	AAT ATTENDANCE POLICY		
	Last reviewed: July 2019	Next Review: July 2020	Approved by Committee Nov 2019

The Alban Academies Trust believes that setting high expectations for all children will allow them to develop academically and emotionally.

PRINCIPLES

The Trust will:

- Improve the overall percentage attendance of students at school;
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents, teachers and governors;
- Develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks;
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students;
- Develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data;
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school;
- Promote effective partnerships with the Hertfordshire ISL Attendance Team (Hertfordshire LEA attendance service) and with other services and agencies;
- Recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

TRUST ARRANGEMENTS

The Alban Academies Trust ensures that in all their Schools:

- The Headteacher will be responsible for the implementation and the day-to-day management of the policy
- A designated member of Senior Leadership, with responsibility for student attendance and punctuality, will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the attendance management, tracking and intervention systems, provide regular reviews to their SLT and an annual report to the designated governing body committee as well as calendared updates to the AAT
- Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, will be responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures are followed and consistently and fairly applied
- Parents and carers will take responsibility for the attendance and punctuality of their child, in line with their legal obligations. They will be encouraged to work in partnership with the school
- Students will be expected to take responsibility for their own attendance and punctuality and will be made fully aware of the school policy, procedures and expectations

PARENT/CARERS RESPONSIBILITIES

- Parents/carers have a legal duty for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance
- Parents/carers are responsible for informing the school of the reason for any absence (by letter, phone call or personal visit) on the morning of any absence
- Parents/carers can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's progress
- Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their children stay at school once they have registered

AUTHORISED/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

- The Headteacher of a school decides whether an absence will be authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the student to be away, or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory. Parents may not authorise absence, only the school can do this. Should staff have reason to doubt that the explanation offered about a particular absence is genuine, the absence should be treated as unauthorised. This decision must be made and communicated to parents by the school.
- Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:
 - Sickness (may require medical evidence)
 - Medical/dental appointments
 - Days of religious observance
 - Exceptional family circumstances – bereavement

Note: The AAT emphasises to parents that all medical/dental appointments should be made outside school hours.

- Absence from school will not be authorised for:
 - Holidays
 - Unsatisfactory explanations (e.g. shopping, minding the house etc)
 - Caring for sick siblings or parents
 - Birthdays

PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Persistent absence (PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a PA if their attendance is less than 90%, regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised.

RESPONSE TO ABSENCE

The AAT operates a 'Response to absence' system in each school. Any student who is registered as absent without an adequate explanation will receive a communication to their parents/carers to report that their child is not at school. It is the parent/carers' responsibility to ensure they call the absence line to report any absence before the start of the school day.

TRUANCY

Truancy is recorded as an unauthorised absence. A number of systems are put in place to inform students that this behaviour is unacceptable. Parents will always be informed and an appropriate sanction will be put in place. A record will be made for the student's file. Through investigation, if necessary, support will be offered to the student who has truanted from a lesson.

Spot attendance checks are made regularly. These may focus on a particular year group if there is a concern. All information will be fed back to the Head of Year and ultimately to the Senior Leader in charge of attendance.

LOCAL AUTHORITY ATTENDANCE OFFICER

The fundamental purpose of the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO) is to maximise attendance rates for individual pupils, individual schools and for the county of Hertfordshire as a whole and to discharge the County Council's legal duty to ensure that all pupils of compulsory school age are in receipt of suitable education. LAAOs will also assist in removing barriers which may prevent a child receiving education.

Referrals to the LAAO will be made by a school once it feels it has exhausted all other avenues to improve attendance.

In conjunction with the AAT Attendance Improvement Officer the governors reserve the right to consider requesting Herts County Council to take legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school.

Under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007, schools are empowered to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to the parent/carer of a child who has irregular school attendance, where the absence is unauthorised by the school. Fixed Penalty Notices are an alternative to prosecution. As long as the fine is paid they do not require the parent/carer to appear in court and no criminal record is incurred. An assessment of the circumstances will take place before a Fixed Penalty Notice is served. Parents will receive a warning letter advising that if unauthorised absences total 15 or more half day sessions the school will apply to Hertfordshire ISL Attendance Team for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued.

