Attendance Policy

This is a Trust Policy – details specific to individual schools and their procedures are added by the school in *Appendix A*.

(*For a copy of the policy for a specific school which includes Appendix A – see individual school websites).*

Date	Revision & Amendment Details	By Whom
November 2023	Review and Approval	Central Executive
May 2024	Updated to reflect LA changes	Central Executive
August 2024	Updated to reflect new statutory guidance	Central Executive

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1. Introduction

This policy applies to all schools in Peterborough Diocese Education Trust (the / our Trust) including children of non-statutory school age who are on the roll of the school.

This policy will be published on each school's website and parents will be sent a copy of it with any initial information when a child joins the school and reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is updated.

The Trust's vision is: *'For every child, within our Trust, to experience an excellent education and to realise their God-given potential to flourish.'*

The DfE state: *'The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.'*

Therefore, in order to achieve our vision, children need to be consistently and regularly attending their school. Underpinned by our Christian ethos, the Trust is committed to creating a culture of calm, orderly, safe and supportive environments in our schools where all children want to be, are keen and ready to learn and thrive. It is also recognised that for the most vulnerable children, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Such a culture will ensure our children get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

Some children find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance our schools and partners will endeavour to work in partnership with children and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

High standards of attendance and punctuality are expected from all children, and it is the expectation that these are supported by parents.

2. Purpose and Aims

This policy sets out the Trust's expectations and approach in relation to attendance and the improving of attendance across the Trust. The individual school's approach to specific elements is set out in the School Specific Information - *Appendix A*.

The policy is based on Prevention, Early Intervention, and Targeted Support as set out in *'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'* (see flow charts at *paragraphs 6.1 & 8*) and aims to ensure:

2.1 Culture and Environment

Each school:

- Develops and maintains a whole school culture that consistently promotes the benefits of good / high attendance and makes the school a place children want to be
- Sets high expectations for every child
- Communicates expectations clearly and consistently to children and parents
- Regularly monitors and systematically analyses data to identify patterns to target their support to overcome barriers to attendance
- Works effectively with the local authority and other partners to overcome barriers to attendance

- Is particularly mindful of children absent due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and / or disabilities and provides them with support as appropriate.

2.2 Community

Each school:

- Works in partnership and collaboratively with local partners, children and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place
- Works together with partners to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all children 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 children 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 children and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early health 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 children's right to an education.

Taken from: Page 10, Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

3. Legislation and Statutory Requirements

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 a 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.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*.

The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of *The Education Act 1996*
- Part 3 of *The Education Act 2002*
- Part 7 of *The Education and Inspections Act 2006*
- *The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024*
- *The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.*

This policy complies with the Trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

4. Definitions

Parents:
Generally, parents include:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person, and
- Those who have day to day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

For the purpose of this policy the school and / or local authority will need to decide which adult is most appropriate to work with.

Headteacher:
Any reference in this policy to 'Headteacher' includes Principal, Head of School and / or Executive Head as appropriate.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

> *'Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils including their safeguarding and welfare and therefore should be seen as everybody's responsibility in school. That starts with the School Attendance Champion on the school's senior leadership team but includes all school staff.'*

Taken from: Page 11, Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

5.1 Academy Governance Committees (AGCs)

AGCs are responsible for reviewing and approving, *Appendix A* to this policy.

5.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at their school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Leading the creation and reinforcement of the culture set out in this policy, ensuring it permeates through every aspect of the school life
- Recognising improving attendance is a school leadership issue and having a designated senior leader (School Attendance Champion) with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in the school
- Overseeing the impact of measures to secure good levels of attendance. These measures should aim to:
  - recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life
  - recognise that absence is a symptom and that improving children's attendance is part of improving the children's overall welfare. This can be achieved by prioritising attendance within strategies relating to: attainment; behaviour; bullying; special educational needs support; supporting children with medical conditions or disabilities; safeguarding; wellbeing; support for disadvantaged children (including use of pupil premium); support for young carers and support for children with a social worker
- Making sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with children and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need
- Making sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding
- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all children and communicating these regularly to children and parents through all available channels. In doing so, helping parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development. It should also include clarity on the short and long-term consequences of poor attendance
- Visibly demonstrating the benefits of good attendance throughout school life; this may include in displays, collective worship or in registration periods. Where used sensitively and without discrimination, this may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance – *see paragraph 6.1.2*
- Recognising that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies
- Recognising children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation
- Reviewing *Appendix A* of this policy to ensure it reflects their individual school's approach to attendance, and for recommending to the AGC approval of *Appendix A*
- Ensuring effective reporting of attendance and absence data to local governors.

