



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Statement of Intent

'Achieving regular attendance at Aspire is key to improving the 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%.

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 multi-agency working. If we experience a period of 5 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 team/ 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

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 student's 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.

Excellent Attendance

To encourage excellent attendance Rotherham Aspire will:

- Communicate with parents daily- via text message or a phone call.
- 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

Parents and 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. Only Rotherham Aspire, 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/carers 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 Early Help & Family Engagement Service who 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 exclusion).
- Poor attendance of 10 or more days within a term (if attendance is less than 75% in a 6 week period).

Students

Each student must ensure that they arrive promptly. Every site is open from 9.15 am. Students are expected to arrive at Aspire by 9.30am and be learning. 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 at 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.

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 and should be complete by 10.30 am and 1.15 pm.

Procedures – Assistant Heads

The Assistant Heads will meet weekly with staff to monitor the attendance and punctuality of all students. This happens after weekly line management meetings with the Headteacher 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:

- First day phone calls have been made and recorded on SIMS.
- They have made a phone call home personally and recorded on SIMS conversations after 3 days of consecutive absence.
- Ensure safe and well checks have been completed after 3 days of consecutive absence.
- Ensure that letters have been sent.
- Considered and discussed Attendance Panel Review.
- Made an early help referral if student falls below 75%.

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 Assistant Head who will direct them to support attendance. 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/ centres in a positive way to BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS.

Mentor Team – Safe & Well

Where 3 days of consecutive absence have occurred Assistant Heads will allocate Mentors to complete a Safe and Well check. This is to ensure that appropriate Safeguarding measures are conducted to confirm 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 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.

Illness During the School Day

If a student becomes genuinely unwell during the school day 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 without staff permission (based on whether contact has been made with a parent/carer at home).

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 Head.

If an acceptable reason for absence is given and accepted by the Assistant Head 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.

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 Early Help Attendance Team, 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 not 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%	PA=90%
	Sessions per term	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 can cause considerable damage to any child or young person's educational prospects and we need parent/ carers 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.

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 Aspire, 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).

Strategies for Achieving Good Attendance and Punctuality

Good attendance is rewarded through the award of certificates and 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.

Analysing and Reporting Attendance Data

The Attendance Officer and Assistant Heads review attendance on a daily basis and monitor this continually, producing reports every half term. All teaching staff should look out for any patterns in absence and investigate or report their concerns to the Assistant Head as appropriate. If a student's attendance level drops below 95% the cause will be investigated by the Attendance Officer or Assistant Head who will liaise with parents/ carers. If there is no improvement the Attendance Procedure (appendix 1) will be followed.

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 and Senior Leadership Team.

Leave of Absence

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

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

All requests for leave of absence should on our 'Request for Leave' form to the Headteacher and will be evaluated on an individual basis taking into account individual circumstances. The Request for Leave form can be obtained from Student Reception and must be returned to Student Reception.

Absence for Religious Observance

One of the strengths of Rotherham Aspire is in respecting, promoting and celebrating the cultural and religious diversity of its pupils, parents and the community. Given the rich diversity of our students, parents will want to celebrate some of the major religious festivals with their children at home, as suggested by religious bodies and community leaders locally. Parents will therefore be seeking permission from schools to authorise their children's absence during these religious festivals. Whilst schools recognise the importance faith and religious observance play in the lives of many of its pupils and want to respect the wishes of parents to celebrate religious festivals with their children, it is important to strike the right balance between authorising such absence and the effect on pupil's progress.

The Pupil Registration Regulations 2006 Section 2 states that absence for religious observance should be "treated as authorised [absence] ... on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance

by the religious body which the parent belongs". Thus, if the parent's religious body marks the day as a religious festival, the school must authorise the absence. Leave for pupils for religious observance should only be agreed if the dates fall outside of normal holiday periods. Schools can check the major religious celebrations on websites, for example the BBC's religion home page's religious festival calendar, the Shap calendar of religious festivals or they can contact the LA.

Many of the main Christian festivals, for example Christmas and Easter, take place during the school holidays. The two main festivals celebrated by Muslims are Eid-ul-fitr (marking the end of Ramadan) and Eid-ul-Adha (marking the end of Hajj). These Muslim celebrations occur according to the lunar calendar in different countries and it is difficult to predict when pupils may need to be absent from school until very close to the day itself. For example, Eid-ul-fitr and Eid-ul-Adha come 10 days earlier every year and can change according to when the moon is sighted (please refer to the LA guidance to schools on arrangements for Muslim pupils who fast during the month of Ramadan for approximate dates for Ramadan, Eid -ull-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha). However, there may be occasions when a festival falls twice in a calendar year.

The main festivals celebrated by Jews include Rosh Hashanah and Yorn Kippur. The commonly celebrated festivals by Sikhs include Baisakhi, Diwali and Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev. Hindus main festivals include Diwali and the

New Year Day (day after Diwali) and the main Buddhist festivals include Vesak (Buddha Day) and Dhammacakka Day. In most cases up to two days annual leave for pupils for religious observance should be sufficient. However, schools may wish to grant a further day's leave in special circumstances.

Schools should use their discretion where a parent does not belong to a religious body, as they may want to celebrate an alternative festival that they feel is important to them, such as Pagan or Wicca festivals.

When parents request leave for their children for religious observance, pupils should be granted a day's authorised absence for a particular religious festival. Where a religious festival falls during a school holiday or at the weekend, no authorised absence should be granted. If parents request further days then appropriate consideration should be given to this. Requests for preparation for religious festivals should be regarded as unauthorised absence.

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), even if they are missing school without your knowledge

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 can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that your child or young person attends school regularly.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Children Missing in Education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and who are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

Children Missing Education are at significant risk of under achieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) later in life.