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POLICY DOCUMENT FRONT PAGE

Attendance Policy

CURRENT POLICY

APPROVED AS A CHAIR'S ACTION

THIS POLICY IS REGULARLY REVIEWED FOLLOWING RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES

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STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

The name and contact details of the school staff member students and parents/carers should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is: Mrs J Jackson, Student Services Manager.

If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence **before 9.30am,** but preferably as early as possible. The school has a 24-hour absence line (01376 559359) where an answer phone is available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, a 24-hour text only service (07598 393348), an absences email (JJackson@alechunter.com), or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please do not email the Tutor or Student Support Leader as they may not see the email until later if they have prior commitments.

The name and contact details of the school staff member students and parents/carers should contact for more detailed support on attendance (Academic Year 2023/24):

Year Group	Student Support Leader	Head of Year
7	Mr R Cleevely – rcleevely@alechunter.com	Mr. C Moreno – cmoreno@alechunter.com
8	Mrs K Willing – kwiiling@alechunter.com	Mr. A Lee – alee@alechunter.com
9	Mrs. L Weaver – lweaver@alechunter.com	Mr. K Spooner – kspooner@alechunter.com
10	Mrs. S Swindale – sswindale@alechunter.com	Ms R Jones - rjones@alechunter.com
11	Mr. C Johnson – cjohnson@alechunter.com	Mr. T Holland – tholland@alechunter.com
All	Miss S Greenway (Home School Attendance Officer) – SGreenway@alechunter.com	

The name and contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion – the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school, is:
Mr M Doolan – Assistant Headteacher
<Doolan@alechunter.com

The governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is:
Mrs K Chiyaka
kChiyaka@alechunter.com

Expectations and Routines

Alec Hunter Academy is committed to providing a positive learning environment, which values, challenges and supports every student through providing opportunities for them to achieve as their own individuals. Staff at Alec Hunter Academy recognise that regular and punctual school attendance is essential for all students if they are to succeed both academically and socially.

It is the responsibility of all staff to promote good attendance, firstly, by regularly attending themselves. Positive action should be taken to encourage good attendance by ensuring lessons are challenging, stimulating, and rewarding for students, thereby leading to students wishing to attend. The environment of the school should be welcoming, and attention paid by staff to the relationships between themselves and students, and between students.

Good and improved attendance should be celebrated. Home-school links: form tutors, subject teachers, Student Support Leaders, Heads of Year, the Home-School Attendance Officer and Leadership Group all have a key role to play in striving towards good attendance. Alec Hunter Academy will give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and students the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there are concerns surrounding attendance.

As a school we will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all students. Each year the school will examine it attendance figures and set targets. The school will regularly review its system for improving attendance and punctuality and take account of changes in the Education Law.

Attendance at 90% or below means that a student has fallen into what is called the Persistent Absentee (PA) Category, a criterion set by the Government. Staff at Alec Hunter Academy will endeavour to reduce the number of students with persistent absence, (10% or above), as required by the Department for Education (DfE). The school will actively work with parents/carers/carers and students, along with outside agencies and professionals to achieve the school targets in this regard and all PA students and their parents/carers will be subject to a school-based meeting where a plan will be written to support an improvement. The Home-School Attendance Officer will also monitor the attendance of all students on the registers, identify patterns in absence and intervene appropriately to address concerns.

We will give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and students the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Although we recognise that parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance and punctuality, staff at Alec Hunter Academy work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all students are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures mentioned within this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Students who are regularly late or absent fall behind with and develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress. As a school, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all students. If there are problems which affect a student's attendance, we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents/carers to resolve those problems as efficiently as possible. Alec Hunter Academy works in partnership with Attendance Compliance to address issues relating to attendance.

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/carers 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.

The DfE has produced guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities: Working together to improve school attendance. Our Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of that guidance.
Working together to improve school attendance

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

- Improve students' achievements by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Create a **culture** in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and are seen to be valued by the school.
- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that students succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that students have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

The policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor student attendance.

