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ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy has been updated to reflect DfE Guidance
Working together to improve school attendance – Updated July 2026

Version:	12.0
Issued Date:	Sept 2026
Next Review Date:	Sept 2027
Approved By:	Governing Body, Head Teacher, and Deputy Head

INTRODUCTION

Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls (AASSG) recognises that positive behaviour and good school attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. Missing out on lessons leaves pupils vulnerable to falling behind and can put them at risk of wider harm. There is a wide range of evidence as to the health and wellbeing benefits of school-age education. At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of **8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 4**. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "Working together to improve school attendance, Updated July 2026" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance including the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing education or absent from school.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- Work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.
- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure every pupil has access to the suitable, full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued.
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

We, at AASSG aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school. We will rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attainment (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

The school aims to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy within which pupils, staff, and parents can work in partnership. Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. We will therefore listen to parents and pupils and try to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

The school will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified. All staff will encourage punctuality and good attendance and he Head Teacher/Deputy Head will liaise with home about a pupil's attendance when this is appropriate.

Good attendance will be seen as an achievement in its own right and recognised as such with rewards such as certificates and prizes.

1. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

THE LAW ENTITLES EVERY CHILD OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE TO AN EFFICIENT, FULL-TIME EDUCATION SUITABLE TO THEIR AGE, APTITUDE, AND ANY SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED THEY MAY HAVE. **IT IS THE LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY PARENT TO MAKE SURE THEIR CHILD RECEIVES THAT EDUCATION EITHER BY ATTENDANCE AT A SCHOOL OR BY EDUCATION OTHERWISE THAN AT A SCHOOL.**

WHERE PARENTS DECIDE TO HAVE THEIR CHILD REGISTERED AT SCHOOL, **THEY HAVE AN ADDITIONAL LEGAL DUTY TO ENSURE THEIR CHILD ATTENDS THAT SCHOOL REGULARLY. THIS MEANS THEIR CHILD MUST ATTEND EVERY DAY THAT THE SCHOOL IS OPEN, EXCEPT IN A SMALL NUMBER OF ALLOWABLE CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH AS BEING TOO ILL TO ATTEND OR BEING GIVEN PERMISSION FOR AN ABSENCE IN ADVANCE FROM THE SCHOOL.**

2. WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

AASSG will strive to treat the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance by working collaboratively with all partners, in partnership with, not **against** families. All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

3. OUR EXPECTATIONS

AASSG will consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at school and make school a place pupils want to be, set high expectations for every pupil, communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents, systematically analyse their data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts, and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance.

We also recognise that attendance cannot be seen in isolation and that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils can learn and thrive.

To manage and improve attendance effectively, we strive to:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

The Senior Attendance Champion (Mrs S. Ismail) is responsible for attendance and will work closely with the Deputy Head (Mrs F. Ismail) to support good attendance, respond to concerns, and promote improvement in attendance by:

- Monitoring and analysing pupil attendance data.
- Implementing the identified strategies for promoting excellent whole school attendance.
- Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance.
- Managing individual pupil casework files.
- Coordinating individual action plans for pupils causing concern including the instigation of an Early Help Assessment and Plan and/ or the implementation of an attendance contract.

- Ensuring first day calling procedures are adhered to if a pupil is absent from school without contact from parents, escalating to home visits or safeguarding alerts if contact cannot be established.
- Taking an active lead in delivering whole school initiatives such as awards assemblies and reward schemes.
- Making referrals to appropriate external agencies.

4. PRINCIPLES

Pupils should come to school every day. A pupil should only be absent if the reason is "unavoidable." Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents), as either authorised or unauthorised.

This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

School Sessions & Times

School starts for the morning session at 8:40. Registration will close at 8:45. For afternoon sessions, registration will begin at 1:45. Pupils coming in after the close of registration will be marked late. Simultaneous registration times for all year groups will be adhered to during morning and afternoon sessions.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'. Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation, and it is accepted as such by the school.

The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the Head teacher.

