Aurora

Attendance Policy

Policy Reference:	A6
Version Number:	v3
Applies to:	Schools and colleges where education is provided for those of compulsory school age
Associated documents:	Service Admissions Policy A1 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Attendance Policy Local Procedures
Approved by:	Quality and Operations team
Implementation date:	August 2023
Next review due by:	August 2025
This policy has been reviewed to ensure it promotes safeguarding and does not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups	

Version:3
Implementation date: August 2023

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Page 1 of 9

Approved by:
Operations & Quality Team

Aurora

0. Summary of changes since previous version of policy

1. Policy checked against current guidance - further detail added to specify vulnerable groups and barriers to attendance as per legislation eg Equality Act 2010

2. Definition of severe absence where a pupil misses 50% or more of school added to section 6.2

3. Section 4 updated to include recording on MIS

1. Aims

Regular attendance at school is the key to enabling children to maximise their potential through access to educational opportunities available to them and be successful in their adult lives.

Aurora values all students and their past experiences so we will work with families to support transitions and build up trusted relationships. Where we identify the reasons for poor attendance, we will try to resolve any difficulties together.

Aurora is committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

> Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence

> Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled

> Acting early to address patterns of absence

2. Legislation and statutory requirements

This policy is based on the following advice/legislation:

Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

> Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

> Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

> Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

> The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

> The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

> Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) please refer to most recent publication

3. Scope

This policy relates to Aurora schools and services where education is provided for those of compulsory school age. Please also refer to the service's local procedures.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Operations Director

The Operations Director is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. They also hold the head teacher/Principal to account for the implementation of this policy and present to the Incident and Safeguarding committee any concerns and actions taken to rectify and positively impact on individual attendance

4.2 The head teacher

The head teacher/Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at their school and training of staff to understand attendance codes and the process for recording and monitoring attendance.

- Creating local procedures to ensure the policy is implemented effectively

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governance

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual studentsEnsuring plans are in place to improve attendance in line with local policy and safeguarding arrangements are being followed and recorded with concerns escalated.

- Ensuring key stakeholders involved in the pupils care are fully consulted and aware of concerns about attendance, and involved in planning to support improved attendance. Where necessary following the Reintegration Timetable Policy Policy.

- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

- Ensuring staff who are taking registers understand how to input attendance on the MIS

- Ensuring that the MIS is quality assured on a weekly basis and does not have blank attendance sessions

4.3 Staff taking registers

Staff taking registers are responsible for:

- Ensuring they understand the attendance codes and how these should be used
- Ensuring they record attendance on the MIS during the registration periods
- Inputting the correct absence codes where appropriate
- Escalating any attendance concerns
- Ensuring that there are no 'blanks' on the attendance register at the end of each registration period

5. Recording Attendance

5.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all students onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. For any students attending off site provision it is the responsibility of the school to ensure they confirm attendance morning and afternoon. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present

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- Attending an approved off-site educational activity

- Absent

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry

- The amended entry

- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made

- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

See local procedures for timings of the school day.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

5.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence or as soon as practically possible. See local procedures.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

5.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 4 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

> Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

> After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

5.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

> Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason

> Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary

> Identify whether the absence is approved or not

> Identify the correct attendance code to use

5.6 Reporting to parents/carers

We communicate with parents/carers regularly regarding their child's attendance and will provide an annual summary of their attendance over an academic year via an annual report. Where there are concerns about attendance we will speak with parents/carers at the earliest possible time and agree a plan to improve in the most rapid timescale possible.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The head teacher will only grant a leave of absence to students during term time if they consider there to be exceptional circumstances. A leave of absence is granted at the head teacher's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

> Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 3.2 and 3.3 for more detail)

> Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

> Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision

> Funeral of immediate family member

> When a family needs to spend time together because of an immediate family member's bereavement, crisis or serious illness

> Children of service personnel about to go on deployment (permission would be considered as long as the request is accompanied by a letter from the Commanding Officer).

> One off sporting events/performing arts competitions, if the child is participating and is at county standard or above and a letter has been provided from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence.

Version:3
Implementation date: August 2023
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Page 5 of 9
Approved by:
Operations & Quality Team

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> Where a student is being supported through a Transition/Reintegration plan and absence from school/college is part of the plan (this must be recorded as C with Transition noted in the notes section of Engage).

Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above, the Head teacher must be convinced that absence from school is in the child's best interests prior to any authorisation being given to the parent/carer. Consultation with the commissioning local authority may also form part of the decision making process.