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

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure and valued and encourage a sense of their own responsibility.
- Raising awareness with parents, carers and students of the importance of (uninterrupted) good attendance and punctuality at every stage of a student's education.
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Working in partnership with students, parents, carers, staff and the Local Authority (Attendance Compliance) so that all students realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- Ensuring consistency when monitoring attendance and recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that students must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the Headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

Promoting Regular Attendance

At Alec Hunter Academy, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our students from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life. We recognise the connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.



The name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school is:
Mr M Doolan, Assistant Headteacher who can be contacted through the school office.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents/carers, students, and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements.
- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality in lessons and tutorials.
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families.
- Reward good or improving attendance by contacting home.
- Award House points to students for consistent and improved attendance and in Year 11 these can be converted to Prom Points.
- Run regular reward programmes for a selected group of disadvantaged students who we are targeting to improve their attendance.
- Each term issue certificates in Celebration Assemblies for students who achieve 100% attendance.
- Display the names of students with 100% attendance for the academic year on our honours board in the Main Hall. Give a special prize in Presentation Evening for students who achieve 100% attendance for the 5 years at Alec Hunter.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality in meetings with parents/carers.

Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any student's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect

the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Parents/carers should be clear of the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence. Students are expected to be in school, on time, every day the school is open or that the student is timetabled to be present, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised) or other unavoidable causes and the school have received notification from parents/carers. For example, if a student has been unwell and the parent telephones the school on the morning of the absence to explain the reason. Only the school have the power to make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority.

Absence for the following reasons could be authorised and it is anticipated that parents will confirm their child's expected return day to school.

- Illness (specific details of the illness should be given).
- Medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time; you may be asked to provide medical evidence before it can be authorised.
- Days of religious observance.
- Exceptional family circumstances e.g., bereavement.
- If permission for the absence has been granted in advance by the Headteacher e.g., authorised participation in a national sporting event.
- Transport arranged by the Local Authority (LA) has failed to arrive where the student lives beyond statutory walking distance.
- A traveller family are travelling for occupational purposes.

Unauthorised absences are when the school does not consider the absence as reasonable and for which an unauthorised mark is given. These include instances of parents keeping their child off school unnecessarily, in the view of the school, absences which have never been explained and students who arrive to school after 9.10 am when the registers have closed, and it is too late to give them a mark, or for which no approved leave of absence has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for Penalty Notices and/or initiating legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes the following, though this is by no means an exhaustive list:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily, 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.
- Where the level of the students' absence is a concern and medical evidence has not been provided for ill health.
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration. This is marked in the register as a "U", which indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, it is counted as an absence for the session.
- Shopping trips.
- Having no uniform available.
- Oversleeping.
- Looking after other children or accompanying siblings or parents/carers to medical appointments.
- Their own or family birthdays.
- Holidays taken during term time, not deemed "for exceptional purposes" by the Headteacher – may result in the school applying to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice or if the parent/carer has previously been issued with a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the Local

Authority. (most requests will not be considered an "exceptional circumstance" if they are pre planned, or involve missing several days of education)
- Day trips.
- Missing transport, or where a parent has failed to make transport arrangements for their child.
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student is defined by the Government as a **'persistent absentee'** when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any student's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents/carers to resolve this. It is important to recognise that students will be deemed as persistently absent by taking just 3 days off in a 6-week term. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent'**. 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.

DAY TO DAY PROCESSES

Absence Procedures

The name and contact details of the school staff member students and parents/carers should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is: Mrs J Jackson, Student Services Manager.

If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence **before 9.30am,** but preferably as early as possible. The school has a 24 hour absence line (01376 559359) where an answer phone is available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, a 24 hour text only service (07598 393348), an absences email (JJackson@alechunter.com), or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please do not email the Tutor or Student Support Leader as they may not see the email until later if they have prior commitments. Consideration will be given to procedures where parents have difficulty with written communication, or where English is not the first language.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again **before 9.30am. Parents/carers are required to contact the school on every morning their child is going to be absent.**
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS and Essex County Council Guidance on School Absence and Childhood Illness

If your child is absent and we have not heard from you, we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence. However, it is the parents' responsibility to contact us.
- If we are unable to contact parents/carers by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home/email and a home visit may be made in the interests of safeguarding.
- A referral will be made to the Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents/carers by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be "absent from education".

