



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Date Last Reviewed: January 2018
Reviewed by: Headteacher
Approved by: Management Committee Feb.08.18
Next Review Due: January 2019

'Achieving regular attendance in Aspire is key to improving life chances of our students. Our students deserve to be on equal footing when they leave Aspire and so require the highest level of access, attendance, and engagement with quality educational opportunities.'

The overall school target for Rotherham Aspire is 75%. Further Breakdown for each centre is as follows

Rawmarsh- 90%
Hutton Park/ Herringthorpe- 70%
Catcliffe- 70%

National PRU average attendance is 68%.

1. INTRODUCTION

At Rotherham Aspire, safeguarding our students is always our foremost priority and we ensure our values and principles supporting attendance reflect this. We care passionately about our pupils understanding the importance of attendance in supporting reengagement in learning. Our learners are consistently those who are acutely disengaged from education and historically hold very poor records of attendance. At Rotherham Aspire we understand the importance of committing ourselves to the continual monitoring of attendance. We understand that our students need a high level of support and monitoring in order to build and sustain improvements in these areas. Rotherham Aspire actively pursues every young person where attendance is a barrier to their education and we do this on a daily basis through telephone calls, home visits and multiagency working. If we experience a period of 5 sessions consecutive days non-attendance then a home visit will be conducted to ensure a young person is safe and well. Additionally this visit will also be used to identify any attendance concerns that need to be discussed with parent/carer and young person.

'No single professional can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action'

Keeping Children Safe in Education - September 2016.

Aspire will ensure:

- **All staff understands their role in ensuring good attendance and punctuality.**
- **Regular attendance monitoring by the admin/ tutor/ teacher/ Assistant Heads**
- **Students with poor attendance and/or punctuality are supported thoroughly through a re-engagement package**
- **Referral procedures and challenged through Aspire. Students with good and rapidly improving attendance and/or punctuality are recognized and rewarded.**
- **Students and their parent/carers are made aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality and are informed of the consequences when it is not.**

Rotherham Aspire has a newly established working relationship with Early Help Services via a half day management placement within the PRU on a weekly basis. Rotherham Aspire works with colleagues to identify any young person that would benefit from Early Help interventions/support this includes a reluctance to engage in education. Our systems around this co-working relationship allow us to ensure an additional level of support is appropriately offered to families in order to best support a period of non-attendance. Regular and punctual school attendance is encouraged via our attendance systems and processes as we understand a positive attitude to this plays an important role in ensuring that all children have access to a full curriculum where valuable learning hours are not lost

2. WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS CRITICAL

In order for our children to make progress both socially and academically they must be at school! Any absence affects the pattern of a child or young person's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning and progress- for many of our students mainstream school has failed and there may be significant gaps in learning or barriers to it. Time spent with specialist staff to support attendance is crucial and will help increase confidence and maximize learning opportunities. Any child or young person's absence allows for further disengagement from learning and effects life chances.

Rotherham Aspire expects that students will be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

3. TO ENCOURAGE EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE, THE ASPIRE WILL:

- Communicate with parents daily- via text message or a phonecall.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on how their child is performing at Aspire through half termly progress meetings where their attendance and punctuality is discussed and how this relates to their attainment and progress.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and centre achievements.
- Always recognize attendance from the students' own starting point.
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates and rewards.
- Listen to students and parents/ carers to make necessary adjustments to support improvement.
- Involve outside agencies to offer further support to our young people

4. PARENTS/CARERS

We encourage an open dialogue with parents about attendance as this helps to identify areas of concern. We always feel that regular absence problems are best resolved between Aspire, the parents/carer and the child.

If a child is reluctant to attend then we advise parents and carers not to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives an impression that attendance does not matter and may make an ongoing attendance issue worse.

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence and in extreme cases of persistent absence we may refer onto colleagues within the Local Authority for support and if needed a fixed penalty notice.

Parents/carers have a legal duty to send their children to school regularly and risk prosecution if they fail in this duty. Aspire can only, within the context of the law, can approve absence.

Parents/carers cannot approve absence.

Parents/carers should attempt to arrange appointments for their child or young person outside normal school hours whenever possible. When the appointment is local, the student will be expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment.