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines: "Absence" as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

"Regular" attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency or unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted such as:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason e.g., because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Shopping, looking after other children or attending weddings.
- Day trips and holidays taken during term-time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.
- Any other absence in term time which has not been agreed.
- Taking holidays without prior permission from the school

5. PERSISTENT & SEVERE ABSENCE

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence.

Over a full academic year this would be 19 school days (38 sessions) missed. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as 'severely absent' (SA). Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support. The attendance of all pupils at our school is monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in our policy. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support. If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice for parentally condoned absence, consideration of an Education Supervision Order or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court. Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

When absence is granted by the Head teacher, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, a fine (£150) will be levied. This could also result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

6. PROCEDURES

If a pupil is unfit for school, parents should contact the school office on the first day in person or by telephone; otherwise the school will contact the parents.

Absences will not be authorised unless the reasons are valid. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which are unavoidable in school time, provided parents ring the school and send an e-message with proof of the appointment or come to the school and show an appointment card or letter as proof of appointment. **Letters from parents are not acceptable.**

Please make all effort to make non-urgent medical/dental appointments out of school hours or during lunchtime, as missing lessons interrupts teaching and learning.

7. TERM TIME LEAVE AND OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH A PUPIL COULD BE ABSENT

All leave and other circumstances for absence in term time are at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Provided the request is made in advance in writing (using the official school leave request form) by the parent/carer looking after the pupil, **leave may be granted, if circumstances are deemed necessary/urgent and the pupil's attendance record is otherwise satisfactory**. Leave will be refused where pupils have already missed a lot of work in the past or at crucial times of the year (e.g., during exams).

Flights must not be booked before leave is authorised.

Parents are strongly urged to avoid taking leave in Year's 10 & 11.

N.B. The Head Teacher will consider request for leave during these years on a case-by-case basis.

8. ENFORCEMENT & FINE

The school follows as support-first policy. Hence, where all other avenues to improve attendance have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, we will enforce attendance through fines, statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

The school will report to the Local Authority/social services any unexplained absences of 10 consecutive days or more or frequent/recurrent absences and lates which are unexplained.

Furthermore, if parents fail to comply with the above and take unauthorised leave, a fine of £150 will be levied, plus a further £20/day beyond five days. The school also has a right to drop the pupil down a school year if teachers feel she is not capable of continuing in that Year due to the work missed.

9. LATENESS

Pupils must attend on time to be given a mark for a session. Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration. Pupils need to arrive before 8.45 am (morning session) and 1.45 pm (afternoon session) after which the register will be closed. Pupils who arrive after the registration period will be marked in late. Any late without a valid reason will warrant an immediate detention and the privilege of going home for lunch may also be taken away for the rest of the term.

Parents will be notified and called in if there is a recurring pattern of lates.

10. MISSED WORK

It is expected that in all cases of absence, pupils will catch up with work missed at the earliest opportunity.

11. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

It is recognised that there may be circumstances when a pupil may arrive late for a period of time because of transport difficulties or because of prolonged illness. The school would adopt a flexible approach in these instances and work with the pupil and parents to help in any way possible.

12. REWARDS

The school will celebrate and reward good attendance to the Year Group with the best attendance. Individual pupils with the highest attendance figures for the year will also be rewarded at the annual awards ceremony.

A high level of attendance would merit a strong and supportive reference from the school to future employers & sixth form colleges.

13. VERSION HISTORY

Issue Date	Version Number	Approved By
February 2011	1.0	Head Teacher, Deputy Head
September 2013	2.0	Head Teacher, Deputy Head
September 2015	3.0	Governing Body, Head Teacher, Deputy Head
February 2017	4.0	Governing Body, Head Teacher, Deputy Head
July 2018	5.0	Governing Body, Head Teacher, Deputy Head
July 2019	6.0	Governing Body, Head Teacher, Deputy Head
Oct 2021	7.0	Governing Body, Head Teacher, Deputy Head
Oct 2022	8.0	Governing Body, Head Teacher, Deputy Head
Jan 2023	9.0	Governing Body, Head Teacher, Deputy Head
Sept. 2024	9.0	Governing Body, Head Teacher, Deputy Head
Sept 2025	11.0	Governing Body, Head Teacher, Deputy Head
Sept 2026	12.0	Governing Body, HT, SLT & SI