Ashmead Combined School

"Ashmead gives its children two ...s... one is roots, the other wings"

Head Teacher Michael Pearse

Attendance at Ashmead School

Attending school regularly is key to unlocking the full range of benefits education offers—supporting your child's learning, wellbeing, and overall development. We are committed to fostering strong relationships and creating a welcoming school environment where children feel safe, valued, and eager to learn.

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child receives a full-time education and attends school consistently. When children are absent, they miss more than just lessons—they miss opportunities to build friendships, make academic progress and take part in the everyday school activities.

We do, of course, recognise that there are times when absence is unavoidable and entirely reasonable. This letter outlines the steps we are taking to support and manage attendance in our school community.

Children can still attend school if they are experiencing minor symptoms. The NHS guidance – "Is my child too ill for school?" advises that children with mild illnesses, such as a slight cough, common cold, sore throat, or headache, are usually well enough to be in school. We are here to support them throughout the day, ensuring they feel comfortable and are able to continue learning.

Illness and First Day Call

If your child is unwell and unable to attend school, please inform us by phone on the first day of absence. Our phone lines are open from 8:00am, and we ask that you contact us before 8.30am, where possible.

Ashmead Combined School
Cole Road, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP21 8SU
Tel: 01296 484434
www.ashmeadschool.org.uk
Email: office@ashmeadschool.org.uk

Insignis Academy Trust

Alternatively, you can email us at attendance@ashmeadschool.org.uk or report your child's absence on the Arbor app **Logging absences on the Parent Portal and Arbor App**

For longer absences, we ask that you keep us regularly updated.

If you're unsure whether your child is well enough to attend, we recommend sending them in and informing us of your concerns. We will monitor them throughout the day and contact you if it becomes necessary to send them home.

If no reason has been provided for a child's absence, we are required—under our safeguarding responsibilities—to contact you to confirm your child's whereabouts. If we are unable to reach you and no reason is provided, the absence will be recorded as *unauthorised*. As outlined in the new statutory national framework for schools, repeated unauthorised absences can result in a penalty fine.

New National Framework for Attendance

The Department for Education introduced stricter legislation on school attendance and published updated mandatory guidance for all schools to follow. This includes a new national framework for penalty notices, with a consistent threshold for when such notices must be considered. This includes when:

- A child is absent for 10 or more unauthorised sessions (equivalent to five school days) within a rolling ten-week period
- Taking a term time holiday of 5 days or more

Please note that this framework is a national one and applies to all schools, not just Ashmead.

When a child is unwell, their absence is recorded as *authorised* by the school. However, if we notice frequent or recurring absences, we may need to speak with you to better understand any underlying issues. In most cases, medical evidence is not required. However, if your child is regularly absent due to illness, we may request supporting evidence. Without this, ongoing absences may be recorded as *unauthorised*. Acceptable forms of evidence include appointment cards, copy of prescriptions, hospital appointment letters or notes from previous consultations—these can also be provided via the NHS App.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Where possible, we encourage medical and dental appointments to be scheduled outside of school hours. However, we understand this isn't always possible. If your child needs to attend an appointment during the school day, we ask that they come to school before the appointment, and return promptly afterwards, to minimise lost learning time. These appointments will be recorded as *authorised absences*.
We are already aware of children with serious or long-term medical conditions, and these circumstances are, of course, considered. However, it is essential that the attendance team is fully informed of any ongoing health issues. If your child requires continued medical treatment, please speak with us.

Punctuality

Children are welcome to arrive at school from 8:30am, ready for learning to start promptly at 8:45am. Arriving late can cause several issues—your child may miss important instructions at the start of the day, which can lead to confusion, increased stress, and lost learning time. It can also be unsettling for them to enter the classroom once lessons have already started. Over time, even small amounts of lateness can have a significant impact. For example, being just 15 minutes late each day adds up to the equivalent of 10 full days of lost learning over the course of a school year.

