

# St Mary and All Saints CE Primary School

## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

AUTUMN 2024

**VISION STATEMENT**

**Head, Hand, Heart**

With our heads we learn • With our hands we create • With our hearts we love & care for each other

We believe in education of the whole child and through this holistic approach, and our christian ethos, when children leave SMAS they are:

- Confident, resilient learners
- Able to challenge themselves and overcome challenges
- Well-rounded young people
- Equipped for life in an ever changing world
- Global citizens, respectful of themselves & others
- Caring and thoughtful individuals

Colossians 2:2 "My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love so they may have the full riches of complete understanding"

Review Date: Autumn 2025

## **1. Introduction – The importance of school attendance**

As a Church of England school, we believe that all children deserve an education that embraces excellence and academic rigour within the wider framework of spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development: an education that promotes life in all its fullness.

Accordingly, St Mary & All Saints aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them. Attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide-ranging and can be complex, both within and beyond the school gates. They are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore 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. We recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

St Mary and all Saints believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. St Mary and all Saints values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Good attendance is a learned behaviour, and the most effective schools recognise the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. Schools that have good attendance recognise that it is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture. St Mary and all Saints recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

## **2. Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

### **3. The law on school attendance and right to full time education**

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%).

### **4. Expectations of schools**

All schools have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community. Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils including their safeguarding and welfare and should therefore be seen as everyone's responsibility in school. That starts with the senior attendance champion on the school's leadership team, but includes all school staff.

St Mary and All Saints promotes the benefits of good attendance at school and makes schools a place pupils want to be, sets high expectations for every pupil, communicates those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents, systematically analyse their data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts, and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. They also recognise that attendance cannot be seen in isolation and that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils can learn and thrive.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

To manage and improve attendance effectively, all schools are expected to:

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

## **5. Building relationships and working jointly with families.**

Good attendance starts with close and productive relationships between the school, parents and pupils, and an understanding of both the huge benefits that regular school attendance brings to the child, as well as a parents' legal responsibility to ensure they do so. Schools should treat all pupils and parents with dignity, and staff should model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. Ensuring primary school children attend regularly is the responsibility of the parent or carer, and not the child, so children should never be humiliated, reprimanded or punished for non-attendance. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school works alongside and supports the family. Wherever possible the person should be kept consistent. Supporting families, and positively encouraging children to attend consistently, is generally the most effective way to improve attendance.

Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic schools should draw on these relationships and listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. In doing so, schools should take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

Supportive approaches are most effective when they are put in place as early as possible and therefore it is essential all parties work together in a timely manner. In all cases, the school should monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments, where necessary, in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved, as part of any whole family plan or team around the family.

Where interventions are failing, all parties should work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach. In very few cases will all options have been exhausted, therefore partners are expected to work together to continue offering new approaches. If a particular form of support is refused or does not work initially, schools and parents are expected to provide further opportunities to engage in that support or try something else.

As outlined in the Working Together to Improve Attendance 2024 document, all children of compulsory school age, have a legal right to a carefully planned, full-time education that meets their particular needs. It is the legal responsibility of every parent or carer to ensure that their child receives this entitlement. Should parents or carers not engage with their child's school to deliver this entitlement, or their child fails to make the required improvement in attendance, the school may consider formal approaches, such as a meeting with senior staff, a formal warning letter or an attendance contract. In rare circumstances, poor attendance can result in attendance prosecution, including fines or prosecution in a Magistrates Court. Such action would be considered on a case-by-case basis, and with the aim of precipitating a positive outcome on patterns of attendance. However, it is the school's belief that by working positively together, these more formal or punitive measures should not be necessary.

### **Registers**

Effective and timely use and sharing of register data is critical to improve attendance. St Mary and All Saints are expected to use an electronic management information system to keep their attendance and admission registers to improve accuracy, speed up the process of sharing and analysing information, and make returns to local authorities and DfE easier. Registers are legal records and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date the data was entered

## **6. Categorising absence**

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head teacher holds the authority to decide whether an absence is authorised or not and a letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received. Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence.