However the authorising officer, (the Head of the Attendance service) has the discretion to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice for a first offence in exceptional circumstances

A fixed Penalty notice imposes a fine of £60 (per child) to each parent/carer if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid within 28 days, the parent/carer may be prosecuted in a Magistrates Court for the offence under S.444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE/PUNCTUALITY

In the belief that all students are more likely to attend regularly if the teaching and learning is of a high standard and the curriculum meets their needs, we will ensure that in each academy:

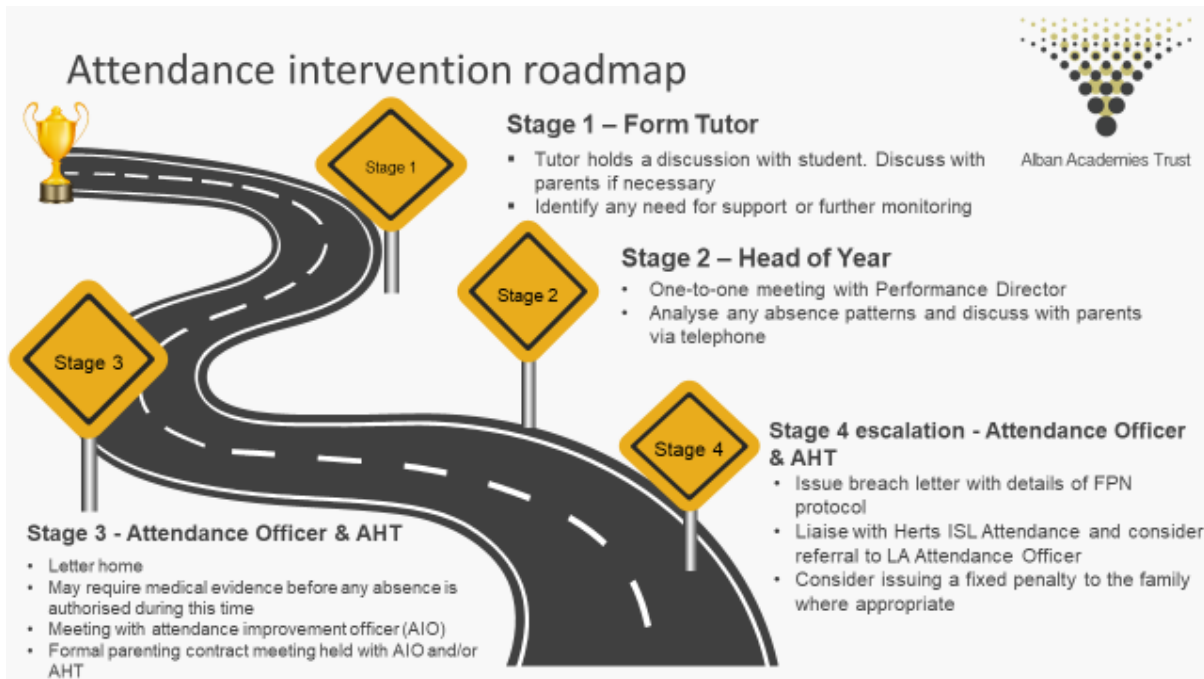
- The curriculum will be monitored and developed to meet the needs of all students
- Attendance statistics will be collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices. These will be shared with senior colleagues regularly
- The school will offer rewards to students whose attendance/punctuality is either excellent or much improved
- Students whose attendance falls beneath 90% will be set targets for improvement. These targets will be regularly reviewed by the AAT Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)
- Regular structured meetings will be held with the AAT Attendance Improvement Officer in order to identify and support those students whose attendance/punctuality is a source of concern
- Parents will be kept regularly and fully informed of all concerns around attendance and punctuality

- Annual reports will be made by the relevant senior leader to the governing body on the issue of attendance/punctuality
- Ensure information for a summative AAT report will be shared at specific calendared data points for presentation at AAT committee meetings
- Students will be regularly reminded of the importance and value of good attendance
- Students who have been absent for any extended period of time will be re-integrated back into school through a structured and individually-tailored programme
- All issues which may cause a student to experience attendance difficulties will be promptly investigated

‘IN SCHOOL ACTION’

How can it be used?

- The diagram below App.1 (AAT road map) suggests a process of in-school action that may lead to an improvement in attendance. It is suggested that this road map be followed by schools within the AAT
- It is recommended that intervention begins with the tutor, and progresses to involve Heads of Year, and Senior Staff if appropriate.
- If all attempts have proved unsuccessful the AAT Attendance Improvement Officer will work with the student and family to improve attendance. An Attendance Improvement Plan will be put in place to set targets and monitor progress made in order to achieve them.