Under the new national attendance framework, frequent lateness may now result in a penalty fine**.** We appreciate your support in ensuring your child starts each day on time and ready to learn.
We have spaces available in our *free* Breakfast Club, which is open to all children from 8:15am. If you would like to request a place, please contact our Assistant Head, Mrs Cheryl Thompson, via the school office. Attending Breakfast Club can support a calm and settled start to the day and ensures your child is in school on time.

Emergency Absence

There may be occasions when it is not appropriate for a child to attend school. In such cases, we will take a compassionate approach and may authorise the absence if the circumstances are exceptional — meaning they are rare, significant, unavoidable, and of short duration.

Holidays in term time

For any holidays taken during term time, please notify the school at least four weeks in advance. Please note that current legislation prohibits schools from authorising term-time holidays. If you choose to take your child out of school for five or more days during term time, we are required to report this absence to the County Attendance Team. When leave is unauthorised, the Governing Body supports issuing a fixed penalty fine, which can be costly.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

The Department for Education considers attendance below 90% as persistent absence. A pupil is classified as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of school sessions during the year, regardless of the reason. Absences at this level significantly impact a child's education, and we need your full support and cooperation to address this issue.

It all adds up!

We aim for a school attendance rate of 95% or higher. As parents, you play a crucial role in your child's academic success, and the foundation of that success begins with good attendance habits. Attendance at 95% means no more than 9.5 days of absence throughout the school year.

Attendance over an academic year IT ALL ADDS UP!	Attendance	Number of days Present in school	Whole Days missed	Learning Hours Lost
Outstanding	100%	190 days	0 days	0 hours
Excellent	99%	188 days	2 days	10 hours
Excellent	98%	186 days	4 days	20 hours
Excellent	97%	184 days	6 days	30 hours
Good	96%	182.5 days	7.5 days	37.5 hours
Expected Attendance	95%	180.5 days	9.5 days	47.5 hours
Becoming Unsatisfactory *Pupils of concern identified and monitored*	94%	177 days	13 days	65 hours
Cause for Concern *Parents will be contacted by the school to discuss concerns and identify support*	90%	171 days	19 days	95 hours
Cause for Concern *For pupils of continued concern, the County Attendance Team intervene*	89%	169 days	21 days	105 hours
Cause for Concern	88%	167 days	23 days	115 hours
Cause for Concern	87%	165 days	25 days	125 hours
Cause for Concern	86%	163 days	27 days	135 hours
Serious Cause for Concern	85%	161.5 days	28.5 days	142.6 hours
Serious Cause for Concern	84%	159.5 days	30.5 days	152.5 hours
Serious Cause for Concern	83%	158 days	32 days	160 hours
Serious Cause for Concern	82%	156 days	34 days	170 hours
Serious Cause for Concern	81%	154 days	36 days	180 hours

How do we monitor attendance?

At Ashmead, we monitor each child's attendance on a weekly basis, carefully reviewing all reasons for absence. Each week, we identify pupils whose attendance has either reached, or is approaching, the threshold for Persistent Absence. When we determine that intervention is necessary, we will take appropriate action, which may include sending an email, inviting you to meet with a member of the attendance team, making a phone call, or issuing an attendance letter. We then closely monitor attendance over the following three weeks, expecting to see consistent improvement.

Intervention Flow Chart System in place

School will notify parent of a child's irregular school attendance in one of the ways mentioned above

If we contact you about attendance concerns, we ask that you:

- Talk with your child to understand if there are any reasons they may be reluctant to attend school.
- Reach out to the school to discuss any challenges you or your child may be facing – our attendance and pastoral teams are always available to listen and offer support.
- Ensure your child attends school regularly.

If attendance does not improve and there is no valid reason for the absences, the School Attendance Team will invite you to an Attendance Contract Meeting. This involves a Parenting Contract, a voluntary agreement between you and us, designed to support you in improving your child's attendance. The headteacher may also be involved during this process.

