



**Al-Ashraf**  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Al-Ashraf Primary School**

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# HOLIDAY & ABSENCE POLICY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Al-Ashraf Primary School is committed to providing every child with the highest quality Islamic and academic education. We firmly believe that regular, punctual attendance is one of the most important factors in a child's educational success. Every day in school matters — not only for academic progress, but for the development of character, routine, and the sense of community that lies at the heart of our school's ethos.

This policy sets out the school's approach to holiday requests and other leave of absence during term time. It should be read alongside the school's *Admissions Policy* and *Attendance Policy*, both of which can be found on the school website.

## 2. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Under Section 444 of the *Education Act 1996*, parents and guardians are legally responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly. Failure to do so may constitute a criminal offence.

The Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance (updated August 2024) makes clear that:

- Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- A holiday or desire for leisure and recreation is not, in itself, considered an exceptional circumstance.
- Parents do NOT have an automatic entitlement to take their child out of school during term time.

Al-Ashraf Primary School works in accordance with this statutory guidance and in close partnership with Gloucestershire County Council's Education Inclusion Service (EIS).

## 3. OUR PRINCIPLES

We recognise that family life is important and that holidays and time together are of real value. We also recognise the financial pressures many families face. However, we must balance this against the educational impact of absence, which evidence consistently shows can have a significant and lasting effect on a child's progress and attainment.

Our approach is guided by the following principles:

- Every absence from school must be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. This decision rests with the school, not the parent.
- Requests for leave will be considered individually, on a case-by-case basis. We do not operate a blanket policy.
- A child should only be absent from school where the reason is genuinely unavoidable.
- The minimum attendance target at Al-Ashraf Primary School is 96%. Our aspiration is 100%.
- Good attendance is an achievement in its own right, and we celebrate it accordingly.

#### **4. CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE LEAVE WILL NOT BE AUTHORISED**

The school will not authorise leave of absence during term time in the following circumstances:

- For holidays, leisure trips, or family visits abroad where no exceptional circumstance applies.
- When a pupil is newly enrolled and still settling into school — this is a critical period for their development and routine.
- When a pupil's current attendance is already below 95% or would fall below that level because of the leave.
- Immediately before or during assessment periods.
- Where the reasons provided do not constitute a sufficiently compelling or exceptional circumstance.
- Where the request is to extend an existing holiday beyond the school term dates.

Please note: airport trips, general family holidays and shopping trips are not considered exceptional circumstances under DfE guidance and will not ordinarily be authorised.

#### **5. WHAT MAY CONSTITUTE EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

Requests for leave will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, on a case-by-case basis, at the full discretion of the Head Teacher. Examples of circumstances which may be considered include:

- The death or terminal illness of a close family member.
- Attendance at a close family member's wedding or funeral.
- A parent or carer returning from an extended overseas tour of duty, where no leave entitlement falls within the school holiday period.
- Absence recommended by a medical or health professional as part of a child's rehabilitation, or parent's recovery – if they are unable to find suitable childcare arrangements for their children.
- The compulsory Hajj pilgrimage — where this is genuinely the parent's or guardian's first and only opportunity to fulfil this obligation, and they are unable to find suitable childcare arrangements for their children.

In each case, written evidence supporting the request must be provided. The school reserves the right to request proof of travel or any other documentation relevant to the application.

Even where a reason may be considered exceptional, the Head Teacher retains full discretion to decline the request if the timing, the pupil's current attendance, or other factors make approval inappropriate.

In considering any request, the school will also consider the individual child's current attendance percentage, the overall attendance picture across the school at the time of the request, and the family's previous history of leave requests. A strong attendance record and a responsible history of previous requests will be viewed favourably. Conversely, a pattern of repeated requests, previous unauthorised absences, failed

payments, or an attendance rate already below the school's minimum threshold will weigh against approval, regardless of the reason given.

## 6. HOW TO APPLY FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

All requests for leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, using *the Leave of Absence Request Form* available from the school office. Requests made retrospectively, or after leave has already been taken, will not be considered.

The application process is as follows:

1. Obtain a Leave of Absence Request Form from the School Admin Office.
2. Complete the form in full, clearly stating the reason for absence and the dates requested. Include full details of the exceptional circumstance and attach any supporting evidence (e.g. proof of travel, medical letter, bereavement notice).
3. Submit the completed form to the school office at the earliest opportunity, and in any case before the leave is taken.
4. The Head Teacher will review the application and respond in writing. A decision will normally be communicated within five school days of receipt.
5. If approved, retain your written confirmation. If you proceed without authorisation, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and charges will apply.

