Aspire Schools Attendance Policy

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Policy reviewed by	Executive Lead for Safeguarding, Executive Leaders, Trustees Ratified by Trustees: Spring 2026
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1. Purpose and context

The Aspire Schools trust is committed to ensuring that children who are on roll at our schools receive the best education we can provide for them. The first step of this is good attendance. Aspire Schools aims to provide a safe and nurturing environment in all our schools, and we are committed to working with children and their families to ensure that they are happy coming to school and attend regularly.

Attendance is a safeguarding priority. Aspire Schools recognises that absence from school can be an indicator of risk, vulnerability, exploitation, mental health needs or unmet educational needs. Attendance information is therefore monitored as part of safeguarding systems and concerns are addressed promptly through a coordinated multi-agency approach where appropriate. All staff understand that unexplained absence, persistent absence and severe absence may require both attendance intervention and safeguarding action.

Our overall attendance target for every young person who attends a Trust school is 95%, as this is the national target for all schools and academies. We consider this to be 95% of a child's individually agreed upon timetable: some of our students have reduced hours due to their medical or other needs**.** We know that for some children, particularly those with medical conditions, it is not reasonable or appropriate to expect them to attend school for 25 hours a week.

Where exceptional circumstances require a temporary reduced timetable, this will:

- Be implemented only as a short-term intervention
- Be agreed with parents/carers
- Include clear planned outcomes
- Be reviewed regularly
- Have a documented plan for return to full-time education

Reduced timetables will never be used as a disciplinary measure or as a long-term solution for attendance difficulties.

Aspire Schools is committed to ensuring that every pupil receives a full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and additional needs. Regular school attendance is fundamental to educational achievement, wellbeing, safeguarding and positive life outcomes.

We recognise that many of our children and young people begin at Aspire Schools in circumstances that make this much more challenging for them to achieve – for example, previous experiences in school, adverse childhood experiences or social, emotional and mental health needs etc. We therefore acknowledge that for some children it will take them a long time to reach 95%, and we will celebrate every small step on their journey towards this target.

Through this policy, Aspire Schools intends for all our schools to:

- Provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and as such attend happily.
- Provide a process where students are supported to reflect and build self-awareness following a suspension. It is important that students understand the reason for the suspension and know that each day is a new start. They belong with us.
- Provide a framework for ensuring that attendance is taken accurately, and non-attendance is followed up swiftly and appropriately, to ensure the safeguarding and wellbeing of our students.
- Ensure that the overall attendance of young people at our schools is high, and that all young

people improve their attendance during the time that they are with us.
- To provide support for parents and families who are struggling with their child's attendance.
- Provide a framework for dealing with poor or non-attendance.

This policy has been written taking into consideration the following legislation and regulations:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- The Education (pupil registration) (England) regulations 2006, and amendments 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016
- The Education (School attendance targets) (England) regulations 2007 and 2010
- Working together to improve school attendance, July 2026
- Guidance for schools on the use of reduced timetables for pupils of compulsory school age, April 2023
- Arranging education for children who cannot attend school due to health needs, Dec 2023
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance, Feb 2023

2. Definitions and categories of absence

Persistent Absence (PA): a student is classed as persistently absent when attendance falls below 90%. It does not matter whether absences have been classed as authorised or non-authorised by the school.

Severe Absence (SA): A pupil is considered severely absent when attendance falls below 50%. Pupils within this category require intensive support and regular review involving senior leaders and, where appropriate, external agencies.

Authorised absence: this is where the school has given approval in advance for a student to be away from school or have accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory. The following may be authorised if evidence is provided to the school:

- Visits or interviews with potential new education providers (such as sixth form colleges, or a new school) or employers
- YOS meetings, if these must be held offsite
- Medical appointments

Unauthorised absence: This is when the school is unable to approve of the reason for absence. Government regulations are clear that schools are not permitted to authorise absence for family holiday or other family occasions.

Children missing education (CME): Refers to children of compulsory school age who are not registered at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. This also includes pupils on the school roll who have been absent without authorisation for a prolonged period and whose whereabouts cannot be established. Procedures will follow local authority CME protocols and statutory guidance. If a child is absent for a period of longer than 10 school days, and we have not been able to speak with parents, carers or family, we must report this to the Local Authority under their CME policy.