Attendance will then be monitored over a period of 3 to 6 weeks.

If attendance continues to be irregular, the County Attendance Team may consider issuing a Penalty Notice.

While participation in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, failure to engage with the support offered, combined with continued irregular attendance, may still result in a Penalty Notice or legal action being taken in the Magistrates' Court.
If a Penalty Notice is issued, the fine is £80 per parent/carer, per child, payable within 21 days. If unpaid within this period, the penalty increases to £160 per parent/carer, per child.

Although formal sanctions may be used, our preference as a school is to work collaboratively with you and your family to build strong, supportive relationships and address any challenges together.

The effects of irregular attendance

Regular school attendance greatly increases the chances of your child succeeding academically and feeling connected to their school community. Even missing just, a day or two each month can add up to several weeks of lost learning over the course of a year. It's important to understand that irregular attendance can significantly impact your child's development and future opportunities. We are committed to ensuring that poor attendance does not become a barrier to your child's success.

At the same time, we understand that challenges can sometimes make regular attendance difficult. Our attendance and pastoral teams are here to support you with issues such as morning routines, anxieties, or transport difficulties, through tailored pastoral interventions and breakfast provision, for example.

Being in school helps support your child's learning, establish strong routines and build friendships that are essential for their wellbeing and development. For more information about who to contact for support — including the school's senior leader responsible for attendance—please visit our website Ashmead School - Attendance

Mental Health/Long Term Illness/Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

If your child is regularly absent from school due to illness—whether physical or mental health related—or because of special educational needs or a disability, they are entitled to the same full-time education as every other child.

We are committed to supporting your child and ensuring they can access their education. This may include:

- Working closely with you to make reasonable adjustments to help improve attendance, such as changes to uniform, transport arrangements, daily routines, or lunchtime provisions

- Providing tailored pastoral care to support your child's emotional and social needs

Our dedicated Pastoral Support Team is available to offer sensitive, personalised support to pupils facing these challenges. Every case is handled individually to ensure the most appropriate and effective support is in place.

Types of Absence

Each absence from school is recorded as either *authorised* or *unauthorised*. Absences are considered *authorised* when a valid reason is provided—for example, if a child is genuinely unwell or due to exceptional circumstances.

Absences are recorded as *unauthorised* when no explanation is given or the reason provided is not deemed acceptable. Please note that if a child's attendance becomes irregular and no medical evidence is provided, the absences may be marked as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences can lead to penalty fining.

Unacceptable Reasons for Absence

The following are examples of reasons that are ***not*** considered acceptable for school absence:

- Shopping trips
- Taking a day off for a birthday
- Caring for other family members
- Family outings or visits to theme parks
- Absence due to parents' work commitments
- Holidays taken during term time
- Absence due to parental illness
- Accompanying parents or siblings to their appointments

Support First Approach

The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overstated. All schools have a duty to promote good attendance and to support families in overcoming any barriers that may prevent a child from attending regularly. This means we may sometimes raise concerns about attendance, even if your child has only been off for a few days. This is not because we doubt the reason for their absence, but because early intervention can help prevent attendance patterns from becoming a longer-term issue. It also gives us the opportunity to work with you to identify and address any underlying factors that may be making school attendance difficult for your child.

For this support to be effective, it is essential that parents and carers work in partnership with the school. If you have any concerns about attendance or would like to discuss support options, please get in touch with our Attendance Team at attendance@ashmeadschool.org.uk.

Our duty of care

We share a duty of care with the Local Authority to address and challenge poor school attendance. When attendance is low, and there are frequent absences without valid reasons—such as unauthorised holidays or absences the school does not approve—parents may be issued a penalty notice. This carries a fine of **£80 per parent, per child**, which increases to **£160** if not paid within 21 days.

We hope this information helps clarify the school's expectations around attendance. If you have any concerns or are experiencing difficulties that may be affecting your child's attendance, please contact us. Our team is here to support you and your family.