Parents are expected to contact Aspire at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may invite the parents to an Attendance Review Meeting in order to try and resolve the situation by agreement. However if other ways of improving the child's attendance have failed, the school may then refer the case to the Local Authority and Access to Education Officers can use Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) or court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) Fixed penalty notices can be issued by the Local Authority for the following reasons:

- Unauthorised leave of absence,
 - Holidays in term time,
 - Persistent late arrivals (after the register has closed),
- Excluded pupils found in public places during school hours (during the first 5 days of an exclusion),
- Poor attendance of 10 or more sessions within a term (if attendance is less than 90% in a 6 week period),

5. STUDENTS

Each student must ensure that they arrive promptly. At every site school opens from 9.15. Students are expected to be in Aspire by 9.30am and students are expected to be in learning by 9.30. Students who currently have targeted intervention programmes/ induction phases will have very personalised timetables and they are expected to adhere to those times.

Permission to leave the site will normally only be given for fixed term exclusion, or authorised medical/dental appointments.

Students are required to sign out if they leave site for a mentoring session or their provision is offsite to an external provider.

All students must sign out at reception and obtain an Authorised Absence Slip, which gives proof of their authorisation to be off-site.

6. REGISTERS

Registers are legal documents and must be taken clearly and accurately, using the correct symbols/codes.

Registers are currently taken for morning and afternoon sessions. They are inputted by administration staff, these should be complete by 10.30 am and 1.15pm.

A new system being introduced in January 2017 will change the way students are registered.

7. PROCEDURES/ ASSISTANT HEADS

The Assistant Heads will meet weekly (Tues am) with staff to monitor the attendance and punctuality of all students, this happens after weekly line management meetings with Head where students are discussed and identified. This overview will identify any attendance problems and students who are at risk of persistent absence; in addition they will check teachers concerns about attainment

They must discuss attendance issues with all staff to share information.

Where attendance is a cause for concern, the Assistant Headteachers will ensure that

- a. First day phone calls have been made and recorded on SIMS**
- b. Rang home personally and recorded on SIMS conversations after 6 periods of consecutive absence**
- c. Ensure safe and well checks have been completed after 6 periods of consecutive absence**
- d. Ensure that letters have been sent (appendix 1)**
- e. Considered and discussed Attendance Panel Review**
- f. Made an early help referral if student falls below 75%**

8. TEACHING STAFF (TEACHERS AND TUTORS)

Subject teachers/ tutors must always follow up suspicious absences by informing the Assistant Head of any discrepancies immediately. They should query persistent or frequent absences from their lesson to offer any further support.

If staff delivering lessons have an unexpected free period due to non attendance (which is not PPA) they must inform their AH who will direct them to support attendance/ any staff will be deployed to do home visits when appropriate.

Subject teachers will attempt to support students who have been absent to re-build relationships/ self esteem/ confidence. All staff will always welcome student into their lessons/ centre's in a positive way to BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS.

9. MENTOR TEAM- SAFE AND WELL

Where 6 periods of consecutive absence have occurred (3 days) **Assistant Heads** will allocate **Mentors** to complete a Safe and Well check. This is to ensure that appropriate Safeguarding measures are conducted to ensure a young person is safe and well. Additionally this visit will also be used to identify any attendance concerns which need to be addressed with the parent/carer and young person.

Should the school staff member not be granted permission to enter the home or parents/carers are out, a calling card will be issued each time, indicating our concerns and requesting a parent/carer to contact the Aspire. Where appropriate other professionals will be contacted and this will be logged on SIMS.

Where attendance is below 75% (school target) an Early Help referral will be made by the **mentor** allocated to the student.

10. ILLNESS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

If a student becomes genuinely unwell during the **Assistant Head** will make the decision as to whether or not the student can go home, admin staff will contact parents/carers directly.

No student should leave the premises for such arising medical reasons without staff permission (based on whether contact has been made with a parent/carer at home).

11. ABSENCE PROCEDURE

On the first day of a student's absence, parents/carers should contact Aspire to report the absence. This should be done by a telephone call to reception and at the earliest opportunity, giving a reason for the absence and a date when the child or young person is expected to return. **Admin** staff should log this on SIMS and inform the **Assistant Headteacher**.

If an acceptable reason for absence is given and accepted by the **Assistant Headteacher** the absence may be marked **authorised**. The Assistant Head is under no obligation to accept the reason given for absence if there is doubt of its validity.