5.3 Senior Attendance Champion

The Senior Attendance Champion is a member of the school's senior leadership team. In our Trust the Headteacher may also be the Senior Attendance Champion.

The Senior Attendance Champion's responsibilities are:

- Championing and improving attendance in the school
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and making sure they are followed by all staff including:
  - liaising with children, parents and external agencies where needed
  - building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
  - creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with children and their parents
  - delivering targeted intervention and support to children and families
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes
- Analysing monitoring and evaluating attendance data to focus the collective efforts of the school
- Reporting attendance data to the Headteacher / local governors.

For name and contact details of an individual school's School Attendance Champion – *see Appendix A.*

5.4 Teachers and Staff

Appropriate / relevant staff should understand:

- Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all children including their safeguarding and welfare and should therefore be seen as everyone's responsibility in the school
- The importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances
- The law and requirements of schools including the keeping of registers
- The school's / Trust's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance
- The processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to children who need it
- How to interpret and analyse attendance data
- How to support children to overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance.

5.5 Parents

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends on time every day the school is open
- Notify the school before the time stated in *Appendix A* when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness; unplanned absence) and on each subsequent day of absence (as appropriate) and advise when they are expected to return
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- If their child is at risk of becoming persistently absent:
  - work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance; and
  - proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support

- If their child is persistently / severely absent:
  - work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance; and
  - proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any attendance contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

5.6 Children

Children are expected to:

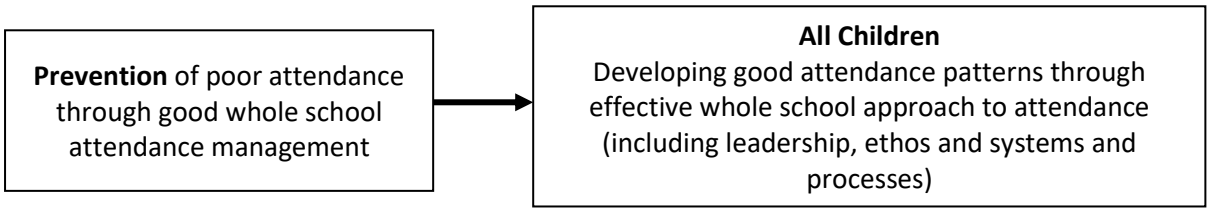
- Attend the school every day on time.

6. Effective Attendance Management

The school will proactively manage and endeavour to improve attendance across the school community.

Effective attendance management in our Trust is split into sections: prevention, early intervention and targeted re-engagement.

6.1 Prevention



6.1.1 Day to Day Attendance Process

- **Contact Details of School Staff in Relation to Attendance:**
  Information and contact details of the following can be found in (*Appendix A*):
  - School Attendance Champion
  - Who parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis
  - Who parents should contact for more detailed support on attendance.

- **Admission and Attendance Registers:**
  - Admission and attendance registers must be kept electronically and schools must accurately complete them using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. (*Full details on keeping admission registers and attendance registers can be found in Working Together to Improve School Attendance – sections 7 and 8 respectively.*
  - Attendance registers will be taken at the start of each morning session of each day and once at the beginning of each afternoon session.

- **Punctuality and Lateness:**
  - The start of the school morning session is as set out in *Appendix A*
  - The attendance register will close 30 minutes after the start of the school's morning session. Any child / children arriving during this 30 minute period will be recorded in the attendance register with code L

- Any child / children attending after close of the register will be considered as unauthorised and marked in the attendance register with code U for that session (i.e. for the full morning session).

For details of the individual school's procedures for managing and reducing lateness – *see Appendix A.*

- **Unplanned Absence:**
  - Parents must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence (e.g. illness) by the time specified in *Appendix A,* or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office. For details of specific procedures for an individual school – *See Appendix A*
  - Absence due to illness (both physical and mental health related) will be marked as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness
  - If a school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, the school may ask the parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence to support the absence. They will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily
  - If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified.

