



AAT ATTENDANCE POLICY

Last reviewed: November 2021

Next Review: November 2023

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

1 PRINCIPLES

The Trust will:

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

2 TRUST ARRANGEMENTS

This policy has been developed at Trust level and therefore covers policy that is relevant and followed by all the schools within the Alban Academies Trust. The appendices contain specific school level documents and details of any differing procedures if applicable and relevant to this policy.

The AAT ensures that in all its schools:

- 2.1 The Headteacher will be responsible for the implementation and the day-to-day management of the policy
- 2.2 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 senior team and an annual report to the designated governing board committee as well as calendared updates to the AAT
- 2.3 Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, will be responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures are followed and consistently and fairly applied
- 2.4 Parents and carers will take responsibility for the attendance and punctuality of their child, in line with with their legal obligations. They will be encouraged to work in partnership with the school

2.5 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

3 DEFINITIONS - AUTHORISED/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

3.1 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.

3.2 Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- 3.2.1 Sickness (may require medical evidence)
- 3.2.2 Medical/dental appointments
- 3.2.3 Days of religious observance
- 3.2.4 Exceptional family circumstances – bereavement

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

3.4 Absence from school will not be authorised for:

- 3.4.1 Holidays
- 3.4.2 Unsatisfactory explanations (e.g. shopping, minding the house etc)
- 3.4.3 Caring for sick siblings or parents
- 3.4.4 Birthdays

3.5 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.

4 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 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.

4.2 Parents/carers have a legal duty for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance

4.3 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

4.4 Parents/carers can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's progress

4.5 Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their children stay at school once they have registered

4.6 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.

- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 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.
 - 4.8.1 Referrals to the LAAO will be made by a school once it feels it has exhausted all other avenues to improve attendance.
- 4.9 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.
- 4.10 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.
 - 4.10.1 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
 - 4.10.2 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 Magistrate Court for the offence under S.444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

5. MONITORING AND REPORTING

- 5.1 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 school:
 - 5.1.1 The curriculum will be monitored and developed to meet the needs of all students
 - 5.1.2 Attendance statistics will be collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices. These will be shared with senior colleagues regularly
 - 5.1.3 The school will offer rewards to students whose attendance/punctuality is either excellent or much improved
 - 5.1.4 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)

- 5.1.5 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
- 5.1.6 Parents will be kept regularly and fully informed of all concerns around attendance and punctuality
- 5.1.7 Annual reports will be made by the relevant senior leader to the local governing body on the issue of attendance/punctuality
- 5.1.8 Information for a summative AAT report will be shared at specific calendared data points for presentation at AAT committee meetings
- 5.1.9 Students will be regularly reminded of the importance and value of good attendance
- 5.1.10 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
- 5.1.11 All issues which may cause a student to experience attendance difficulties will be promptly investigated

6 EVALUATION AND REVIEW

- 6.1 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. Please note, there is a road map for each phase (secondary and primary).
- 6.2 It is recommended that intervention is underpinned by a hierarchical approach that begins in the classroom and escalates as appropriate
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 The diagram below App.1 will be reviewed along with procedures which underpin this policy biennially.

ATTENDANCE INTERVENTION ROADMAP



Class Teacher/Attendance Administrator

- Class teacher alerts school office if child is absent and reason not known.
- Office calls parents/ carers to ascertain nature of absence and encourage child to be brought in if appropriate.
- Reasons for absence recorded.
- Liaise with juniors re: sibling attendance
- Any absences of concern are recorded on CPOMs.



Headteacher/INCO (with support of Attendance Administrator)

- Review under 90% attenders every half term.
- Look at any absence trends/recorded concerns and strategies to improve attendance.
- Letter to parents/carers inviting them for a meeting with the Head and SENCO to discuss concerns/strategies for improvement.
- Work with the family- offer pastoral support to encourage improved attendance.
- Offer Parent/Carer meeting with Health, Ed Psych, Family Support workers, Social Workers



Headteacher/Herts AIO

- After four week review period, letter to parent stating improvement or if not involve AIO.
- If Parent/ Carer refusing to cooperate with all supportive measures, school will involve Herts AIO
- Medical evidence may be required before any absence can be authorised.
- School follows CME protocol to ensure no child goes missing. Records kept in CPOMs.



Herts CC AIO & Headteacher

- If 15 unauthorised sessions reached, parent sent breach letter with details of FPN protocol
- Liaise with Herts ISL Attendance and consider referral to LA Attendance Officer
- Consider issuing a fixed penalty to the family where appropriate

* Introduce Pastoral Support Plan where child's needs dictate they cannot attend fulltime.

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.