If a child is going to be absent from school, parents should ring the office on 01494 673762 and press through to the absence line giving the name, year group and short explanation for the child's absence from school.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

**Illness:** In most cases a telephone call from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable.

**Medical/Dental Appointments:** Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

### **Other Authorised Circumstances: Authorised Absences**

- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- The pupil is the child of a Traveller parents and the conditions as stated in paragraph 47 of the guidance are met.
- There is a close family bereavement
- The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition.
- The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit or being educated off site
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance.
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion (e.g. if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling).
- The pupil is visiting a potential new school.
- The pupil was absent with leave granted by the Head teacher (or any person authorised to do so by the governing body of the school) for a predetermined length of time. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.
- The pupil is attending an interview
- The pupil has a temporary, time limited part time timetable.

**Excluded (no alternative provision made):** Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher/form tutor/Head of Year will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

**Late Arrivals:** Registration begins at 8.55am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9.25am (*no more than thirty minutes after the opening of the register*). Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session. On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

(Code M) The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry. (Code U)

**Unauthorised absence:** Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

**Leave of Absence and Extended Leave:** Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before arrangements are made. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Parents/carers receive a signed copy of the 'Leave of Absence' form with dates.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice.

## **7. Religious Observance**

St Mary and All Saints acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R) It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body. Where possible, Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be

designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

### **8. Traveller Absence:**

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

St Mary and All Saints will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at the school will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

St Mary and All Saints can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

The school will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

### **9. Deletions from the Register**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools

- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

St Mary and All Saints will follow Buckinghamshire County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

St Mary and All Saints believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.



# St Mary & All Saints CE primary School –Home school agreement

## Head, Hand Heart

With our heads we learn. With our hands we create and with our hearts we love and care for each other

### School

The school will:

- actively fulfil our safeguarding duties, ensuring all children have a 'Trusted 5'.
- care for all pupils at SMAS and treat them fairly, including supporting any special educational needs.
- provide all pupils with a balanced curriculum and additional opportunities to enable them to achieve the school's vision.
- implement all school policies fairly and make sure they are readily available on request.
- take any concerns seriously and deal with them as appropriate.
- be open and welcoming to all parents and supporters of children and value their input.
- contact parents if there are any concerns about their child, including problems with attendance, punctuality or resources.
- send home an annual school report.
- arrange Parents' Evenings during which progress will be discussed.
- keep parents informed about school activities through regular letters home, newsletters and the school website.
- Provide appropriate home learning, opportunities for all children to complete, including reading books.

Class Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Parent

I will:

- see that my child attends school regularly, on time and is properly equipped.
- let the school know about any concerns or problems that might affect my child's work or behaviour.
- support and encourage my child to lead a healthy lifestyle (healthy eating, exercise, personal care and wellbeing).
- support the school's policies and guidelines for behaviour.
- support my child with their home learning and ensure this is completed and submitted on time.
- ensure my child has an appropriate place and time to complete their home learning.
- encourage my child to read at home on a regular basis and record this in their diary.
- attend Parents' Evening and discussions about my child's progress.
- get to know about my child's life at the school by reading newsletters, parent mails etc.
- recognise and support achievement and progress.
- arrange holidays outside school time.
- encourage my child to use their 'Trusted 5' adults if they have any concerns.

Parent/carer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Pupil

I will:

- try my best and work hard to improve in all I do.
- take pride in my achievements and progress.
- make sure I know, understand and follow the school rules.
- respect other people (children and adults), their property and the school.
- listen to my teacher and other adults at all times.
- attend school on a regular basis and be punctual, polite and organised.
- behave well to maintain the safety of myself and others.
- complete my home learning to the best of my ability and ensure that it is submitted on time.
- read at home on a regular basis.
- talk to one of my 'Trusted 5' adults if I am struggling with anything e.g. school work, friendships etc.
- uphold the school values of Wisdom, Creativity and Love.