3. Expectations

We expect the following from our students:

- That they attend as per their individual timetable
- That they arrive on time, or are ready for their taxi collection on time
- That they talk to staff about any problems that they are having which are making attendance difficult for them

We expect the following from our parents, carers and families:

- To ensure their child attends school, as per the legislation on this matter, states that children's attendance at school is the responsibility of parents/carers.
- To support their child to attend wherever possible, encouraging them to attend if they are fit and well enough to be in school, and do not remain at home for minor complaints
- To contact their child's school if they are not able to attend, providing medical evidence if appropriate.

What students, parents and families can expect from us:

- That their child is provided with a timetable that is either full time, or as close to full time as is appropriate given their individual needs.
- That school will contact them if their child does not arrive at school, to ensure that the child is safe and well at home, and that nothing has happened on the way to school.
- That someone from school will come to visit the home if we cannot contact a child's family, to ensure that they are safe and well.

4. Attendance procedures across the Trust

Attendance systems may differ across the different Trust schools. However, the following elements will remain consistent:

- Morning registers will be completed by 9.30am.
- First day attendance calls to parents/carers and families will be completed immediately after the registers close at 9.30am. This is so that we ensure students have not got into difficulties or an accident on the way to school.
- If we cannot speak to parents/carers and families, we will send a text message to all numbers on record asking them to contact the school and explaining that if we do not hear from them, we will do a safe and well visit to the home.
- If we do not see a child for three consecutive days, **and** cannot contact anyone at home, a member of staff will visit the home or hold a video call to ensure that the child is safe and well. This will be logged on CPOMS as a safeguarding matter. The Head of School (or DHoS in their absence) may decide that a safe and well visit is required before this point if there are particular concerns about a young person.
- Any unexplained absences for a young person who has a CIN or CP plan will be reported immediately to the social worker or other relevant professionals.
- Attendance data will be reviewed weekly by school leaders to identify emerging concerns, pupils at risk of persistent absence and pupils of risk of severe absence.
- Unexplained absence will be followed up on the first day of absence and every subsequent day where concerns remain regarding a pupil's whereabouts or wellbeing.
- Where absence patterns indicate potential safeguarding concerns, neglect, exploitation or risk of harm, safeguarding procedures will be followed immediately alongside attendance procedures.

4.1 Medical provision attendance

The Aspire Schools medical provisions, based at The Stables in The Wycombe Grange and The Bridge in Blueprint, which are for EOTAS/Section 19, EBSNA or certain SEMH needs students, will follow the Aspire Schools Attendance Policy and will take into account the legislation above and the 'School Attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' 2020. However, the nature of the provisions means that attendance recording processes will differ as detailed below.

Our medical provisions, will follow this policy consistency, with regard to monitoring and reporting of attendance. However, sessions for students operate on reduced hours for either a morning or afternoon only and may have different timings from the rest of Aspire Schools sites for the 'am' and 'pm' roll call cut off.

This approach has been checked with Buckinghamshire Council to ensure that it's legally compliant and the above approach was agreed with James Fowler, Education Entitlement Manager.

The procedure has been checked and found to be justifiable by Charlotte Antonio, Partner at Browne Jacobson the Aspire MAT's legal advisor.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Heads of School/ Provision leads are responsible for:

- Ensuring that there are systems in place for the timely and accurate taking of registers.
- Logging follow up actions of concerns raised on CPOMS. (Using the Logging and Tracking Attendance Working Instructions)
- Ensuring that children at home awaiting transport are being supported in line with the Aspire Schools Awaiting Taxi Protocol
- Ensuring children feel supported to return to school following a suspension
- Attendance date is reviewed regularly and concerns are identified and action upon as early as possible

Site administrators are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the registers are accurately completed.
- Doing first day absence calls to parents and recording reasons for absence on the registers and sending text messages to those that do not answer the phone.
- Ensuring that Heads of School are aware of any students who have not been seen for three consecutive school days.
- Passing any other concerns to the Learning Support Team or Heads of School as per individual school systems.
- Running weekly attendance reports for Heads of School and Learning Support Team as per individual school systems.
- Logging attendance issues on CPOMS (Using the Logging and Tracking Attendance Working Instructions)

Behaviour Support Teams are responsible for:

- Working with the Heads of School to improve attendance for any student under 95%.
- Doing safe-and-well visits for any child who has not been seen for 3 days.
- Logging safe-and-well visits on CPOMS (Using the Logging and Tracking Attendance Working Instructions)

Trustees are responsible for:

- Receiving attendance reports
- Holding leaders to account for attendance outcomes
- Ensuring sufficient resources are allocated to attendance improvement
- Reviewing attendance policies annually

6. Addressing persistent absenteeism

Aspire Schools aims to work supportively with parents, carers and families to address barriers to attendance and increase students' attendance over the time that they are with us. Attendance intervention will follow a graduated approach based on individual need, level of concern and attendance data. Support strategies will normally be considered before enforcement action unless there are safeguarding concerns or exceptional circumstances.

