



**Alder Community
High School**

School Attendance Matters

**Information for Parents and
Carers**

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why we always ask for information about the cause of any absence students have from school; we have to make a decision based on the reason given.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for an acceptable reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. The types of absence that would be unauthorised include:

- Parents/carers keeping children 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 (after 9.45am)
- Shopping, looking after other children, hair appointments or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed prior to the absence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school for a number of reasons. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend please contact the school immediately as we want to support your child and by bringing issues to our attention we can work with you to resolve them. Condoning time away from school will not make the situation any better and gives the impression that school attendance does not matter

Absence procedure:

If your child is absent please:

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note of explanation in to school with your child when they return. This is required as a follow up to the phone call you will have already made;
- If you need to speak to somebody in further detail about the absence please contact Mrs Hulmes, Attendance Officer or your child's Progress Leader.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if you have not already made contact;
- If absences persist a number of actions may be taken including:
 - discussing the situation with the student in school
 - sending letters home
 - inviting parents/carers into school to discuss the situation
 - home visits carried out by a member of the pastoral team
 - parents/carers invited to attend an Governor's Attendance Panel Meeting
 - an application for the issue of Penalty Notices
 - other legal interventions

Punctuality:

Poor punctuality is disruptive to the school day, to the education of the child who is late and also to that of the other students. School commences at 8.20am and students have until 8.25am to be in their form rooms to register before being marked late. The register is officially closed at **9.45am** and in accordance with the Regulations, anybody who arrives after that time will receive a mark that shows that they are on site. However it will not count as a present mark and will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This means that as a parent, you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued if the problem persists.

Holidays in term time:

The Department for Education (DfE) announced important amendments to legislation surrounding holidays in term time that came into effect from the 1st September 2013. The new law gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

Please note the following:

- Any application for leave of absence from school must only be in exceptional circumstances and must be made in writing to the Headteacher
- The Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of leave
- There is no predefined criteria and exceptional circumstances are considered on an individual basis
- If leave is authorised, the Headteacher will agree the number of days
- We would not class any term time holiday as exceptional
- If parents take their child/children on holiday without consent from school, the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice fine

Telephone numbers:

There are times when members of staff need to contact a child's parent, this could be in an emergency or to discuss a variety of school related issues. Therefore it is extremely important to ensure that we always have an up to date number for a responsible adult.

School targets, projects and initiatives:

The school sets targets to improve overall attendance and reduce the number of persistent absentees. Everybody within the school community has a part to play.

As a school we would expect a student to achieve a minimum of **95%** attendance. Each half term an information letter is sent to all parents including a copy of their child's register so they are able to track attendance and highlight any concerns.

Good attendance is acknowledged each half term with certificates and reward assemblies and attendance is one of the factors taken into account when students are being considered for the reward trips which are organised once a term.

Throughout the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to establish where improvements need to be made and take action as necessary.

Legal Interventions:

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work together with staff to resolve any potential attendance problems, we will offer a lot of support and do what we can to ensure that your child is happy and settled at our school. If attendance concerns persist with no medical justification, then the school will have a duty to consider legal intervention.

- School will refer to the Local Authority to request the issue of Penalty Notices in accordance with the Tameside Code of Practice and the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) 2004.
- School will gather evidence for legal action which will be taken against parents or carers if intervention strategies have been unsuccessful and it is considered that prosecution may bring about improvement in the student's school attendance.
- Applications will be made for Education Supervision Orders (ESOs) where appropriate. An ESO will be considered before initiating proceedings against a parent for an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty Notices:

Section 444 (A) of the Education Act 2004 empowers the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance. When a student has at least 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence from school, we have to notify the Authority and this may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice fine of £60.00 (per child, per parent), which must be paid within 21

days. If payment is made after 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty is increased to £120.00. Where a fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter will be referred to the Borough Solicitor, who will consider instigating criminal proceedings. Reasons not to authorise absence include:

- Holidays taken in term time without school's authorisation
- Persistent lateness where a student arrives after 9.45am
- Absence from school when no contact has been made by a parent or carer to give reason
- An unacceptable reason being given for absence
- Ongoing absence for minor ailments

In addition to your child's Form Tutor and Progress Leader, you may also have contact with the following staff regarding your child's school attendance:

Mrs Hulmes – Attendance Support Assistant

Mrs Gallagher – Attendance Support Assistant

Miss Rachel Lee – Senior Leader Safeguarding