6.2 Reducing persistent absence

The threshold for persistent absence is when a student's overall absence is 10% or more of their possible sessions , and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.. A student's absences may be authorised, unauthorised or a combination of both.

The focus on persistent absence is part of an escalating process that is outlined in local procedures, led by senior leaders, monitored through governance and understood by the whole school community: staff, students and parents.

Having assessed the reasons for the PA and analysed its profile, it is important to identify strategies that can be used to address it. In more complex and longer-term cases of poor attendance and persistent absence, interventions may include:

- multi-agency meetings and actions plans
- requests for medical information or information from other services
- use of local authority enforcement processes and procedures
- home visiting
- direct work with children and parents to address root causes of absences
- engaging specialist services
- considering options for provision.

Each case is different and getting to know the family and the individual circumstances is crucial.

Where attendance cannot be improved through additional support e.g. clinical, educational support, individualisation of a time table or a transition back in to school after a long period of absence with direct interventions then the placement may be deemed at risk and will be monitored. The school will work closely with the family and any other agencies including the local authority to look at what the next steps for the child will be, it may be decided that the school placement is not suitable and the school will support a transition to another alternative placement e.g. hospital, mental health facility etc.

6.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a head teacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

> The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

Version:3
Implementation date: August 2023
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Page 6 of 9
Approved by:
Operations & Quality Team

> One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

> Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6.4 Children Missing Education

Aurora supports their commissioning Local Authorities who have a duty to identify any student who is of compulsory school age who is not receiving education by:

> Addressing poor or irregular attendance
> Referring poor attendance to the placing LA
> Investigating any unexplained absences as part of our wider safeguarding duties
> Keeping our admissions registers accurate and up-to-date
> Holding more than one emergency contact number for each student wherever possible
> Amending our registers as soon as changes to our roll are made
> Notifying the LA within 5 days if a student starts or leaves school at a non-standard transition point (for example, joining mid-year or leaving before your school's final year) and provide them with all the information held within the admission register about the student
> Ensuring staff receive safeguarding training which includes identifying who are most at risk of going missing from education with regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education
> Making reasonable enquiries and where necessary safeguarding referrals in line with local authority guidelines for students who aren't attending which applies to students who:

- Haven't returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, **or**

- Have been absent without authorisation for 20 consecutive days

Further guidance on CME can be found in the DfE statutory guidance Children missing education

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

Aurora employs a range of strategies to improve and reward attendance. These include but are not limited to:

> Providing a safe, engaging and caring environment which is conducive to learning through development of positive relationships and meeting of individual needs.
> The delivery of clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to students and families through regular communication and on admission and transition events
> Rewards for attendance and punctuality and sanctions for absence and lateness
> The monitoring of whole school data regularly to identify reasons for absence, patterns, attendance of particular groups and the impact of interventions
> Robust arrangements to identify, report and support children missing education (CME)
> Support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND)

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- The ongoing promotion of 'next lessons' and the sequence of lessons to motivate students to be in the classroom
- Prompt and consistent follow up on absence and lateness with students to identify barriers and reasons for absence
- Regular contact with parents and carers regarding absence and punctuality where concerns are identified
- Multi agency approaches to supporting students and their families with individual planning through robust reintegration/transition processes.

Local procedures outline any site specific strategies

8. Attendance monitoring

Our schools use a management information system to monitor student absence on a daily, weekly, monthly and termly basis. We use this to:

- Track the attendance of individual students
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support
- Report to placing local authorities
- Report to parents/carers

A student's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning before resgistration if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Where the school has not been informed of an absence they will ring the parent/carer after the register has closed if a student has not arrived to check on the reason for the absence or to check if the parent/carer is aware that their child has not arrived on site. If the school is not satisfied with the reason for the absence the safeguarding lead may make a home visit. Multiple absence and illness reports without evidence may trigger a safeguarding concern and home visit.

If a student's absence goes above a maximum of 10 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the student to discuss the reasons for this. They will also inform the Local Authority within this timescale or sooner as outlined in local procedures.

If a student's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the student will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Students' attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and Department for Education and other agencies if a student's attendance is a cause for concern. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the wider Aurora Group as part of governance. The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

Version:3
Implementation date: August 2023
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Page 8 of 9
Approved by:
Operations & Quality Team

Aurora

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 2 years by the Quality assurance team. At every review, the policy will be approved at the Senior Operations meeting.

10. Local Procedures

See separate 'Service Local Procedures' document **A6-Attendance Policy Local Procedures**