If absence continues, we will:

- Call, write or email you if your child's attendance or punctuality is a concern.
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with our Home School Attendance Officer and Student Support Leader if absences persist.
- Create a personalised action/support plan to address any barriers to attendance.

- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services if appropriate, based on the individual needs of the family.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. Following guidance from the Local Authority, we especially scrutinise absences either side of a school holiday and may request a Penalty Notice to be issued to parents if identify that their child/ren are on holiday and not absent for the reason given. The onus is on the parent/carer to provide evidence to support their reasons for absence in order for us to withdraw an application to the Local Authority to fine.

If a student's attendance has been identified as a cause for concern, the school or Home-School Attendance Officer will explore whether the parents/carers can provide the school with appropriate medical evidence for absences, which may be one of the following:

- Appointment card/letter (for absence of part or a whole day).
- Photocopy of prescription from GP or pharmacy.
- Letter from GP.

The school will consider any advice from healthcare professionals on how we can feasibly support the student in attending school and in more complex cases, and only where there is supporting evidence from a medical professional, we may refer to the Local Authority's Education Access team as a medical referral to get additional support.

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with members of staff, including the Student Support Leaders and the Home-School Attendance Officer in resolving any issues together. If difficulties cannot be worked out in this way and attendance continues to drop due to unauthorised absences, the school may issue an Attendance Information letter, followed by a Penalty Notice/Legal Action Warning Letter and refer the student to the Local Authority (Attendance Compliance). The Local Authority may issue each parent with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court with the possibility you will receive a criminal conviction.

Monitoring Absence

The Home-School Attendance Officer will monitor each student's attendance and punctuality very closely. Students with 10% persistent absence (PA) or more will be highlighted and the school will work closely with the Home-School Attendance Officer and parents to ensure actions are put in place so that students are taken out of the PA category.

The Home-School Attendance Officer will hold fortnightly meetings with the Student Support Leaders where information will be shared, and attendance letters will be discussed. The Home-School Attendance Officer and the Student Support Leaders will also agree to invite parents in for a school-based meeting for students in the PA category, or close to falling into this category, prior to issuing a Notice to improve letter or making a referral to the Local Authority (Attendance Compliance). An attendance letter will automatically be sent when a student has attendance that falls below 90%. Only the senior leader overseeing that year group can give authorisation for it **not** to be sent, but this will only be in exceptional circumstances, such as a student who has a known medical condition that prevents them from attending school as expected. The Headteacher is the only one who can authorise a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued, or legal action to be taken.

Long-Term Absence and Returning to School

Where appropriate, teachers may arrange for work to be sent home during the absence period and this will be organised by the Head of Year. Students who have enforced long periods of absence from school, for whatever reason, need careful handling on their return. A re-integration period may be required, and the Student Support Leader may meet with parents and the student before the student returns to discuss any worries they may have about returning to school. A phased return may be agreed but only with the approval of the Headteacher. The decision regarding which lessons a student should attend as part of a phased return rests with the school.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can lead to irregular attendance patterns. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed or miss vital work and important messages from their tutor or class teacher.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all students at Alec Hunter Academy are:

Student Entrance (front of the school) and Bike Shed Gate (at the side) both open: 8.00 am
Start of the school day: 8:40 am
Registration closes: 9.10 am
End of the school day: 3.20 pm

Students who arrive on site at 8.00am can go to the 'Homework Club' in A2 which is supervised by a member of staff. In addition, there will be a supervised 'Breakfast Club' for invited students, which will be based in the canteen.