- **Process for Dealing with Unexplained Absence:**
  - The school's day to day processes for managing unexplained absence, for example first day calling and follow up, can be found in *Appendix A*
  - If, as part of managing attendance, a home visit is deemed necessary, this will only be undertaken following an appropriate risk assessment and will never be conducted by a lone member of staff

- **Process for Requesting Leave of Absence:**
  - Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence and it is at the school's discretion whether or not to grant it
  - Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request
  - If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the children can be away from the school
  - As leaves of absence should only be granted in exceptional circumstances it is very unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday

  ('*Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance*').

  Taken from: Paragraph 38 Page 18, Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

For details of an individual school's process for requesting leave of absence – see *Appendix A.*

- **Dentist / Medical appointments:**
  - The authorisation of dentist / medical appointments within the school day are at the Headteacher's discretion and the expectation is that evidence of such appointments is provided prior to the appointment except for those children where their attendance is below 90%, when evidence of appointments **must** be provided.

6.1.2 Promoting and Incentivising Good Attendance

Good attendance is a learned behaviour. It is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture. Therefore:

- The school will visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include in displays, collective worship or in registration periods
- Where used sensitively and without discrimination, the school will utilise praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at cohort or class-based level (e.g. weekly rewards for best attendance). In order to avoid any possible discrimination, the expectation is that there will not be individual rewards.

Details of ways the school promotes and incentivises good attendance can be found in *Appendix A.*

6.1.3 Monitoring and Evaluating Attendance data

6.1.3.1 Trust Level

The Trust recognises the importance of school attendance and will:

- Ensure school leaders fulfil their statutory duties in relation to attendance
- Promote good attendance across the Trust
- Prioritise attendance improvement so that effective strategies and action plans are put in place for children with poor attendance as it is crucial to safeguarding and improving children's overall welfare in both the short and long term
- Regularly review and monitor trust-wide attendance data, identify, discuss, and challenge trends (to identify common issues and barriers), and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual child or cohorts who need it most
- For schools that are struggling with their attendance, work with school leaders to improve attendance. Actions will form part of the school's Academy Improvement Plan and will not need to be a separate document. The impact of such actions will be evaluated regularly
- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools.

6.1.3.2 School: Whole School and Cohort Level

The school will:

- Monitor and analyse attendance data (including punctuality) half termly, termly and annually to identify patterns and trends for groups / cohorts of children. This should include uses of certain codes and days of poor attendance. The school should decide which cohorts of children should be included in their data analysis based on their context and school population. This may include: boys and girls, year groups, children with special educational needs or disabilities, children with a social worker or who are looked after by the local authority, children eligible for free school meals, and any children from backgrounds (including ethnicities, religions or beliefs, or sexual orientations where applicable) in the school community that have, or have historically had, lower attendance than their peers
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data. This may, for example, include children in a cohort with higher-than-average absence or for children eligible for free school meals if their attendance falls behind that of their more advantaged peers

- Use analyses to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and to leaders (including any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Benchmark their attendance data against Trust, local / regional, and national levels where possible to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented. The findings should then be used to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the Trust Board and to those with specific delegated responsibilities for monitoring attendance in the Trust i.e. Academy Improvement Officers.

6.1.3.3 School: Individual Child Level

The school will:

- Monitor and analyse attendance data rigorously every half term to identify poor attendance (i.e. below 96%) at individual child level
- Focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to identified children and families. This should not just focus on persistent and severe absence; it should look at all severities of absence to identify children who can be supported earlier before patterns become entrenched (see below to address poor attendance)
- Regularly inform all parents about their child's attendance levels as set out in *Appendix A*.

6.1.4 Children Absent due to Mental Ill Health, Physical Ill Health or SEND

Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. These children are however still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.

Staff play a critical role in communicating this expectation to parents. They should also work with families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible.

Some children face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include children who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. In developing support for these children, the usual processes relevant to any attendance case apply:

- Understanding the individual needs of the child and family
- Working in partnership with the child and family to put in-school support in place and working with the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available)
- Regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

In cases of both **long term physical or mental ill health**, staff are not expected to diagnose or treat physical or mental health conditions, but they are expected to work together with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every child. They should:

- Facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue

- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of the child / children who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a child has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the child and their parents
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxious feelings about school attendance.