Where more than one sibling attends the school, requests may be submitted on a single form, clearly identifying each child by name and year group.

## 7. UNAUTHORISED LEAVE: FINES AND SCHOOL CHARGES

If parents proceed with leave that has not been authorised by the school, or extend their leave beyond what was approved, the following will apply.

### 7.1 School Charges

In addition to any statutory penalty notices, Al-Ashraf Primary School will levy the following charges upon a child's return to school:

- A flat charge of £120 per child where the entire absence was unauthorised.
- A charge of £20 per child, per day for every day of unauthorised absence, where only part of the leave was authorised.

These charges are due within two weeks of the date of the school's response letter, or before the leave is taken – whichever is sooner.

Non-payment of these charges will be pursued through all means available to the school. Please be assured that we will always seek to resolve matters directly with families in the first instance, but the school cannot allow outstanding charges to remain unaddressed indefinitely.

Persistent non-payment may also result in the child being removed from the school roll and placed at the bottom of the admissions waiting list, thereby risking the loss of their school place and requiring a new admission fee to reapply.

The school also reserves the right to drop a child down a school year if teachers determine that the work missed means the child is no longer able to continue in their current year group. This decision rests with the teaching and leadership team and can have a significant knock-on effect on a child's progression to secondary education.

## 7.2 Misrepresentation of Grounds for Leave

Where the school becomes aware that a parent or guardian has provided false, misleading, or exaggerated information in support of a leave request — whether this comes to light at the time of the request or at any point afterwards — the school reserves the right to take retrospective action. This includes reclassifying the absence as unauthorised and applying the relevant charges accordingly.

The school is entitled to act on information from any source in making this determination. The fact that information was not available to the school at the time the request was considered will not prevent action being taken once it comes to light.

## 7.3 Financial Difficulty — Instalment Arrangements

We understand that settling a charge in a single payment may, on occasion, present a genuine financial difficulty. Parents or guardians in this position are encouraged to speak directly and confidentially with the Head Teacher as soon as possible, and ideally before the charge falls due.

Where there is a demonstrable and genuine hardship, the school may, entirely at its discretion, consider a structured instalment arrangement to allow the charge to be settled over an agreed period. Any such arrangement must be agreed in writing and adhered to in full. Parents should be aware that this is not an automatic entitlement, and the charge itself will remain payable in full — it will not be reduced or waived. The school will assess each situation individually and in good faith.

## 8. RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER ABSENCE

Upon return from any period of absence, children are expected to catch up with missed work at the earliest opportunity. Teachers will not set advance work during a holiday period, but children are encouraged to read independently and keep a diary of their experiences.

Any outstanding charges arising from unauthorised absence must be settled before a child may be considered for re-enrolment if they have been removed from the school roll.

## 9. PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

By enrolling your child at Al-Ashraf Primary School, parents and guardians have accepted full responsibility for ensuring their child attends regularly and punctually. This includes:

- Notifying the school on each day of absence via Compass before 9:30am.
- Making all efforts to arrange medical, dental, and other appointments outside of school hours or during lunchtime.
- Ensuring children arrive by 8:30am. Children arriving after the registration period will be marked late.
- Not booking holidays during term time without first obtaining written authorisation from the Head Teacher.
- If holiday leave is taken, to ensure parents support their re-integration once they return.

We ask all parents and guardians to plan family holidays within the scheduled school holiday periods. There are 185 non-school days in the year — providing ample opportunity for family time, travel, and rest. Planning around these dates is strongly encouraged.

## 10. COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

We believe that most attendance concerns are best resolved through open, early communication. If there are any circumstances affecting your child's attendance — whether financial, medical, personal, or family-related — please do not wait. Speak to the school office or request a meeting with the Head Teacher at the earliest opportunity.

Attendance updates will be shared with parents at least twice a year during Parent Consultation meetings, and at any point where attendance falls below 96%.

Where concerns cannot be resolved directly between the school and the family, the matter may be referred to the Local Authority Education Social Worker.

## 11. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Issue Date	Approved By	Notes
1.0	April 2026	Head Teacher, Governing Body	Initial issue
1.1	April 2026	Head Teacher, Educational Advisor	7.4 removed