



Dame Alice Owen's School
The Dame Alice Owen Foundation - 1613

ATTENDANCE POLICY

(Statutory Policy)

Policy agreed by the Governing Body Curriculum Committee
To be reviewed
(every 2 years)

Spring 2021
Spring 2023

To be monitored by the Governing Body Curriculum Committee

Introduction

At Dame Alice Owen's School, we aim to encourage and assist all young people to reach outstanding levels of attendance and punctuality. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that only if children attend school regularly and punctually will they be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and achieve as well as they can. This correlation is borne out in our own data; at Dame Alice Owen's School, our level of attendance is higher than the national average, as are our results.

The Deputy Head, Pastoral, has responsibility for ensuring excellent attendance across the School.

The Department for Education's publication *The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4* published February 2015, p5 states "Specifically, students with no absence are 1.5 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*-C or equivalent and 2.8 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*-C or equivalent including English and Mathematics than students missing 15-20 per cent of KS4 lessons. The difference in achievement is also evident with the English Baccalaureate, where students with no absence are around 10.2 times more likely to achieve the English Baccalaureate than students missing 15-20 percent of KS4 lessons".

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412638/The_link_between_absence_and_attainment_at_KS2_and_KS4.pdf

Student attendance is categorised as follows

Grade	Excellent	Good	Poor	Cause for Concern
Percentage attendance	95 - 100%	92 - 95%	90-92%	85-90%
Number of days absent per term	3.5	5	6.5	10
Number of days absent per year	10.5	15	19.5	30

The government classifies students with attendance below 90% as ‘persistent absentees’. Whilst 90% may appear to seem a reasonable level of attendance to some, it means almost 20 lost teaching days over the year, which equates to 4 out of 39 weeks of lost learning.

The School aims to work in partnership with families and carers to promote and encourage excellent attendance.

Promoting Regular Attendance

How can parents help ensure their child’s excellent attendance?

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by sending their child to school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents can help with their child’s attendance by:

- Ensuring their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn; establishing a good routine in the morning and evening so that children are prepared for the school day ahead.
- Ensuring their child attends school regularly. Absence should only happen when a child is significantly ill and therefore unfit to attend school, or if there is an avoidable / unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing difficulty / period of difficulty.
- Ensure they are aware of the Attendance policy of the School.
- Impress on their child the need to observe the School's code of conduct.
- Taking truancy seriously - if a child is not attending school as expected are they putting themselves at risk - question them: Where are they? Who are they with? What have they been doing?
- Not taking family holidays during term time.
- Talking to their child about school and taking an interest in their school work.
- Attending Parents’ Evenings and school events.
- Working in partnership with the School to resolve any issues, which may lead to non-attendance.
- Praising and rewarding children’s achievements at school.
- Discussing problems or difficulties with the School - staff are there to help and support.

- Telephoning or emailing on the first morning of any absence to give the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school. To continue to contact the School on **each** day of absence.
- Arranging all non-emergency medical and dental appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.
- Providing medical evidence in the case of frequent absence.
- Providing appropriate medication to support their child's attendance at school.
- Keeping the School updated by telephone, email or letter if the child has any extended period of absence.
- Making sure we always have current contact numbers of parents; this includes all telephone numbers; child care arrangements and emergency contact details.

The School shall:

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls, emails and letters as necessary.
- Let parents know if the School has concerns regarding a child's attendance and punctuality.
- Work closely with parents/carers by telephone/face to face meetings to help improve a child's attendance.
- If we continue to have concerns, we may make a referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer.
- Support the attendance of students and deal with problems the School has been alerted to which could lead to non-attendance.
- Ensure registers are taken. These are legal documents which can be required as evidence in court cases.
- Through registers, carefully monitor attendance across the School at KS3 and KS4.
- Write 'at risk letters' to those families whose children run the risk of attaining below 90% attendance over two terms.
- Use a range of interventions to help support families with children who have difficulties with attendance.
- Work closely with outside agencies to support full attendance.

Types of Absence

Every half day absence is classified by the School as **authorised** or **unauthorised**. An absence can only be authorised by the School. It is not possible for a parent to authorise an absence.

An authorised absence are mornings or afternoons away from School for a good reason including but is not limited to:

- Illness;
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments;
- Religious observance;
- Emergencies.

Unauthorised absences are those that the School does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes but is not limited to:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy;
- Unexplained absence;

- Students arriving after 10am with no appropriate reason;
- Day trips and holidays taken without prior authorisation by the School.