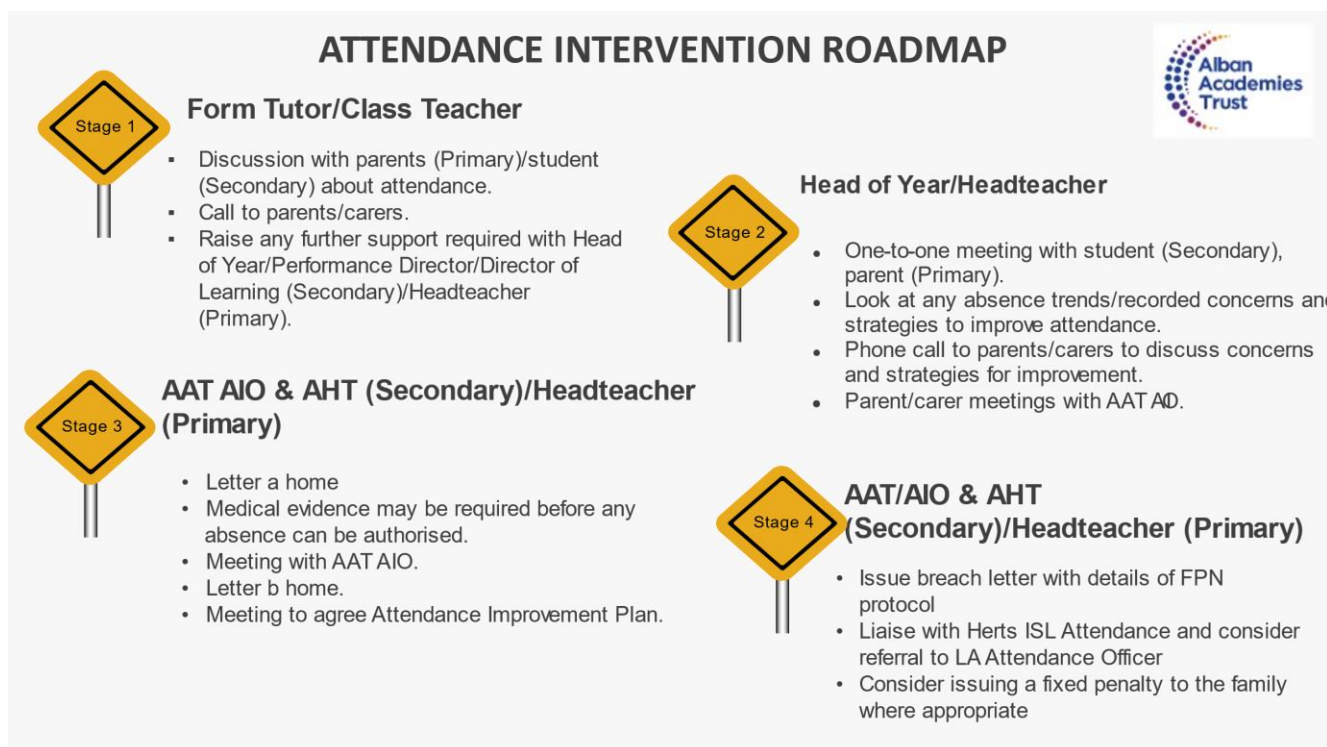
HCC administrates the fixed penalty notice. A fixed penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid with 21 days or £120 if paid with 21-28 days. Payment is made directly to HCC and not the school or MAT.

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.





STAGE 1

FORM TUTOR (Secondary)/Class Teacher (Primary): Leads all interventions at this stage.

1. Discussion with student (secondary) /parent (primary) about their absence.
2. Phone call home to parents if reason for absence is unclear/unexplained.
3. Raise with Head of Year (secondary)/Headteacher (primary) if further support/closer monitoring is required.



STAGE 2

HEAD OF YEAR (secondary)/Headteacher (primary) : Leads all interventions at this stage.

1. One-to-one meeting with student (secondary)/parent/carer (primary).
2. Analyse any absence trends (e.g. days/times) and concerns that have been recorded.
3. Phone call to parents/carers to discuss concerns and strategies to improve attendance.



STAGE 3

AAT ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT OFFICER : Leads all interventions at this stage with support/guidance of AHT (secondary) /Headteacher (primary).

1. 1a letter home.
2. Medical evidence may be required before further absence can be authorised.
3. Student(secondary)/Parent (primary) meetings with AAT Attendance Improvement Officer.
4. 1b Letter home (Issued by School Attendance Officer).
5. Meeting to agree Attendance Improvement Plan with student (secondary) and parents/carers (to be reviewed on a 4 weekly basis).
6. Parents/carers reminded of their legal obligations and the potential consequences of their son/daughter's attendance not improving.



STAGE 4

AAT ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT OFFICER : Leads all interventions at this stage with support/guidance of Assistant Head Teacher.

If attendance has not improved on Attendance Improvement Plan, school will need to decide whether to monitor attendance for a further period of time, make a referral to the Herts ISL Attendance Team or to proceed with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If at any point during the process, parents/carers appear to disengage, (i.e. do not attend meetings/are unwilling to attend meetings), the case can be referred to Herts ISL Attendance Team at an earlier stage.



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



- Attendance Officer - Daily absence reports in spreadsheet form sent to all teaching staff each day.
- Heads of Year, Senior Leaders and AAT AIO to monitor attendance statistics on BromCom on a weekly basis.

Attendance Tracker (found on Pastoral Hub)



- Attendance Officer - inputs data to Attendance Tracker detailing students with poor attendance (less than 94%) and emails it to Form Tutors, HOY, AAT AIO and senior staff every 3 weeks.
- Senior member of staff responsible for attendance meets with AIO every 3 weeks and allocates a stage of intervention, for each student that has been flagged by the tracker as having attendance less than 94%, on a drop down menu.
- Each member of staff records their interventions on the Attendance Tracker.
- HOY to meet with AAT AIO fortnightly