For children with **special educational needs and disabilities**, schools are expected to:

- Work in partnership with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for these children, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the child's education, health and care plan (EHCP) is accessed
- Work in partnership with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed
- Work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these children face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments e.g. uniform, transport, routines, access to support in the school and lunchtime arrangements
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of children who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a child has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the child and their parents
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed.

Attendance is everyone's business therefore in many of these cases the school will not be able to fully support a child without the assistance of a range of other agencies. The school should:

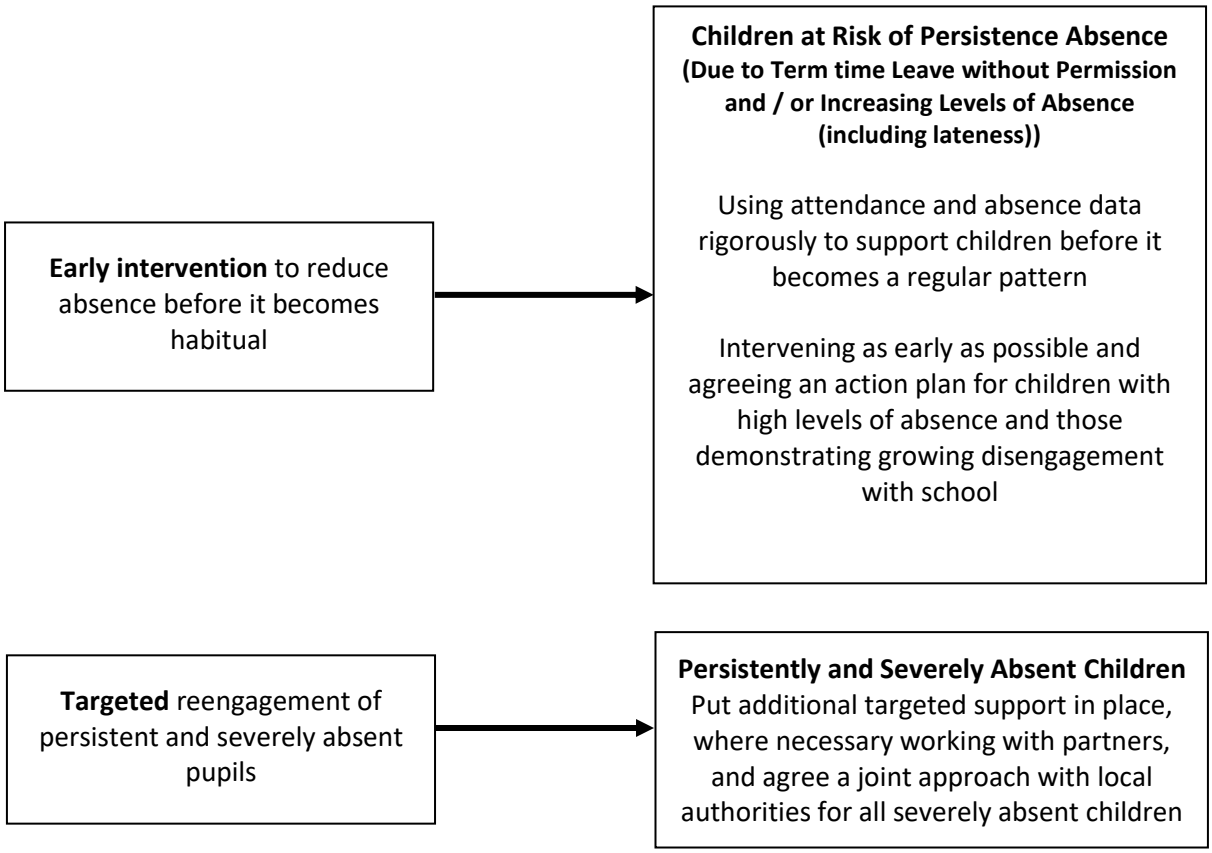
- Make use of school nursing services and mental health support teams where they are available
- Consider whether additional support from other external partners (including the local authority, children and young people's mental health services, GPs or other health services) would be appropriate and make referrals
- Where external support is provided work together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

If the **child has an EHCP**, the school should:

- Communicate with the local authority where a child's attendance falls or they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the child's needs
- Where possible agree adjustments to its policies and practices that are consistent with the special educational provision set out in the EHCP in collaboration with parents
- Where needed work with the local authority to review and amend the EHCP to incorporate the additional or different attendance support identified.