How we manage lateness:

- Students can begin to come into school from **8.00am.**
- The school day starts at **8.40am.**
- Registers are taken by **8.50am** and a student will receive a late mark "L" if they are not in by that time.
- It students arrive between 8.40am and 8.50am, they must enter via the Year 7 playground. After 8.50am
  they must enter via the School's Visitor Reception and report to the receptionist on duty.
- At 9.10am the registers will be closed, in accordance with the Regulations. If a student arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site (U) but this will not count as a present mark, and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence unless a valid reason is given by a parent.
- The school will contact parents/carers regarding lateness, such as via standard messages or emails and phone calls from Form Tutors, Student Support Leaders and Heads of Year.
- A member of the Leadership Group will be on duty in the Year 7 Playground to greet late arrivals and discuss their reasons for absence.

The below shows the sanctions which will be imposed on any student who arrives late during one half term.

First late does not receive a sanction.

- *2-5 lates in a half term = a lunch detention*
- *6 lates in a half term = 60 min detention*
- *7- 10 lates in a half term = a lunch detention*
- *11 lates in a half term = Ext Wednesday*
- Late through front office – 9.20am onwards = Late (U code) – Unauthorised absence and sanction from Head
  of Year and Student Support Leader.

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a record of persistent lateness, you will be asked to meet with their Student Support Leader or Head of Year, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents/carers and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrating good individual and group punctuality.

Registration

At Alec Hunter Academy an electronic registration system is used. School staff will complete accurate registers within ten minutes of the beginning of each lesson and tutorial. Morning registration begins at 8.40am and

closes at 8.50am each school day and Period 4 is used as afternoon registration, starting at 12.10pm and closing at 12.20pm; registers close 30 minutes after these times.

If a student has been marked present earlier in the day but is absent from the lesson and doesn't arrive within the first ten minutes, teachers are expected to refresh their register to check whether the student has been marked as being elsewhere under the supervision of staff (Q! code). If this is not the case, staff must alert On Call immediately to investigate where the student may be. On Call staff will check whether students have signed out or are with key staff, such as Student Support Leaders, in the medical room or SDC, or with therapeutic staff. If a student's location cannot be determined, On Call staff will arrange for contact to be made with home and request that the subject teacher refers the student's absence as potential truancy. However, the priority remains ensuring that the child is safe so efforts to locate the child will continue until their whereabouts and security can be established.

Please see Registration Code Appendix 1

Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. If a parent/carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root cause and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend

a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individualised early help plan may be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain; however, we will work with families and students to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

Local Authority attendance support services

Local Authority Attendance Specialists work strategically by offering support to schools, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice.

School Attendance and the Law

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activities in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

Applying for leave of absence

If a parent/carer wishes to apply for leave of absence, they must complete an 'Application for leave of absence during term time' form (Appendix 3) which can be obtained from the school website or from the school office. Supporting evidence must be included as without it the absence will be deemed as unauthorised.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Essex Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- At any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class at the start of the academic year as quickly as possible.
- During assessment and examination periods in the school's calendar affecting your child's year group.
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence, or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.

The school will **not** provide work for children to do during their absence, whether it has been authorised or not. However, it is the expectation that students catch-up with work on their return and should make contact with other students in their class or their teacher to find out what they have missed.

At Alec Hunter Academy 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The Headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Maintaining the School Roll including Deletions

It is crucial that parents/carers keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency.

For any student leaving Alec Hunter Academy ***other than at the end of Year 11***, parents/carers are required to complete a 'students moving from school' form which can be obtained from the school office. This provides school with the following information: child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and appropriately safeguard all our students, even those who leave us.

Under Student Regulations 2006, all schools are now **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the student being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that student, and in any event no later than the time at which the student's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a student's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the student has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

The member of staff responsible for maintaining the school roll, both additions and deletions, is Mrs J Jackson.

Home educated children

On receipt of written notification to home educate, schools must inform the pupil's local authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. Schools should not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding excluding the pupil or because the pupil has a poor attendance record. Schools and local authorities should not seek to prevent parents from educating their children outside the school system. There is no requirement for parents to obtain the school or local authority's agreement to educate their child at home. Parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full-time education, but this does not have to be at a school.

Absence data

Data, Monitoring and Intervention

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual students or groups of students when their attendance needs to improve. We monitor identified groups of students using historical data and the context of the school population. Persistently absent students are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking as increased absence affects attainment. We also use data to check the impact of strategies we are using and make adjustments where necessary.

