

# ALT BRIDGE SCHOOL

## Attendance Policy



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# Alt Bridge School Attendance Policy

## School Ethos

At Alt Bridge, we are committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for each of our learners. We believe that this can only be achieved in partnership with families and young people. We are therefore dedicated to partnership working and person-centred practices, through which we are determined to know our pupils well and to learn of their aspirations. Being able to connect with others through positive relationships that are characterised by trust, certainty and positivity is a goal we hold for our whole school community.

Our pupils are exceptional people with a huge range of abilities, interests and views. We will be relentless in our drive to achieve the highest standards possible for our pupils and will use individualised approaches in working towards the high expectations we all share for them. We want their voice to be heard in society, for them to be able to make a positive contribution and succeed in the paths they choose. To achieve this, we will continuously promote the characteristics of independence, determination and resilience.

Our calm and caring approaches will enable learners to access the curriculum successfully and develop the personal skills they need in order to lead successful lives. The well-being of our pupils is of paramount importance and we seek to promote the five keys steps to achieving good mental health and well-being;

- **Connect**– connect with the people around you
- **Be active**– Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life
- **Keep learning**– learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence
- **Give to others**– even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word
- **Be mindful**– be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you

## Introduction

Alt Bridge is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will students be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential pre requisites of successful learning. They are also an important training preparation for the world of work.

## Aims of the Policy

- Alt Bridge School seeks to ensure that all its students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupils to realise his/her true potential.
- The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels secure.
- Good attendance is essential if students are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills they will need and reach their full potential.
- The school aims to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy within which pupils, staff and parents can work in partnership.
- The school will provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and children.
- The school will develop and maintain positive communication between home and school.
- The school will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention when a problem is identified.
- All staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality and work closely with families to encourage this
- The school will encourage good attendance among pupils through a system of rewards and incentives
- The school Governors will monitor attendance closely and work with the Head Teacher on attendance issues.
- To work together with the School Attendance Service and other services
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysis of attendance data

## Why regular attendance is so important

Everyone in the school community needs to be aware of the result of poor attendance on pupils enjoying and achieving.

Poor attendance can lower a child's confidence, self-esteem, security at school and their academic success.

If absent, our students may not access interventions that are planned into their timetables provide essential provision for their Special Educational Needs and meet the outcomes of their Education Health and Care Plans. They may also have reduced access to specialist support from external experts or therapists.

**Alt Bridge School will work together with parents and the Local Authority to improve attendance so we can all help all children to achieve their full potential.**

## Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, students and all members of school staff.

We are an inclusive school and recognise the individual circumstances of all students and reward attendance with the following recognition;

- Students who have achieved excellent attendance (95% or above)
- Students who have achieved significantly improved attendance
- Students who have achieved personally good attendance despite significant barriers

Students in the above categories are recognised in termly reward assemblies through certificates and awards.

## Registering and Monitoring Attendance

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and then in the afternoon session. Form teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers. The School attendance officer is responsible for monitoring attendance will complete the registers using the prescribed codes.

The morning registers will close at 9:30am. Any student who arrives after the closing of the register will need to sign in at reception. Any student arriving late but before the closing of the register will be marked as late.

All registers are marked at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions in school. This is the first task teachers do in the morning and afternoon.

**Teachers often use their teacher Ipad or laptop to enter presence into SIMS. Staff must turn off their Ipad and laptop fully at the end of each day to ensure the data syncs to SIMS accurately.**

The school will monitor attendance on a daily basis and once a week analyse attendance records. During the COVID-19 pandemic, school also monitor the number of students absent due to COVID-19 reasons and the number of students accessing our remote learning offer.

At the end of the academic year parents will be given a copy of their child's attendance record for the year. The Deputy Head will also share the attendance record with parents throughout the year if there are any concerns.

Attendance will be discussed at Governing Body meetings and reported on via the Head teacher's report.

## Categorising absence

Every half – day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is required in writing.

**Authorised absence** – Where reasons for absence are already known and accepted by the school. School may request evidence for absences in relation to medical needs. The decision whether or not to authorise absence will always rest with the school.

**Unauthorised absence** – Where reasons for absence are not accepted by the school as being acceptable reasons for absence.

Unauthorised absences may include:

- Parents/carers keeping youngsters off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Excessive illness without medical evidence
- Others

**No reason given** – The school will make continuous efforts to contact parents and carers to ascertain the reasons for absences which will then lead to decisions about whether the absence can be authorised or not. If repeated attempts elicit no reasons for absences then absences will be recorded as unauthorised automatically.