Procedures

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure full attendance at school. If your child cannot avoid being absent then they will need to follow the procedure below:

- Inform the School Office by telephone (01707 643441) or email (attendance@damealiceowens.herts.sch.uk) by 9am on the first day of their child's absence from school and, where an absence goes beyond the first day, keep the School up to date regarding the absence **each day** by 9am.
- Where no advice of an absence is received, parents may expect the School to contact them on the first and every day of absence.
- Parents must provide an email upon the student's return giving reason for their absence. If no reason is given, the Attendance Officer will contact the parent/carers requesting the reason for absence.
- Provide medical evidence if the absence is longer than 5 consecutive school days, or when requested by the Attendance Officer.
- All absence notes are kept for at least a term. When a student's absence is a cause for concern the notes are to be retained until there is no longer a concern.
- Inform the School Office in advance of any medical appointments which could not be scheduled outside of school hours.
- Make any requests for any other type of absences that may be authorised e.g. religious festival, performing in music or drama events in reasonable time. Requests should be addressed to the Attendance Officer, who will consult the Pastoral Team.
- Please note requests for holidays are very strongly discouraged and will not normally be authorised. Requests can be made to the Deputy Head, Pastoral, who will consult with the Headteacher regarding any mitigating circumstances which may mean a holiday within school time should be considered.
- **Please note that requests for absence will not be authorised for students whose attendance falls below 95%.**

Lateness

- Students should attend school and remain in school attending all timetable lessons. This means that students should arrive in time for registration. In the case where buses and public transport have incurred delays resulting in the students being late to school, students should sign in at the School Office as soon as they arrive so they can be marked present.
- Students who have not been marked present by their form tutor are required to sign in at the Office. They will be asked to explain their late arrival when signing in.
- Avoidable lateness beyond 10.00 am constitutes unauthorised absence and can legally be the basis of an offence by the parent/carer.
- A distinction is drawn between students who arrive late but at the first reasonable opportunity, eg after a medical appointment or where there has been genuine transport difficulties and those who are unpunctual.
- Those who are late but who arrive before 10.00am will be counted as present and their attendance will be indicated by an 'L' in the register.

- If we believe the reason for lateness is not genuine, an entry will be made into the student's behaviour log. Please refer to the Positive Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Parents/carers whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the School at an early stage and work together with staff to resolve any problems. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the School or the parent may refer the child to the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who will also try to resolve the situation by working directly with the family and school. In some cases, a referral to another agency may be appropriate.
- If attendance remains poor over time following the School's work to improve it in collaboration with parents/carers and the formal involvement of the AIO, the AIO may use legal action.

Please refer to the Appendix for Covid-19 attendance related procedures.

Legal Action

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered students (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on the law and on Best Practice guidance produced by the DfE and the Local Authority. The School aims to work with families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However, in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if these absences continue.

Fixed Penalty Notice

If a child is absent from school without the necessary authorisation, the School can apply to the Local Authority, who will then issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The Penalty Notice requires a fine of £60 to be paid within 21 days. If this fine is not paid within the time limit the penalty rises to £120 which must be paid within 28 days.

If a parent is issued with a Penalty Notice it enables them to discharge their potential liability for an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 of failure to secure their child's regular attendance at school. If the fine is not paid they will be liable for prosecution for this offence.

Next steps

If a student, who is registered at a school, fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the School fail to secure that student's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action.

A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the student under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the student's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action.

'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the Local Authority. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' might include the death of a close relative, certain medically recognised conditions, awaiting SEN placement, specific child protection concerns, change of provision.

Legal proceedings can be considered at any stage if no progress has been made and no exceptional circumstances are deemed to exist.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the AIO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.

In cases where parents wilfully withhold a student from school, or persistently refuse to cooperate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Teams will begin legal proceedings promptly on the grounds that no other course of action is available. Local Authority will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced.

The Attendance Teams will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor behaviour. Education Supervision Orders will not usually be applied for in relation to students in Years 10 or 11.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- Other possible means of dealing with the student's poor attendance will be explored.
- The attitudes of the parent and student towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted.
- The Local Authority will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the student's attendance at school.

Appendix

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Attendance

As announced by The Prime Minister, a new national lockdown came into force on Wednesday 6th January 2021.

During the period of national lockdown, schools, alternative provision, special schools, and colleges will remain open to vulnerable students and young people and the children of critical workers only. All other students will learn remotely.

Vulnerable students include those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance, this might include:
 - children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services or in the process of being referred to children's services
 - adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
 - those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
 - those living in temporary accommodation
 - those who are young carers
 - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)

- care leavers
- others at the provider and local authority's discretion including students and students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

Children and young people who have been classed as [clinically extremely vulnerable due to pre-existing medical conditions](#) may have been advised to shield. Clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) people are those considered to be at a higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. Parents should follow medical advice if their child is in this category and inform the School of this as soon as possible.

Attendance Codes during National Lockdowns

Students learning remotely are coded in the school register with an X, indicating that they are not expected to attend school. All students attending school are recorded in the register with a present mark.