We use pupil premium funding to promote and incentivise good attendance for disadvantaged students, and this is overseen by Mr M Doolan, Assistant Headteacher. When the attendance of students with other specific needs are identified as a cause for concern, such as SEN, LAC or those with a social worker, key staff in the school who regularly work with them will be involved in the plan to remove barriers to their attendance.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time, every day.

All school staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parents/carers and students as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance at our school as possible.

0 - 4 DAYS ABSENT	98 – 100%	Form Tutors	**Actions for all students** • Warm welcome • Praise for good attendance or improvements
5 – 8 DAYS ABSENT	96 – 97%		• Regular messages to promote reasons why good punctuality and attendance are important (achievements/references/life chances) • Request notes for unexplained absences • Report patterns of absence and other concerns to SSL/HoY • Talk with students in yellow and red categories to offer motivation and explore reasons
		Admin	• Daily notifications sent home for students who are late to school • Weekly 'well done' attendance messages home for those with 100% and above 96% • Weekly attendance information sent out to ALL staff • Half termly attendance update letters sent to all parents/carers
9 – 12 DAYS ABSENT	94 – 95%	Student Support Leader Admin	**Additional actions** • Tutor, SSL, student and family develop attendance plan • Fortnightly check-ins with SSL • Positive letter sent if attendance has improved and moved to green • If falls below 95%, 'at risk of PA' letter sent
13 – 16 DAYS ABSENT	92 – 93%	Student Support Leader/Head of Year Home-School Attendance Officer	**Additional actions** • SSL, HoY, student, and family develop 'at risk of PA' plan • Fortnightly check-ins with SSL • Positive letter sent if attendance has improved and moved to yellow/green • If 92%, attendance letter sent; only LG link can ask for letter to be deferred • Home visits with SSL
17 – 19 DAYS ABSENT	90 – 91%	Student Support Leader/Head of Year Home-School Attendance Officer	**Additional actions** • SSL, HoY, student, and family develop PA plan • Fortnightly check-ins with SSL • Positive letter sent if attendance has improved and moved to yellow/green • If 90%, attendance letter sent; only LG link can ask for letter to be deferred • Home visits with SSL

MORE THAN 19 DAYS ABSENT	Under 90%	Student Support Leader/Home-School Attendance Officer	**Additional actions** • SSL/HSAO organise meeting with student/parent/carer and complete action plan • If family don't attend, send 'failed meeting' letter and phone home to complete action plan • Refer to Local Authority if attendance doesn't improve, especially if family are not engaging with the school.

Appendix 1: Registration Codes

The following codes are taken from the DFE's **Working together to improve school attendance**

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
	Attending a place other than the school	
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
	Absent – leave of absence	
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
U	Late after registration has closed	Will be treated as unauthorised absence

Application for Leave of Absence from School during term time

Dear Applicant

All schools **by law** must follow the Department for Education's statutory guidance relating to school attendance. They must use the appropriate national attendance or absence code, and follow the criteria set out within the guidance. The statutory guidance states:

- A leave of absence **must not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances and must be requested in advance.**
- Absence must be requested in **advance** by a parent who the pupil normally lives with
- Schools must judge **each application individually**, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request
- Where a leave of absence is granted, **the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from the school**
- **A need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance**
- A school **cannot** grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, the leave of absence should not be granted.
- Where this guidance refers to a parent, the school and/or Local Authority will need to decide which adult(s) is most appropriate. Generally, parents include:
    - All natural parents, whether they are married or not
    - Those who have parental responsibility
    - Those who have day to day responsibility for the child

Please note all schools are expected to regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence.

Your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to their educational progress. If absence is not authorised and the leave is taken, schools may refer to the Local Authority for legal action. Please find attached information regarding Penalty Notice Fines for School Attendance.

Essex County Council

Parents understand Penalty Notice Fines for School Attendance

From 19 August 2024, there is a National Framework for Penalty Notice Fines being issued for unauthorised absences recorded by schools

National Threshold
A single consistent threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by ALL schools in England, this is: • 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-week school period • These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of authorised absence • For example, a 5-day unauthorised leave of absence could meet the national threshold • The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years.