Name of pupil: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Using Attendance Data

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern. Every **half term** the office will provide the **Headteacher** with attendance data for the previous **five weeks** for each pupil within their **school**. The list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attendees at the top; This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix A). Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment. **The school** will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## 11. Support Systems

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. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school 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. St Mary and All Saints School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil but additional support may need to be provided.

St Mary and All Saints will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Early help support / multi-agency working

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

## 12. Part time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. In some circumstances their education may be provided partially at school and partially at another educational setting or through education otherwise than at a school in line with section 19 of the Education Act 1996 or section 42 or 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Time away from school to receive education in other ways must be recorded in the attendance register using the appropriate codes.

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school or another setting full-time and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

### **13. Expectations of the governing body**

Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge. Therefore, all trusts and governing bodies are expected to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Whilst it is expected that all governing bodies will provide support covering these areas, the approach to delivering it should be proportionate to the size of the group of schools and type of school(s) within it.

Governing bodies of schools should take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with school leaders to set whole school attendance cultures.

This should include:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents.
- Recognising that absence is a symptom and that improving pupil's attendance is part of improving the pupil's overall welfare. This can be achieved by prioritising attendance in strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour and combatting bullying, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding.
- Ensuring their schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent attendance support is provided for pupils who require it most by prioritising the staff and resources needed. This includes ensuring schools engage and work effectively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and wider local partners and services.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils, but that processes and support are adapted to the individual needs of particular pupils. This includes those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.
- Repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of their school(s)' processes and improvement efforts to ensure they are meeting the needs of pupils as experiences and barriers to attendance evolve.
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Governing bodies should provide support and challenge to their schools around current trends on attendance in the school community, by:

- Regularly reviewing attendance data at board meetings. This should include thorough examination of recent and historic trends at a school level as well as benchmarking to comparator schools within the trust, local authority area, region and nationwide.
- Paying particular attention to attendance of pupil cohorts within their school(s) that have historically had poor attendance or that face entrenched barriers to attendance. This should be specific to the school's context, but may include pupils who have a social worker, are from a background or ethnicity where attendance has historically been low, have a long-term medical condition, special educational needs or a disability, or are eligible for free school meals.
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those focus areas.