Schools should ensure data is regularly monitored for children with long term illnesses and or special educational needs or disabilities including at AGC meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

6.2 Early Intervention and Targeted Re-engagement



Adapted from: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Attendance / Absence:
Poor attendance is a generic term for attendance below 96% which includes the following:

- **At risk of persistent absence:** attendance 90.1% - 95.9% (inclusive)
- **Persistent absence:** attendance ≤90%
- **Severe absence:** attendance ≤ 50%

Children can be both severely and persistently absent.

6.2.1 Process for Managing and Reducing Poor Attendance

In all cases when a pattern of poor attendance is identified:

- Children (if appropriate) and parents will be listened to, and discussions will take place in order to try to understand barriers to attendance within the school and subsequently agree how all partners can work together to resolve them
- Work will be undertaken with children (if appropriate) and parents to access the support they need to overcome any barriers outside of the school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

- **At risk of Persistent Absence:**
  - Weekly attendance patterns and trends will be monitored, analysed and intervention and support delivered in a targeted way to children and families. This will include looking at individual children and cohorts (including their punctuality).

- **Persistent Absence:**
  - Where absence escalates and children are **persistently absent** (i.e. miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to one day or more a fortnight across a full school year)), the school will work with the local authority to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these children. In doing so, the school should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of the school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties. The process that will be followed is set out in *Appendix B1.*

- **Severe Absence:**
  - Particular focus will be given to children who are **severely absent** from the school (i.e. they are absent more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school)). These severely absent children may find it more difficult to be in the school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. The school will therefore work with all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school. The process that will be followed is set out in *Appendix B1.*

- **Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with**:
  - The school will work with partners to explain clearly to the parents the consequences; and
  - Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

- **Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with**, the school will notify the local authority who may enforce attendance through legal intervention to protect the child's right to an education – *see paragraph 7 for details.* For information on formal support and statutory intervention – see the chart at *Appendix B2.*

7. Legal Intervention

This section provides details in relation to notices to improve, penalty notices and prosecution. However, schools and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of other legal interventions i.e. Attendance Contracts, Education Supervision Orders, Parenting Orders as appropriate.

7.1 Notices to Improve

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. Details of what is sufficient improvement for each case should be made clear in the Notice to Improve.

Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to issue a penalty notice before the improvement period has ended. The parent should be informed before a penalty notice is issued if it is before the end of the improvement period.

7.2 Penalty Notices

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

If a school deems a child's attendance to be irregular (i.e. they have 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks (including spanning different terms or school years)) it must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate as the non-attendance will have reached the national threshold for such consideration. The school should make a judgement on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency.

When a school becomes aware that the **threshold has been met**, they are expected to make the following considerations to decide whether a penalty notice should be issued in each individual case:

- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that child. NB: In the case of a holiday in term time, a penalty notice should be issued
- Whether support / further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the child must not be present in a public place on that day).

'Support' is defined as any activity intended to improve the child's attendance, not including issuing a penalty notice or prosecution. As part of this consideration, the school and local authority should consider what suitable forms of support are currently available in the school and where necessary from other services and agencies in the area. They should then decide whether any of those things are appropriate in the individual cases and for those that are appropriate, whether they have been provided previously or could be provided now instead of taking legal action. The local authority's decision on whether sufficient support has been provided before issuing a penalty notice should be treated as final.

Whatever action is taken after the national threshold has been met, the school, and local authority where appropriate, should monitor the impact of the action, and if it does not lead to attendance improvement, review the case and consider alternative actions.

If in an individual case the local authority (or other authorised officer) believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events.

(See below for Penalty Notice rates.)