Who May Be Fined?
• Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent who allows their child to be absent without authorisation from school • For example, 3 siblings absent for authorised leave during term time would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines •

Offence
The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, the fine amount will be: • £80 per parent, per child if paid **within 21 days**
• If not paid **within 21 days**, the fine will increase to **£160 per parent, per child**, payable between the 22nd and 28th day

Second Offence (within 3 years)
The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for an unauthorised absence, a reduced rate is not available. The amount therefore will be: • £160 per parent, per child – payable within 28 days.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)
The third time an offence is committed, a Penalty Notice will NOT be issued, and the case will be presented **straight to the Magistrate's Court**. • **Prosecution** can result in **criminal records** and **fines of up to £2,500** • Cases found guilty in a **Magistrate's Court** can show on the parent's future DB certificate (Disclosure and Barring Service) due to a "failure **to safeguard a child's education"**

Application for Leave of Absence from School during Term Time

Dear Headteacher

I would like to request permission for leave of absence for my child, a pupil registered at your school for the reasons detailed below (*further information can be attached if required).*

Pupil's full name	
Pupil's Date of Birth	
Year Group	
Class / Registration	
Pupil's full address and postcode	
First date of absence	
Last date of absence	
Date of return to school	
Number of school days absent	

Please be aware, as per our school's attendance policy and the Essex published Code of Conduct relating to school attendance, that the law requires parents to seek permission from the Headteacher to take their child out of school during term time. The law states that <u>permission can only be granted if</u>:

1. **An application has been made in advance by the parent the normally lives with; <u>and</u> there are exceptional circumstances.**

Please note that, if on the rare occasion circumstances are deemed exceptional by the Headteacher, the duration your child is permitted to be away from school may only be determined by the Headteacher.

Reason for request including why you believe your circumstances to be exceptional

If you have children at another school, please detail their name(s) and which school/s they attend below; pupils name, name of school and school telephone number

Appendix 4 DFE guidance Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance

All Pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and Governing Bodies are expected to:	Local Authorities are expected to:
Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies. Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness) Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand. Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance. Accurately complete admission and attendance registers. Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.	Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures. Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. Use data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with other local schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed. Ensure school staff receive training on attendance	Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services. Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance. Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice. Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

Pupils At Risk of Becoming Persistently Absent

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and Governing Bodies are expected to:	Local Authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the supports offered to prevent the need for more formal support.	Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence. Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Hold a regular conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so. Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their

	Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance and act as lead practitioner if attendance is the only issue and/or the local threshold for formal early help is not met If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. If a case meets the local threshold for formal early help/family support, this included conducting the early help assessment and acting as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.		family with access to services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, and there are multiple needs consider whether the threshold for early help is met and facilitate access where it is. Regardless, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner in cases where threshold is met and all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

Persistently Absent Pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and Governing Bodies are expected to:	Local Authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including attendance contracts and education supervision orders. Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort)

	Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through a referral to statutory children's social care.		

Severely Absent Pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and Governing Bodies are expected to:	Local Authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and: Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the Local Authority.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and: All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision. Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans.

Support for Cohorts of Pupils with Lower Attendance than their peers

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and Governing Bodies are expected to:	Local Authorities are expected to:
Not applicable	Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them. Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.

Support for Cohorts of Pupils with Medical Conditions or SEND with poor attendance

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and Governing Bodies are expected to:	Local Authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance. Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed. Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals. Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families. Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.

Support for Pupils With a Social Worker

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and Governing Bodies are expected to:	Local Authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Know who the pupils who have, or who have had, a social worker are. Understand how the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced, can have an impact on attendance – whilst maintaining a culture of high aspiration for the cohort. Provide additional academic support and make reasonable adjustments to help them, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there can be a lasting	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Ensure that all Children's Social Care practitioners, understand the importance of good attendance for pupil's educational progress, for their welfare and their wider development – and understand their role in improving it. Through the work of Virtual School Heads they should: • Undertake systemic monitoring and data sharing of the attendance of children with a social worker in their area: developing and implementing targeted cohort level interventions to improve attendance.

	impact on children's educational outcomes. Work in partnership with the local authority at a strategic and individual level, sharing data on attendance, including, at an individual level, informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.		• Provide advice, challenge and training to schools on how to promote and secure good attendance for children with a social worker. • Develop whole system approaches, with social care, to support the attendance of children in need.

Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and Governing Bodies are expected to:	Local Authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to held them understand the child's barriers to attendance – including the development of Personal Education Plans.	Have high expectations for the cohort – with expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after pupils. Work in partnership with the local authority Virtual School Head to develop and deliver high quality Personal Education Plans for looked-after children that support good attendance. Work directly with parents to develop good home-school links that support good attendance. For previously looked-after pupils this could include discussion on use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding managed by the school.	Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils. Monitor and review attendance of the cohort and consider how school policies, including behaviour policies, are sensitive to their needs and support good attendance.	Promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children – doing everything possible to minimise disruption to education when a pupil enters care. (LA that looks after the child:). Appoint an expert Virtual School Head (VSH) – will: • Monitor, report on, and evaluate the education outcomes of looked after children, including their attendance, as if they attended a single school wherever they live or are educated. • Ensure schools know when they have a pupil looked after by the authority on their role and that information is shared with the school on issues that may impact on their attendance. • Ensure that all looked-after pupils have high quality, up to date, effective Personal Education Plans developed in partnership with schools, social workers and carers – including, where necessary, clear interventions and use of pupil premium plus funding to support good attendance. • Provide expert advice and information on the education of previously looked-after pupils to schools and parents – including their attendance.

Monitoring

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and Governing Bodies are expected to:	Local Authorities are expected to:
Schools regularly update parents on their child's attendance.	The school's Senior Attendance Champion will ensure all school based staff complete their attendance responsibilities in line with the school's policies and procedures. The governing board or academy trust will hold the headteacher or executive leadership to account for	DfE Regions Group considers multi academy trusts' efforts on attendance as part of decision making.	DfE Reports Group monitors local authority efforts as part of regular interaction. Ofsted may consider the local area partnership's

(If parents feel the school and or local authority have not delivered what they are expected to they should discuss the case with the school and/or local authority's attendance support team).	their delegated responsibilities and for compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements. They will review progress and provide challenge when required. The board will help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most and ensure that school staff receive adequate training on attendance. Ofsted will expect schools to do all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance as part of the behaviour and attitudes judgement. This includes, where attendance is not consistently at or above what could reasonably be expected, that schools have a strong understanding of the causes of absence (particularly for persistent and severe absence) and a clear strategy in place that takes account of those cases to improve attendance for all pupils. Ultimately, in cases where a school has not met expectations or statutory duties the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.	Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections.	approach to improving attendance of children and young people with SEND as part of the SEND Area Inspection, and the local authority's approach to improving attendance for children with a social worker through inspecting local authority children's services. Ultimately, in cases where a local authority has not met expectations or statutory duties, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.

Excluded Children

When a child is excluded from school, the parent will be responsible for ensuring that their child is not found in a public place during normal school hours on the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion (Section 103 Education and Inspections Act).

The excluding school must have notified the parent informing them of their duty and warning that a penalty notice could be issued.

Where there is more than one person liable for the offence, a separate penalty notice may be issued to each person.

Where a student is present in a public place in the first five days of a fixed period exclusion the Essex Local Authority would issue a penalty notice if the school is in their area. Where the child has been permanently excluded, it would be the authority where the child resides.

Appendix 5 Illness and absence guidance

DFE external document template Children's Commissioner Advice on childhood illnesses - What to do

Annex C

DfE "The link between absence and attainment at KS2 - 2013/14 academic year"

The analysis of the link between overall absence and attainment when taking prior attainment and student characteristics into account showed that, for each KS2 and KS4 measure, overall absence had a statistically significant negative link to attainment – i.e., every extra day missed was associated with a lower attainment outcome.