The school works with parents to consider whether their child is considered vulnerable (as per the above guidance) in order to make arrangements for that student to come into school. Once agreed, that student is expected to attend school as per the agreement made with the school and is marked as authorised absent (Code C), when they are not in school (term time only), except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining, which then is coded as an X. All other students within the above mentioned vulnerable categories who are learning remotely are marked as C in the school registers, as per government guidelines.

Parents are expected to contact the school as per the normal attendance reporting procedures if their child will not attend school on the agreed days their child is due to be in.

Parents of those students learning remotely are asked to email the school if their child is unwell (covid and non-covid related), has medical appointments etc. and so will miss any live lessons / affect their learning for that period of time, as per the normal attendance reporting procedures.

Children or young people should **not attend** school if they [have symptoms or are self-isolating due to symptoms in their household](#). Please read the section below titled "Symptoms".

Parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time. We aim to work with parents and other relevant partners to work with and support families and students to return to school when schools open for in school learning. Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, the government has relaxed the law so that the parent of a child of compulsory school age is not guilty of an offence on account of the child's failure to attend regularly at the School at which the child is registered (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

When schools resume for in school learning

In March 2020 when the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic was reaching its peak, the government made it clear that no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school. Circumstances then changed and the government made its expectation clear: once school's were opened for all students, it was vital for all children to return to school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks students falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to under achieve in both primary and secondary school. We expect School attendance to therefore be mandatory again when schools are allowed to open to wider groups of students. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- It is the parents' duty to ensure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- It is the schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence;
- The availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.

Students who are shielding or self-isolating

The government has advised that they now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there should be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of students will be able to return to school. However, it is noted that:

- a small number of students will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August. This means that even the small number of students who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the [current advice on shielding. The School is aware that it may be subject to change and therefore will continue to monitor government guidance.](#)
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, may be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below).
- some students no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school. More advice is available from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people.](#)

Absence can only be authorised by the School. The School expects parents/carers to contact the Attendance Officer to discuss their child's absence due to any of the points above. Where children are not able to attend school because parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

All other students of compulsory school age **must** be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence by the School, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc.). Parents/carers are reminded that they should follow the attendance procedures as set out in the School's Attendance Policy.

The School understands that there may be potential concerns of students, parents and households who may be anxious about returning and we welcome those parents to contact either the Attendance Officer or the Pastoral team to discuss these concerns. This may include students

who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

Symptoms

The most important symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If a student has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), however mild, OR has received a positive coronavirus (COVID-19) test result, the clear medical advice is to immediately self-isolate at home for at least 10 days from when symptoms started. Students should remain away from the School site for at least 10 days after the onset of illness/positive test. After 10 days, or longer, if the student still has symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste, they must continue to self-isolate until they feel better. Students may return to school after that time provided that they are temperature free for 48 hours. If the student has been in contact with someone with COVID-19 symptoms, they must self-isolate for at least 10 days.

If a student is presenting with COVID-19 symptoms at school, parents will be asked to collect their child without undue delay and ensure their child is isolating for the minimum period. Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

Parents/carers should:

- [book a test](#) if they/their child are displaying symptoms.
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they were to test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace
- [self-isolate](#) if they have been in close contact with someone who develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

Parents are expected to inform the School immediately of the results of a test so that the School can act accordingly to keep others safe:

- if someone tests negative, if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating. They could still have another virus, such as a cold or flu - in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until they are better. Other members of their household can stop self-isolating.
- if someone tests positive, they should follow the [‘stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection’](#) and must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 10-day period starts

from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal. Other members of their household should continue self-isolating for the full 10 days.

Parents should notify the School of absences as per the procedures set out in the Attendance Policy. In order for the School to carry out any necessary risk assessments parents will be asked to provide clear confirmation whether the student is absent due to

- personally having COVID-19 symptoms
- has been in contact with someone else who has COVID-19 symptoms
- has been advised to shield.

If the School is made aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), we will seek advice from the local health protection team. This team will also contact the School directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended the School - as identified by NHS Test and Trace.

The health protection team will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.

Based on the advice from the health protection team, the School will send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 10 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious. Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person.

The health protection team will provide definitive advice on who must be sent home. Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the child, young person or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a class or group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within their 10-day isolation period they should follow [‘stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection’](#). They should get a test, and:

- if the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 10-day isolation period. This is because they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days.
- if the test result is positive, they should inform the School immediately, and must isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms.. Their household should self-isolate for at least 10 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms or if asymptomatic, 10 days from the date of test following [‘stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection’](#)

Further guidance is available on [testing and tracing for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

If the School has two or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, there may be an indication of an outbreak, and the School will continue to work with the local health protection team and follow their advice and guidance of any additional action required.

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