**Medical/ Dental Appointments** - Where possible appointments should be arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents should inform school in advance, advising when the appointment is and providing evidence of the appointment.

If a child needs to leave school during the course of the school day e.g. medical or dental appointment, parents carers must attend the school office to sign the child out of school and on the return to sign the child back in again.

## Absence Procedure for Parents/Carers

**If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence. If you do not inform school about your child's absence, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- Send a note into school, e-mail, or a parent app message on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us.

**If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- School will continue to ring on a daily basis until contact is made. A home visit may be made at any point during absence if the school is concerned for the welfare of a student.
- If the school is unable to contact any of the emergency numbers provided, and is concerned for the welfare of the pupil after 10 days of absence, a home visit will be made by the welfare team, school attendance service or the Police.
- If your child is persistently absent you may be invited in to school to discuss this further with the Headteacher and the school attendance service.
- Refer the matter to the LA if attendance moves below 90%

## Absence Reporting Procedure

By adhering to the following procedure, staff will know at a glance the position of a pupil who is absent and there should be continuity in the actions taken by the Form Teachers within the school.

- An Absence Report Log is maintained by the office staff and attendance officer.
- Messages taken by telephone or notes received are to be entered on the Absence Log and input on to the sims.net management system.
- System of first day calling is in operation, implemented by the Wellbeing team.
- The School attendance officer will work with families to discuss the reasons for absence and work to identify solutions which ultimately improve attendance and enable students to access school.
- Attendance concerns should always be raised with families during EHCP reviews by the form teacher and should become a target if persistent absenteeism is noted (below 90%).
- After a maximum of 10 days absence where no contact has been achieved, students are deemed as a Child Missing in Education. CME students are reported to the Local Authority after all attempts have been made to make contact and locate the student.
- Attendance is a regular item on fortnightly staff meeting agendas.
- After consultation between the school and the School Attendance Service, a joint decision will be made regarding action; this will be relevant to the appropriate Stage. This may be in form of letters, visits, or casework.
- All N and missing marks will be reported to the School attendance officer weekly to seek further information from parents about the reasons for absences. If no reason is provided after attempts to contact parents, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- The office staff will go through attendance records at the end of each half term and ensure all N marks are changed to unauthorised if school has not been provided with an acceptable reason.

## Persistent absence

Students with attendance below 90% are classed as having persistent absence which is a significant concern. Students with such low attendance are unlikely to achieve their full potential.

We aim to support parents and carers to help remove any barriers which prevent a child attending school. These could be barriers which the child has or which the parent/carer has. Our starting point is always one of support. In return, we expect parents/carers to contact school at an early stage and to work with us in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful and we try to resolve attendance issues within school.

The School Attendance Service visits school regularly and will follow up any cases where difficulties remain unresolved. The School Attendance Officer will also try to resolve the

situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed.

School make referrals to The School Attendance Service when required for pupils with attendance below 90%, if there is not a sustained improvement in attendance during a half termly casework period, the case may escalate and parents would be invited to attend an Pre Court Panel Meeting with the agreement of school.

Alternatively, parents/carers may wish to contact the School Attendance Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

### **Children Missing Education**

A child cannot be taken off our school roll until they start in the next school. Both the parent and the receiving school must inform us of the start date. Failure to receive confirmation of a forwarding school will result in a child being classed as a Child Missing Education and we have a duty to inform the Local Authority and Police of their missing status.

The Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations under Safeguarding Procedures. This will include: liaising with, School Attendance Service, Children's Social Care (formerly Social Services) the Police and other agencies, to track and locate your child.

**By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.**

### **Leave during term time**

There are 190 statutory school days in one year. Headteachers cannot authorise any leave in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any period taken without agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised absence and may attract a Penalty Notice.

Where a pupil is absent from school without permission of the school for 14 sessions (7 school days) or more, the parent/carer of the pupil may be issued with a £60.00 Education Penalty Notice per parent per child. If the notice remains unpaid after 21 days the penalty increases to £120.00. If the notice remains unpaid after 28 days the Local Authority may commence proceedings under section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act in the Magistrates Court.

School will send parents/ carers an Education Penalty Notice Warning letter once the child has recorded 6 sessions of unauthorised absence, and if there is a further 8 sessions of unauthorised absence over a ten week period we may be requested that the Local Authority issue an Education Penalty Notice.