7.3 Repeated Penalty Notices

If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. Therefore, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The **first penalty notice** issued to a parent in respect of a particular child will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. (Each parent who is liable for the child's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent / parents who allowed the absence.)
- A **second penalty notice** issued to the same parent in respect of the same child is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days
- A **third penalty notice** cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Once 3 years has elapsed since the first penalty notice was issued a further penalty notice can be issued, but in most cases, it would not be the most effective tool for changing what may have now become an entrenched pattern of behaviour.

In cases where a child has moved school or local authority area in the previous 3 years an additional check should be made to try to ascertain whether previous penalty notices have been issued to the parent in respect of the child.

Parent(s) can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice.

7.4 Prosecution

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at the school at which they are registered, their parents may be guilty of an offence. There are 2 separate offences where parents fail to secure their child's regular attendance at school and the following sanctions apply:

- A fine of up to £1000 where a child is absent without authorisation (Section 441(1) Education Act 1996)
- A fine of up to £2,500 and / or a community order or a prison sentence of up to 3 months where a child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the absence and failed to act (Section 441 (1A) Education Act 1996).

8. Monitoring Arrangements of the Policy

This Attendance Policy will be reviewed by the Trust (and *Appendix A* by the Headteacher and AGC) every year.

9. Links with Other Policies

This attendance policy is linked to the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Equalities Statement.

Appendix A - School Specific Information

Name of School:	
Senior Attendance Champion:	
Name of Member of Staff to Contact regarding Absence on a Day-to-Day Basis:	[Please contact school office.]
Name of Member of Staff to Contact for More Detailed Support on Attendance:	[Please contact school office.]

Vision and Values:

[*Insert details and include a positive statement about your school's approach to attendance.*]

Times:

Registration session opens:	
Register closes:	
Afternoon Session start time:	

Promoting and Incentivising Good Attendance:

In our school we [*Insert details*]

Process for Notification of Unplanned Absence:

[*Insert details e.g. notify x by y time on first day etc.*]

Procedure for Dealing with Unexplained Absence:

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, we will:

[*Insert details of your procedures. (Example included)*]

- [*Call the child's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the child's emergency contacts, we may [insert measures, e.g. contact police]*
- *Identify whether the absence is approved or not*
- *Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the child was absent*

- *Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, we will consider involving an education welfare officer*
- *Where appropriate, offer support to the child and / or their parents to improve attendance*
- *Identify whether the child needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals*
- *Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see paragraph 7 of this policy), as appropriate*].

Procedure for Lateness:

[*Insert details of your procedures.*]

Procedure for Requesting Leave of Absence:

[*Insert details of your procedures.*]

Reporting to Parents:

[*Insert details of your procedures.*]

Appendix B1 – Process to be Followed When Attendance Falls Below Certain Levels

NB – the DfE guidance refers to 'severely absent' as children who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). Consequently, children can be both severely and persistently absent therefore the same process will apply as below.

At Risk of becoming Persistently Absent (Attendance 90.1% - 95.9%):

- At the Headteacher's discretion notification (via a letter or through an app / text) to be sent to parents informing them of concerns regarding level of absence and impact on learning
- At the Headteacher's discretion request a meeting with the parent.

Persistent Absence (Attendance ≤90%):

At the Headteacher's discretion to action all or some of the following as appropriate:

- Letter to be sent to parents informing them of a high level of absence accompanied by a request for a meeting
- Attendance targets to be set at meeting for the next five weeks from the date of the meeting
- Parents to be informed that the School Attendance Support Team (SAST) at the LA will be informed if no improvement
- Consideration to be given to a possible EHA
- All further absences to be reported as unauthorised unless accompanied by evidence (e.g. a doctor's note). This is to inform the next step of a referral to Education Inclusion Partnership Team (EIPT) / SAST
- School attendance contract to be put in place
- In the event of non-attendance at a meeting – targets to be set in absence and parent informed.

