



# Aspire Attendance Policy

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| This policy was adopted | March 2026                                                                                  |
| Policy reviewed by      | Executive Headteacher, Director of Safeguarding,<br>Aspire Trustees<br>Ratified by Trustees |
| Policy review date      | February 2027                                                                               |

## **Contents**

1. Purpose and context
2. Definitions and categories of absence
3. Expectations
4. Attendance procedures across the Trust
5. Roles and responsibilities
6. Addressing persistent absenteeism
7. Children Missing in Education (CME)
8. Children awaiting transport to school
9. Reintegration following suspension
10. Aspire policies
11. Working instructions

## 1. Purpose and context

Aspire is committed to ensuring that children who are on roll at our schools and services receive the best education we can provide for them. The first step of this is good attendance. Aspire aims to provide a safe and nurturing environment in all our schools and services, and we are committed to working with children and their families to ensure that they are happy coming to school and attend regularly.

Our overall attendance target for every young person who attends an Aspire school or service is 95%, as this is the national target for all schools and academies. We consider this to be 95% of a child's individually agreed upon timetable: some of our students have reduced hours due to their medical or other needs. These are always done in agreement with parents and families, as well as other professionals working with a child. We know that for some children, particularly those with medical conditions, it is not reasonable or appropriate to expect them to attend school for 25 hours a week.

We will work towards achieving the target of 95% attendance with all of our young people. However, we also acknowledge that some of our children and young people begin at Aspire in circumstances that make this much more challenging for them to achieve – for example, previous experiences in school, medical conditions etc. We therefore acknowledge that for some children it will take them a long time to reach 95%, and we will celebrate every small step on their journey towards this target.

Through this policy, Aspire intends for all our schools and services to:

- Provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and as such attend happily.
- Provide a process where students are supported to reflect and build self-awareness following a suspension. It is important that students understand the reason for the suspension and know that each day is a new start. They belong with us.
- Provide a framework for ensuring that attendance is taken accurately, and non-attendance is followed up swiftly and appropriately, to ensure the safeguarding and wellbeing of our students.
- Ensure that the overall attendance of young people at our schools and services is high, and that all young people improve their attendance during the time that they are with us.
- To provide support for parents and families who are struggling with their child's attendance.
- Provide a framework for dealing with poor or non-attendance.

This policy has been written taking into consideration the following legislation and regulations:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- The Education (pupil registration) (England) regulations 2006, and amendments 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016
- The Education (School attendance targets) (England) regulations 2007 and 2010
- Working together to improve school attendance, September 2022
- Guidance for schools on the use of reduced timetables for pupils of compulsory school age, April 2023
- Arranging education for children who cannot attend school due to health needs, Dec 2023
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance, Feb 2023

## 2. Definitions and categories of absence

**Persistent Absence (PA):** a student is classed as persistently absence if they have attendance of 90% or less. It does not matter whether absences have been classed as authorised or non-authorised by the school.

**Authorised absence:** this is where the school has given approval in advance for a student to be away from school, or have accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory. The following may be authorised if evidence is provided to the school:

- Visits or interviews with potential new education providers (such as sixth form colleges, or a new school) or employers
- YOS meetings, if these must be held offsite
- Medical appointments

**Unauthorised absence:** This is when the school is unable to approve of the reason for absence. Government regulations are clear that schools are not permitted to authorise absence for family holiday or other family occasions.

**Children missing education (CME):** If a child is absent for a period of longer than 10 school days, and we have not been able to speak with parents, carers or family. In this case, we must report this to the Local Authority under their CME policy.

## 3. Expectations

**We expect the following from our students:**

- That they attend as per their individual timetable
- That they arrive on time, or are ready for their taxi collection on time
- That they talk to staff about any problems that they are having which are making attendance difficult for them

**We expect the following from our parents, carers and families:**

- That they ensure their child attends school, as per the legislation on this matter, states that children's attendance at school is the responsibility of parents/carers.
- That they support their child to attend wherever possible, encouraging them to attend if they are fit and well enough to be in school, and do not remain at home for minor complaints
- To contact their child's school or service if they are not able to attend, providing medical evidence if appropriate.

**What students, parents and families can expect from us:**

- That their child is provided with a timetable that is either full time, or as close to full time as is appropriate given their individual needs.
- That school will contact them if their child does not arrive at school, to ensure that the child is safe and well at home, and that nothing has happened on the way to school.
- That someone from school will come to visit the home if we cannot make contact with a child's family, to ensure that they are safe and well.

