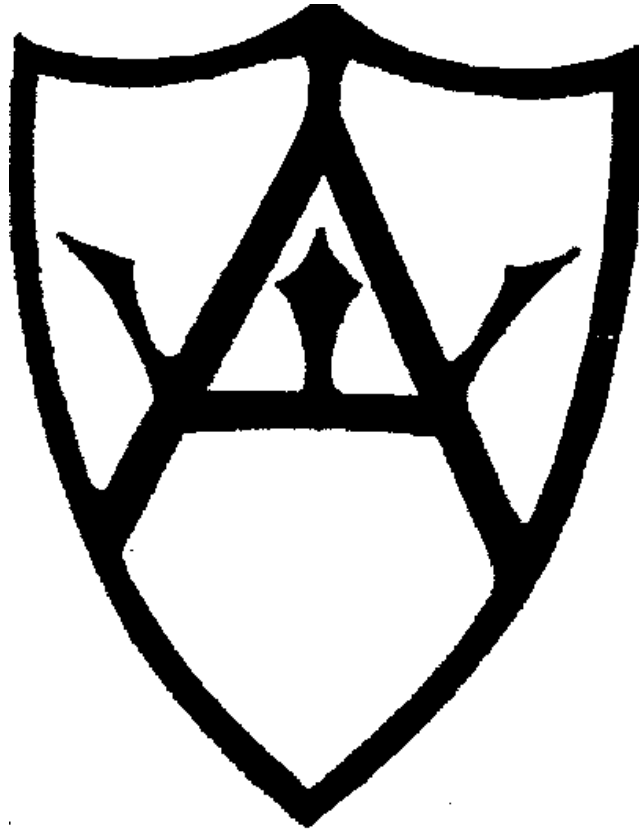


# **Alfriston School**



# **Attendance Policy**

Approved by Governors: Sept 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 when children are absent or late.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend school and you are covering up their absence, this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. It may also be viewed as unlawful.

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?

From 1 September 2013, government legislation changed meaning schools are not allowed to authorise requests for children to be taken out of school for a holiday during term time.

Therefore, the DfE only allows a headteacher the discretion to authorise an absence if 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.

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. The school year is only 39 weeks which leaves 13 weeks in which holidays can be taken without your child missing school.

Children returning from a term time holiday are also unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed. 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.

If we suspect a child has been absent from school due to a holiday that we have not been informed about, the absence will be unauthorised and it is the responsibility of the parent(s) to provide evidence to the contrary ie. a doctor's certificate.

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.
- ❖ Police Officers or Firefighters who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time. We will only authorise one holiday of 5 days per school year. (We are unable to authorise holiday for any other job or business).

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. 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 the playground door has been locked and enters school through the main entrance, they will be marked down as late.

**School procedures for dealing with individual absences:**

- Sickness absence should be reported to the school office before 9.30am on the first day of absence and on each day of absence thereafter.
- Office staff will contact parents/carers if a child is absent and no information has been received as to their whereabouts.
- When a child returns to school following illness the parent must put the reason for the absence in writing.
- Planned absence during term time that is not medical should be requested in writing using the 'Withdrawal from Learning Application' which can be obtained from the school office. Parents should also be issued with a 'Request for leave of absence in term time' leaflet.
- GP and dental appointments should be made out of school hours unless it is an emergency.
- Hospital appointments should be arranged for out of school hours or for the afternoons where possible.
- Where hospital appointments are given (eg for certain clinics which only run at given times) parents should request an appointment that will enable their child to be in school for as much of the day as possible. All children should be in school for the first part of the morning wherever possible.
- Private or alternative health care appointments will not be allowed (authorised) in school hours unless supported by a GP letter and evidence that the practitioner only provides services in school hours.
- A copy of the school letter in appendix 1 to clinics and health services outlining our policy and requesting appointments at certain times can be obtained from the school office to help parents in making a suitable appointment.

**Procedures when there are attendance concerns**

1. Letters will be sent weekly to any family where children have been late twice or more in that week.
2. Where a child's attendance falls below 95%, this is likely to affect progress and parents will be informed of this and offered support.

3. 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.
4. Where attendance falls below 85%, it is likely the Education Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service will be involved.
5. Unauthorised absence may result in a fine administered by the County.
6. Children arriving after the playground door has closed and entering through the front door will be recorded as late.
7. If a pupil arrives late 10 or more times, parents may be liable for a fine or it may result in the involvement of the attendance support service or social services.

### **School attendance 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 and prizes are awarded at the end of the academic year.
- Attendance and punctuality figures will be published for each class weekly in the newsletter using a 'traffic light' system: Green = 100% to 98%, Amber = 98% to 96%, Red = <96%.

Before starting our school:

- Parents are made aware at prospective parents' events and in welcome packs that the school take attendance seriously and what the expectations are.
- Parents will also be made aware that by choosing to send their child to school before they are 5, they are expected to follow the schools attendance policy and not take children on holiday in term time.

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

#### Governing Body

- Ensuring a governor is appointed with responsibility for attendance
- Requesting information from the Headteacher/Attendance Officer any aspect of the school, including attendance
- Meeting with parents where there are attendance concerns.

#### Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

- Positively promoting good attendance within the school
- Overseeing the implementation of attendance policy and procedures
- Ensuring the collection of accurate statistical data
- Developing efficient monitoring and evaluation systems
- Reporting to Governing Body

#### Class Teachers

- Accurate recording of children attendance in the register
- Communicating concerns to the Headteacher or Attendance Officer
- Promoting good attendance and punctuality within the class
- Ensuring all notes and messages received are sent to the school office

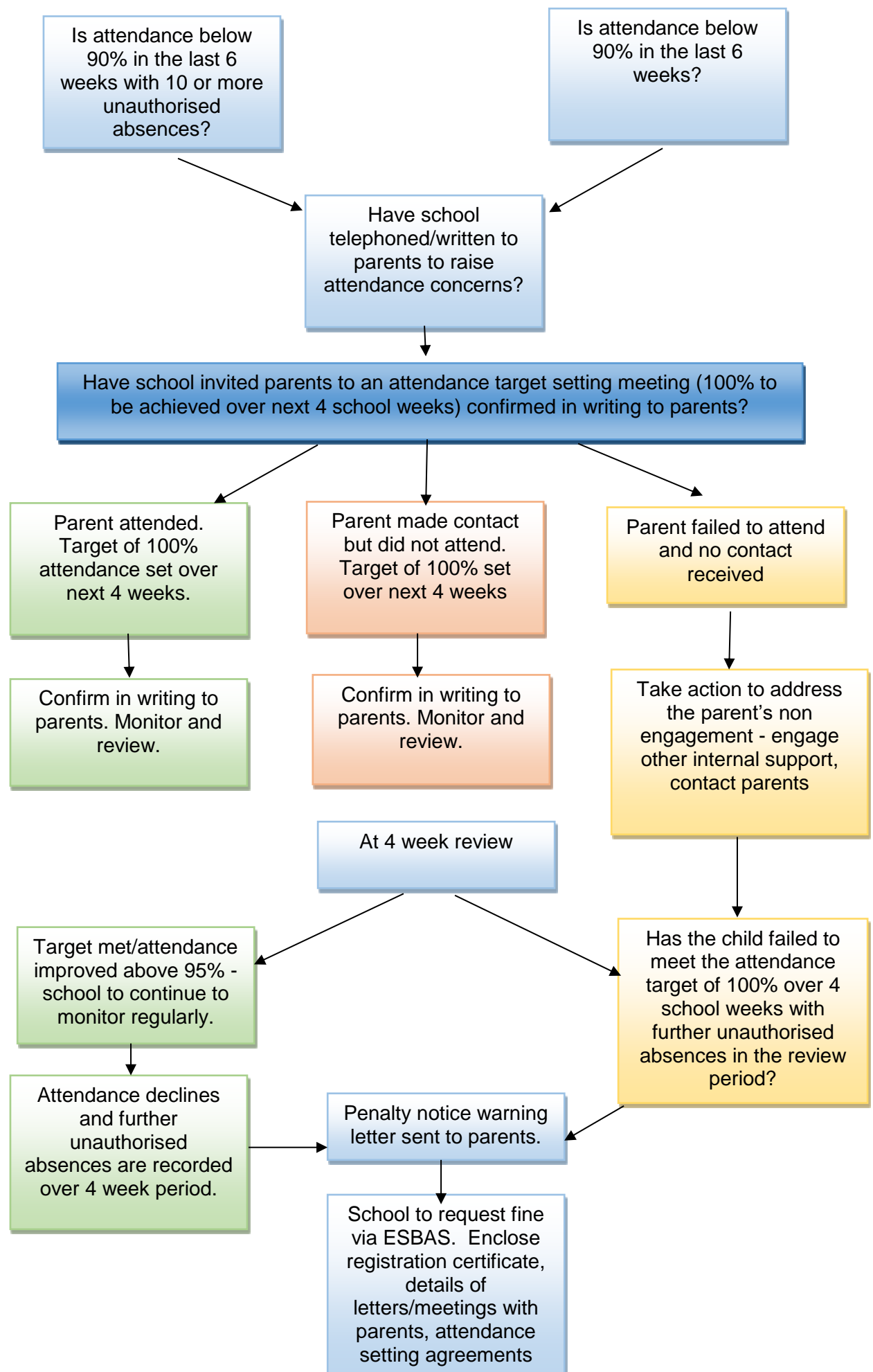
#### Office Staff

- Maintain attendance information on SIMS
- Record absence messages from parents
- Ensure absence notes are received from parents

- Assist in the collection of data

**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.

**Attendance Flow Chart**

## Appendix 1 – Letter to clinics and health services

To be put onto headed paper

Date: XXXXXX

Dear Practitioner

**Re: Absence from School for Medical Appointments**

At Alfriston Primary School we are committed to inclusion and equal opportunities for all.

Our children's wellbeing is extremely important to us and safeguarding our children is vital.

We are dedicated to high standards of attendance and punctuality as there are clear links between a child's attendance and their attainment, we always aim to provide children with access to a broad and balanced education.

We are therefore asking all parents and carers to make medical appointments in the afternoon or even better after school to minimise the disruption to learning in general and accessing core maths and literacy skills.

Please support our pupils by giving them appointments later in the day or before school for any non-emergency.

We greatly appreciate your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Lindsey Hudson  
Headteacher