Continued Persistent Absence:

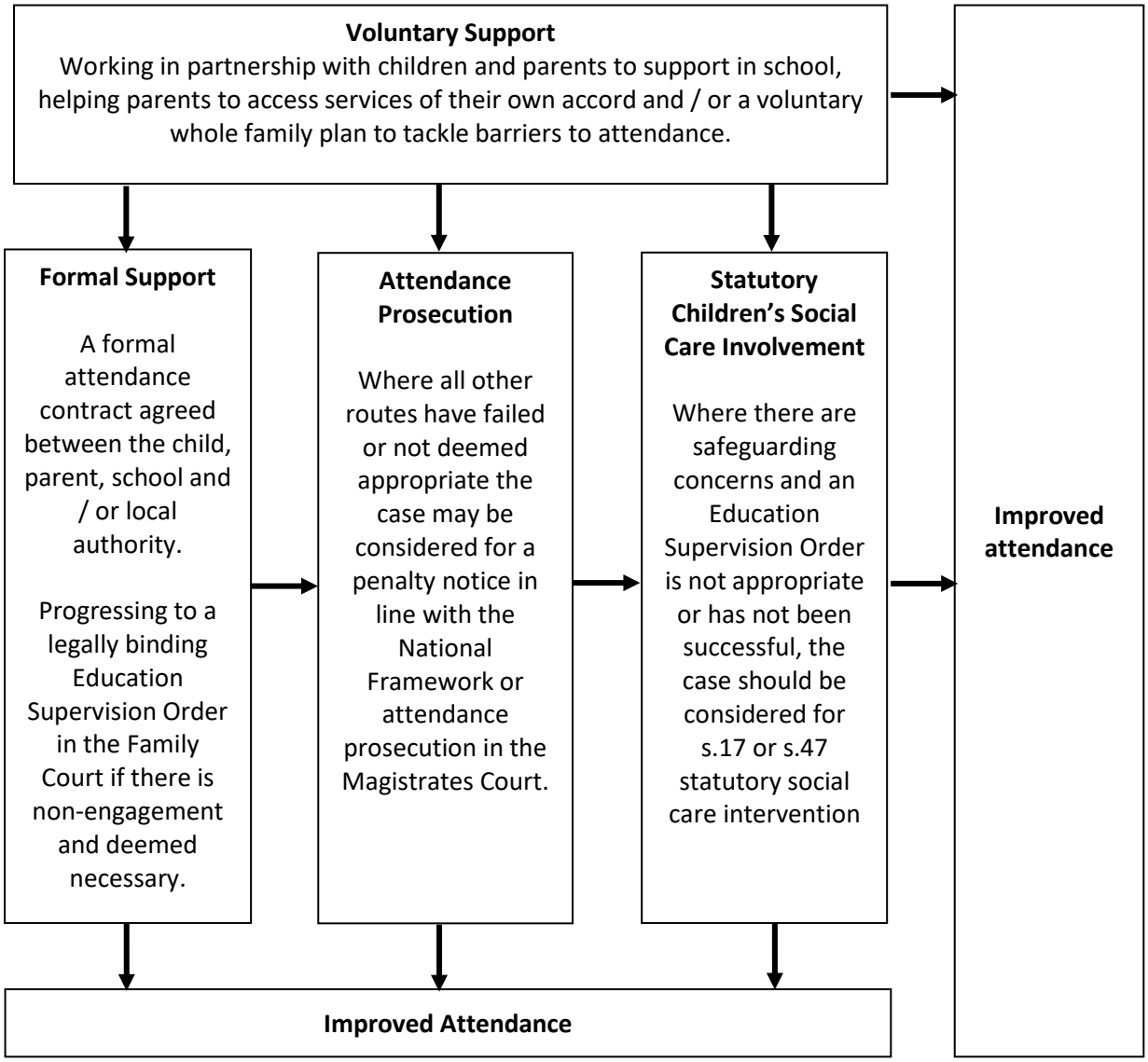
- Letter to be sent to parents informing them of no improvement / targets have not been met / sustained accompanied by a request for a meeting
- Referral to SAST
- Invitation for SAST to attend meeting
- Reconsideration of EHA, as appropriate
- School attendance contract to be put in place for 6 weeks (signed by child in addition, if appropriate).

If school attendance contract does not sufficiently improve attendance, or there is non-engagement and all other avenues have been exhausted:

- Proceed to Education Supervision Order, Statutory Children's Social Care Involvement, Attendance Prosecution, as appropriate – see flow chart at Appendix B2.

Appendix B2 - Formal Support and Legal Intervention Flow Chart

As absence is so often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, schools, trusts and local authorities should always work together with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where that is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects children's right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. Attendance legal intervention can only be used for children of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis.



Reference: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)
page 47, Chapter 6, paragraph 135