Strategies that Aspire Schools use across the Trust to support an increase in attendance include (but are not limited to):

- Ensuring that our schools are welcoming, supportive environments that students want to attend.
- Praising and thanking students and families who work to improve attendance.
- Working with students and families, and other professionals where they are involved, to identify reasons for poor attendance and finding ways to overcome those barriers.
- Reviewing provision so that we are better meeting students' needs, therefore making attendance more likely.
- Implementing short term reduced timetables where students have been out of school for a long period of time, as a supportive transition back to formal education. This will be done with agreement from parents/carers and families, and using the Buckinghamshire reduced timetable protocol. (Use of Reduced Timetable Working Instructions)

6.1 Attendance and safeguarding

Persistent absence, severe absence and unexplained absence may indicate wider safeguarding concerns. Where attendance raises safeguarding concerns, attendance procedures will operate alongside safeguarding procedures.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed where attendance patterns give rise to concern regarding:

- Neglect
- Child exploitation
- Criminal exploitation
- Domestic abuse
- Mental health risk
- Missing episodes
- Child-on-child abuse

Attendance concerns may therefore result in safeguarding assessments, referrals or multi-agency planning.

6.2 Legal intervention

In general, Aspire Schools does not believe that taking legal action against parents is a helpful strategy. In our experience, the majority of parents of children who have poor attendance are doing everything that they can to ensure their child attends, and adding fines and legal processes often only adds difficulties to already impossibly hard situations.

However, legislation does provide a legal framework for supporting absence management and Aspire Schools may on occasion feel that use of this legal framework is appropriate. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure that their child receives an education, either by attendance at school or education otherwise. In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled section 444B of the Education Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a fixed penalty of either £80 or £160 per adult per child.

If the Trust believe that use of this framework is appropriate, the following process will be followed:

- Parents/carers will be made aware that their child's attendance is a problem, and that a fixed penalty may be issued if it does not improve.
- Parents/carers will be invited to a meeting with a member of the school's SLT in which this is explained, barriers to attendance discussed and a plan agreed for improving attendance.
- Parents/carers will be issued a formal warning, explaining that a Fixed Penalty may be issued if their child's attendance does not improve in the next 14 days.
- Parents/carers will be issued a final formal warning, explaining that attendance has not improved since the formal warning, and that if attendance does not improve in the next 14 days the school will be contacting the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty.

7. Children Missing in Education (CME)

Any student who is absent for ten school days and for whom we have not been able to contact parents or carers, will be reported as a Child Missing in Education (CME) using the Buckinghamshire CME protocol.

8. Children awaiting transport to school

Many children placed at an Aspire Schools provision will require transport to bring them to school. Transport is requested as part of the referral process to Aspire Schools, but it takes at least 15 working days for the transport to be put in place by the local authority, and only once it has been assessed as being needed by the Council's Admissions team.

Single registered students:

- We become responsible for the safeguarding and wellbeing of the child from their start date with us. To mitigate risks the Awaiting Taxi Protocol must be followed.

Dual registered students:

- We will need to negotiate with the main school who maintains the responsibility for ensuring the safeguarding and wellbeing of the child.
- Consider which parts of the Awaiting Taxi Protocol are appropriate to follow.

9. Reintegration following suspension

To support our students to successfully reintegrate back into the school community following a suspension, the following steps will occur:

1. A reintegration meeting will take place with the students, their parents/carers and the HoS/DHoS.
    - The aim of this meeting is to establish what all parties can do to avoid further suspensions.
2. One to one reflection work.
    - This is for the student to reflect on their behaviour and/or do some targeted work with a trusted adult to gain a greater understanding of their own self-regulation and communication.

10. Aspire Schools linked policies

This policy is written with regard to the following Aspire Schools policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Risk Assessment for Student Wellbeing Policy

11. Working instructions

The following Working Instructions support the implementation of this policy:

- Logging and Tracking Attendance
- Use of Reduced Timetables
- Awaiting Taxi Protocol
- Reintegration Protocol

All Working Instructions are located on the Aspire Schools Information and Resources Team in the [Working Instructions] folder within the [Attendance Working Instructions and Form] folder.