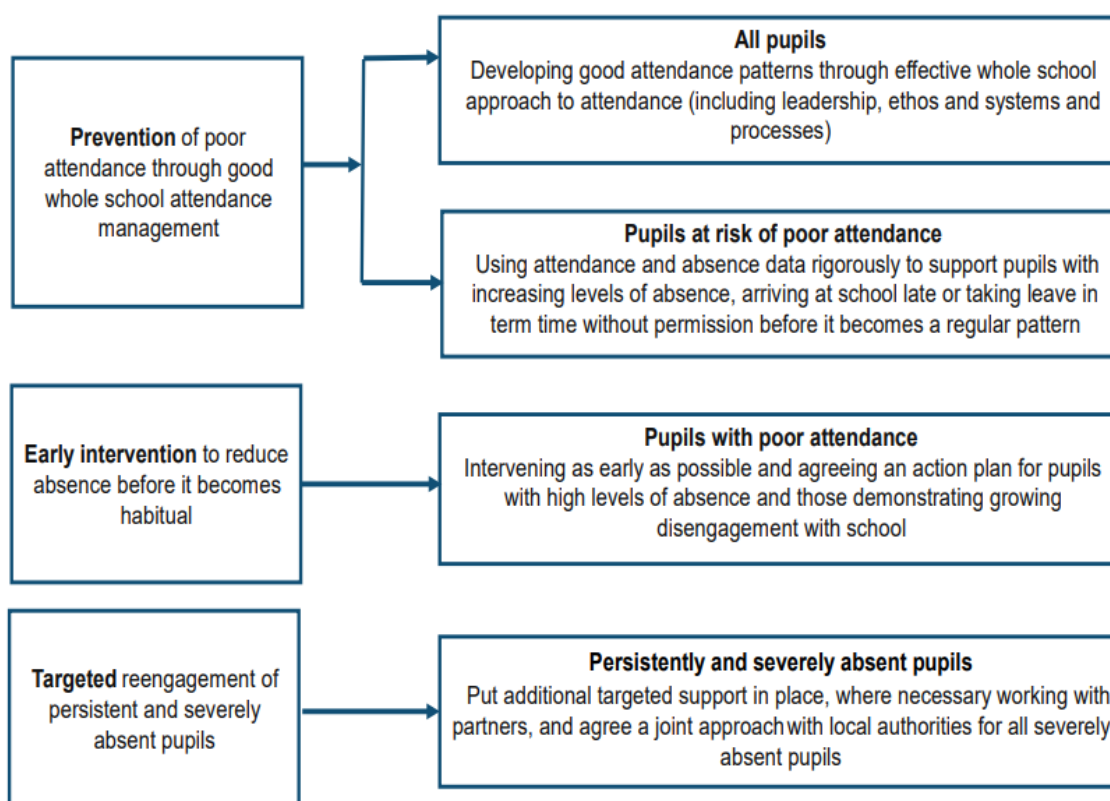
#### 14. Persistent and severe absence

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, schools should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils 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 across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across 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.

Both persistent and severe absence should also be central to school, trust, and local authority level strategies for improving attendance.

#### Effective school attendance improvement and management



## **15. Attendance Legal Intervention**

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 pupils' 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 pupils of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis.

Schools and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on penalty notices or prosecution.

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance we **will** notify the County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance. The County Attendance Team or school, may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/.carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

## Working together to improve attendance

14. Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

### **Expect**

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

### **Monitor**

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

### **Listen and understand**

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

### **Facilitate support**

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

### **Formalise support**

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

### **Enforce**

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

## All pupils

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

## 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:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.</p>	<p>Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence.</p> <p>Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 includes 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.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance.</p> <p>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.</p>



## Persistently absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through a referral to statutory children's social care.</p> <p>Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including attendance contracts and education supervision orders.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).</p>

## Severely absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

## 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.	<p>Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.</p> <p>Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.</p>	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 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:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.</p> <p>Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

## 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:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Know who the pupils who have, or who have had, a social worker are.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 impact on children's educational outcomes.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Through the work of Virtual School Heads, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Provide advice, challenge and training to schools on how to promote and secure good attendance for children with a social worker.</li> <li>Develop whole system approaches, with social care, to support the attendance of children in need.</li> </ul>

## 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:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand the child's barriers to attendance – including the development of Personal Education Plans.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Have high expectations for the cohort – with expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.</p> <p>Monitor and review attendance of the cohort and consider how school policies, including behaviour policies, are sensitive to their needs and support good attendance.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>(LA that looks after the child:) Appoint an expert Virtual School Head (VSH) – will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Provide expert advice and information on the education of previously looked-after pupils to schools and parents – including their attendance.</li> </ul>

## Monitoring

Parents:	Schools:	Academy trustees and governing bodies:	Local authorities:
<p>Schools regularly update parents on their child's attendance.</p> <p>(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.)</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>The governing board or academy trust will hold the headteacher or executive leadership to account for 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.</p> <p>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 causes to improve attendance for all pupils.</p> <p>Ultimately, in cases where a school has not met expectations or statutory duties the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.</p>	<p>DfE Regions Group considers multi academy trusts' efforts on attendance as part of decision making.</p> <p>Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections.</p>	<p>DfE Regions Group monitors local authority efforts as part of regular interaction.</p> <p>Ofsted may consider the local area partnership's 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.</p> <p>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.</p>