## 4. Attendance procedures across the Trust

Attendance systems may differ across different Aspire Schools and Services. However, the following elements will remain consistent:

- Morning registers will be completed by 9.30am.
- First day attendance calls to parents/carers and families will be completed immediately after the registers close at 9.30am. This is so that we ensure students have not got into difficulties or an accident on the way to school.
- If we cannot speak to parents/carers and families, we will send a text message to all numbers on record asking them to contact the school, and explaining that if we do not hear from them, we will do a safe and well visit to the home.
- If we do not see a child for three consecutive days, **and** cannot make contact with anyone at home, a member of staff will visit the home to ensure that the child is safe and well. This will be logged on CPOMS as a safeguarding matter. The Head of School (or DHoS in their absence) may decide that a safe and well visit is required before this point if there are particular concerns about a young person.
- Any unexplained absences for a young person who has a CIN or CP plan will be reported immediately to the social worker or other relevant professionals.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

**Heads of School/ Provision leads are responsible for:**

- Ensuring that there are systems in place for the timely and accurate taking of registers.
- Logging follow up actions of concerns raised on CPOMS. (Using the Logging and Tracking Attendance Working Instructions)
- Ensuring that children at home awaiting transport are being supported in line with the Aspire Awaiting Taxi Protocol
- Ensuring children feel supported to return to school following a suspension

**Site administrators are responsible for:**

- Ensuring that the registers are accurately completed.
- Doing first day absence calls to parents and recording reasons for absence on the registers, and sending text messages to those that do not answer the phone.
- Ensuring that Heads of School are aware of any students who have not been seen for three consecutive school days.
- Passing any other concerns to the Learning Support Team or Heads of School as per individual school or service systems.
- Running weekly attendance reports for Heads of School and Learning Support Team as per individual school or service systems.
- Logging attendance issues on CPOMS (Using the Logging and Tracking Attendance Working Instructions)

**Learner Support Teams are responsible for:**

- Working with the school or service Heads of School to improve attendance for any student under 95%.
- Doing safe-and-well visits for any child who has not been seen for 3 days.
- Logging safe-and-well visits on CPOMS (Using the Logging and Tracking Attendance Working Instructions)

## **6. Addressing persistent absenteeism**

Aspire aims to work supportively with parents, carers and families to address barriers to attendance and increase students' attendance over the time that they are with us. Strategies that Aspire use across the Trust to support an increase in attendance include (but are not limited to):

- Ensuring that our schools and services are welcoming, supportive environments that students want to attend.
- Praising and thanking students and families who work to improve attendance.
- Working with students and families, and other professionals where they are involved, to identify reasons for poor attendance and finding ways to overcome those barriers.
- Reviewing provision so that we are better meeting students' needs, therefore making attendance more likely.
- Implementing short term reduced timetables where students have been out of school for a long period of time, as a supportive transition back to formal education. This will be done with agreement from parents/carers and families, and using the Buckinghamshire reduced timetable protocol. (Use of Reduced Timetable Working Instructions)

In general, Aspire does not believe that taking legal action against parents is a helpful strategy. In our experience, the majority of parents of children who have poor attendance are doing everything that they can to ensure their child attends, and adding fines and legal processes often only adds difficulties to already impossibly hard situations.

However, legislation does provide a legal framework for supporting absence management and Aspire may on occasion feel that use of this legal framework is appropriate. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure that their child receives an education, either by attendance at school or education otherwise. In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled section 444B of the Education Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a fixed penalty of either £60 or £120 per adult per child.

If Aspire believe that use of this framework is appropriate, the following process will be followed:

- Parents/carers will be made aware that their child's attendance is a problem, and that a fixed penalty may be issued if it does not improve.
- Parents/carers will be invited to a meeting with a member of the school or service SLT in which this is explained, barriers to attendance discussed and a plan agreed for improving attendance.
- Parents/carers will be issued a formal warning, explaining that a Fixed Penalty may be issued if their child's attendance does not improve in 14 days.
- Parents/carers will be issued a final formal warning, explaining that attendance has not improved since the formal warning, and that if attendance does not improve in the next 14 days the school will be contacting the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty.

## **7. Children Missing in Education (CME)**

Any student who is absent for ten school days and for whom we have not been able to make contact with parents or carers, will be reported as a Child Missing in Education (CME) using the Buckinghamshire CME protocol.

## **8. Children awaiting transport to school**

Many children placed at an Aspire provision will require transport to bring them to school. Transport is requested as part of the referral process to Aspire, but it takes at least 15 working days for the transport to be put in place by the local authority, once it has been assessed as being needed by the Council's Admissions team.

### **Single registered students:**

- We become responsible for the safeguarding and wellbeing of the child from their start date with us. To mitigate risks the Awaiting Taxi Protocol must be followed.

### **Dual registered students:**

- We will need to negotiate with the main school who maintains the responsibility for ensuring the safeguarding and wellbeing of the child.
- Consider which parts of the Awaiting Taxi Protocol are appropriate to follow.

## **9. Reintegration following suspension**

To support our students to successfully reintegrate back into the school community following a suspension, the following steps will occur:

1. A reintegration meeting will take place with the students, their parents/carers and the HoS/DHoS.
  - The aim of this meeting is to establish what all parties can do to avoid further suspensions.
2. One to one reflection work.
  - This is for the student to reflect on their behaviour and/or do some targeted work with a trusted adult to gain a greater understanding of their own self-regulation and communication.

## **10. Aspire policies**

This policy is written with regard to the following Aspire policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Risk Assessment for Student Wellbeing Policy

## **11. Working instructions**

The following Working Instructions support the implementation of this policy:

- Logging and Tracking Attendance
- Use of Reduced Timetables
- Awaiting Taxi Protocol
- Reintegration Protocol

All Working Instructions are located on the Aspire Information and Resources Team in the [Working Instructions] folder within the [Attendance Working Instructions and Form] folder.