Stage 1

All interventions in this stage are led by the **form tutor**.

- Discussion to be had with student about their absence
- If the reason for absence is unclear or unexplained then a phone call to parents/carers should be made
- If further support is needed for this student or closer monitoring required, this should be raised with the Head of Year swiftly



Stage 2

All interventions in this stage are led by the Head of Year.

- One-to-one meeting with student
- Head of Year to analyse any trends in absence (e.g. particular days or times) and concerns recorded
- A phone call to parents/carers is made to discuss concerns and strategies to improve attendance



Stage 3

All interventions in this stage are led by the AAT Attendance Improvement Officer with the support and guidance of the senior member of staff in charge of student attendance and punctuality.

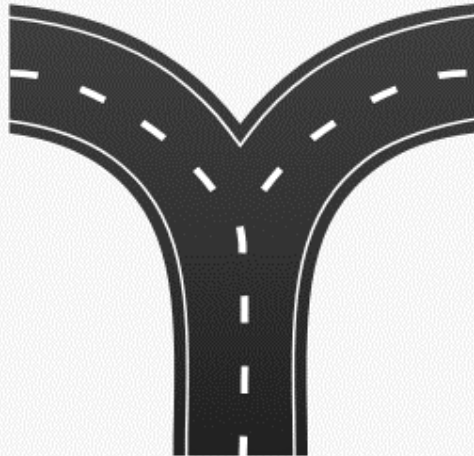
- Attendance concern letter is sent home to parents/carers
- May require medical evidence before any further absence is authorised
- Student will have a meeting or series of meetings with AIO where a meeting record form will be completed
- Parents/carers are met with and an attendance improvement plan agreed
- Parents/carers verbally reminded of their legal obligations and potential consequences of their son/daughter's attendance not improving



Stage 4 escalation

If attendance has not improved then school will need to decide whether to monitor the student's attendance for a further period of time, or to make a referral to the Herts ISL Attendance Team to consider this as an open case to them.

If at any point during the process parents/carers appear to disengage (i.e. do not attend meetings or are unwilling to rearrange meetings); the case can be referred to the Herts ISL Attendance Team at an earlier stage. If parents/carers decide to engage with the Herts ISL Attendance Team, the case may be sent back to the school to process.



Stage 4 Fixed Penalty Notice Guidelines

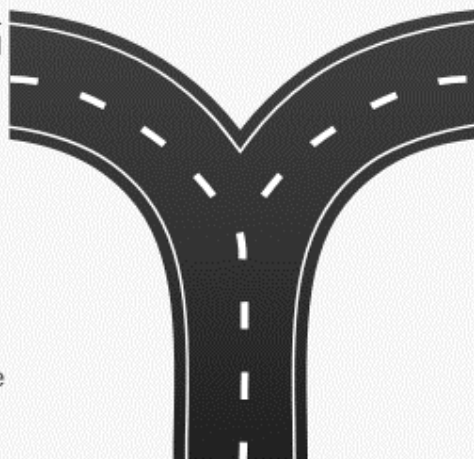
Fixed penalty notices (FPN) can only be issued after a student has 15 or more sessions of **unauthorised absence** (7.5 days). A letter breach letter must be sent to **all parents with parental responsibility**. The letter must be sent individually to **each parent** via **1st class** post. An appropriate timeframe must be given for attendance to improve before HCC can issue a FPN.

HCC administrates the fixed penalty notice. A fixed penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid with 21 days or £120 if paid with 21-28 days. Payment is made directly to HCC and not the school or MAT.

Should the fixed penalty notice not be paid, then HCC will look to prosecute the parent/carer Under Section 444 (1)/(1a) of The Education Act:

Offence: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil.

(1) If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.



Monitoring Absences

- Daily absence reports will be sent to all teaching staff each day. This will be compiled by the attendance administration team.
- Form and year group attendance statistics will be emailed to Heads of Year and Senior Leaders every week.
- Form tutors, Heads of A tracker detailing students with poor attendance (<94%) will be compiled by the attendance administrator and emailed to all form tutors, Heads of Year, AIO and Senior Staff on a set basis. All students on this list will then fall into the aforementioned intervention categories.
- Year, AIO and Senior Staff will make notes of their intervention(s) on the tracker.