### **Leavers**

If a child is leaving to attend another school or due to relocation, full information about: date of move, new address, the new school and start date is required. This transition form is available in the office & Wellbeing Hub.

### **Consequences of Poor Attendance /Punctuality**

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

- 1) The Parents/Carers may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice, which carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 28 days, it rises to £120 per parent, per child. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.
- 2) The Local authority may initiate statutory action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if there is not a sustained improvement of the child's attendance during a casework period with The School Attendance Service, this could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.

### **Lateness**

Pupils who arrive late after registration has closed must sign in using the Signing in System, located in reception.

Registers are marked by 9.30 am and 1pm and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time for each session.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be invited to meet with key staff in school in order to resolve the issue through working together.

All letters concerning punctuality and attendance will be copied to the child's file.





### Medical Conditions

We ask parents to inform us about any ongoing medical conditions.

We will work closely with parents, school nurses and other medical professionals to support children with ongoing medical conditions. This may involve the implementation of a Health Plan and specific training for staff or an attendance panel meeting with the school nurse.

### Public Health England

Public Health England provide schools with information about how long children will need to stay off school. Parents are welcome to contact the school office and ask for advice. It must be understood that any advice provided is simply from 'Public Health England' and such not be taken as advice from a medical professional.

### Religious observances

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals.

Parents are required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

### Reluctant attenders

Parents/carers and staff should do everything possible to encourage a student to attend. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, anxiety or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to resolve this concern.

We are extremely flexible and happy to discuss and agree a bespoke re-integration plan for our students in consultation with parents/carers. A bespoke plan may include;

- Therapeutic interventions
- Reasonable adjustments and creative strategies to support inclusion
- Access to the wellbeing hub for learning mentor support
- Incorporating student's special interests to improve engagement
- Restorative practices to resolve any conflicts with members of the school community
- Opportunities for relaxation/mindfulness
- Blended learning arrangements where possible and access to the remote learning offer (only to be agreed via SLT consultation)
- Various other strategies

## **Exclusions**

If the school decides to send a pupil home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an Exclusion. The school will follow the current DfE's statutory guidance on exclusions.

Any exclusion must be agreed by the Head teacher.

The school will notify the parent of the exclusion. If the pupil is a Looked After Child, the school will notify the pupil's carer, social worker and Virtual School. In other instances, where a pupil is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

The pupil must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult, and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

## **Child Protection Statement**

At Alt Bridge School, every child has the right to an education and to be safe and cared for in a way that ensures their safety and meets their individual needs. We recognise that all children need protection at all times from anything or anyone who may cause them harm. To ensure this we follow the school's Child Protection Policy.

We respect all members of the school's community and treat information with confidentiality. The Attendance Policy is served in conjunction with our role to safeguard all our pupils.

## **Telephone Numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about different things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular reminders on telephone numbers throughout the year. We also request two further emergency contact phone numbers for each student.

## Summary

Alt Bridge has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its Attendance Policy to parents in order to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority & Department for Education; equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff is committed to working with parents and children as the best way to ensure as high level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment.

This Policy will be reviewed annually or if there are any changes concerning pupil's attendance.

## Related policies

This policy, Attendance should be read in conjunction with the following policies:-

- Allegations Management
- Anti-Bullying
- Behaviour
- Child Protection
- Disability Equality Duty Scheme
- Equality Scheme (including Race & Gender)
- Exclusions
- Internet & E-Safety
- PHSE (including Drug Prevention)
- Positive Handling
- Safer Recruitment
- Visits and School Trips

## **KNOWSLEY BOROUGH 5 STAGE PROCEDURES**

### **THE FIVE STAGES OF CONCERN OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

#### **STAGE 1**

##### When absences start to occur

School will contact you by phone or letter for a reason

#### **STAGE 2**

##### When Absences continue

School may interview your child and monitor progress more closely, together with letters and phone calls. School may ask you to come in for a meeting.

#### **STAGE 3**

##### When the situation does not improve

School talks to the School Attendance Service within the LA and an officer will visit you and make an assessment. This visit may also be regarding punctuality.

#### **STAGE 4**

##### When stages 1 – 3 have not brought about an improvement

At this stage any further absences will not be authorised by school. The LA School Attendance Officer will case work with you for 6 weeks to support you in improving your child's attendance. This can include home visits, meetings, phone calls, referrals etc.

#### **STAGE 5**

##### When no improvement occurs despite all of the above

The case will be transferred to the school Attendance Improvement Officer for possible prosecution. This could mean a fine or imprisonment resulting in a criminal record for the parent.