Where appropriate, parents/carers regularly identifying poor health as a reason for their child or young person's absence will be asked to provide **a medical certificate from their GP. If a student is considered Persistently Absent, no absence will be granted without a medical record from the health professional.**

If the absence involves physical injury, with implications upon the student's return to the Aspire a risk assessment will be carried out by the Assistant Head for each specific case.

12. UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised Absence - Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, evidenced medical/dental appointments, emergencies or other unavoidable causes, which unavoidably fall in school time. These are allowed by law, such as:

- Illness
- Religious observance

Unauthorised Absence - Unauthorised absences are those which legislation does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority, through its Attendance Service (AS), using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children or young people off school.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Students who arrive at school too late to get a mark in the register.
- Shopping.
- Looking after other children.
- Birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.
- Excessive illness without medical evidence.
- Waiting for a delivery.
- Taking or collecting a relative to/from the airport.
- Sleeping in after a late night.
- Parent/carer's illness.
- Prolonged or repeated patterns for absence due to illness without a medical note from the GP.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) - A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' **when** their attendance falls to 90% or below for whatever reason.

Term Dates	PA = 90% Sessions per term	PA=90% Days per term
Half Term 1 – Sept to Oct	7 sessions	3.5 days absence
Half Term 2 – Nov to Dec	14 sessions	7 days absence
Half Term 3 – Jan to Feb	20 sessions	10 days absence
Half Term 4 – Feb to April	25 sessions	12.5 days absence
Half Term 5 – May to June	31 sessions	15.5 days absence
Half Term 6 – June to July	38 sessions	19 days absence

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child or young person's educational prospects and we need parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

13.SUPPORTING AND ENCOURAGING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Whilst any child or young person may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the Aspire the parents/carers and the child or young person. If a child or young person is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse. Parents/carers can support students by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times.

- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before.
- Providing a healthy breakfast.
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly to the school.
- Retaining open and honest communication with the child or young person's school.
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive).

14. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Aspire are no longer able to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time. The Principal may not grant any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any student absent during term time, unless granted by the Principal because of exceptional circumstances, will be recorded as **unauthorised absence**.

All requests for leave of absence should be in writing to the Headteacher and will be evaluated on an individual basis taking into account individual circumstances. The request for leave of absence form can be obtained from student reception and must be returned to Student Reception.

15. STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Good attendance is rewarded through the award of certificates/letters home for excellent and improved attendance from the starting points. This keeps attendance high profile amongst staff and students. Morning Routines can be used to present certificates.

16. ANALYSING AND REPORTING ATTENDANCE DATA

The Attendance Officer and Assistant House Managers review attendance on a daily basis and monitor this continually, producing reports every half term. All teachers should look out for any patterns in absence and investigate or report their concerns to the student's House Manager as appropriate. If a student's attendance level drops below 95% the cause will be investigated by the Lead Attendance Officer/House Manager who will liaise with parents/carers. If there is no improvement, an Internal Referral will be made to the Attendance Officer.

17. MONITORING ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY AT OFF SITE PROVISION

Where students attend external provision, we receive weekly Registration Certificates from the external providers. These are monitored and any concerns reported to the Attendance Officer/Senior Leadership Team.

18. FIXED TERM PENALTY NOTICE

Reducing unauthorised absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a student's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Truancing can also leave a student vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Under existing legislation, parents/ carers commit an offence if a child or young person fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (absences without a valid reason).

Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under the Education Act 1996.

A Fixed Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court. Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice enables parents/carers to discharge what is potentially the liability for a criminal conviction.

The penalty is £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days of receiving a notice and £120 if paid after this but within 28 days.

As a parent/carer you are committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child or young person attends school regularly, even if they are missing school without your knowledge.

As a parent/carer you can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that your child or young person attends school regularly. You may also be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 allow Local Authorities to issue penalty notices for certain offences. These notices can be used as an alternative to prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction of that offence by paying a penalty. The Local Authority is authorised to act under the Code of Conduct issued under The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) to ensure the consistent, fair and transparent application of the policy regarding penalty notices throughout the City.

The Local Authority may issue a penalty notice of £60 per parent per child to be paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale the penalty will increase to £120. If the higher penalty is not paid within 28 days, parents/carers may be prosecuted.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Children who are considered 'Missing from Education' are:

- Not on roll of a school or registered as electively home educated.
- School leavers where destination is unknown or unconfirmed – including Primary and Secondary Transfers.
- CIN/CP children with attendance below 90%.
- Children/young people with attendance below 30%