Pupil Attendance Policy

Written by	Reviewed & Ratified by Governors	Shared with Staff	Last Updated	Review Cycle	Next Review Due
Polly Ross Headteacher	October 2026	September 2026 Inset Day	September 2026	Annually	September 2027

1.0 Statement of Intent

Shefford Lower School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "Working together to improve school attendance" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. This draft School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

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

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school;
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

It has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers, parents, pupils. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

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

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

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the *headteacher,* not the parent, who can authorise the absence.** This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which provides detailed procedures for responding to safeguarding concerns that may arise from attendance issues.

2.0 Legal Framework

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

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. 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.

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

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

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

2.1 This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance and School attendance parental responsibility measures. 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

The Equality Act 2010

It also refers to:

School census guidance

Keeping Children Safe in Education

Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit

- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK GDPR
- Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

2.2 Links with Other Policies

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Home visits Procedure
- SEND Policy and SEND Information Report
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- EYFS Policy
- Mobile phones and mobile devices

3.0 Roles & Responsibilities

The name of the Attendance Champion (the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school) is:

Duncan Wakefield (Deputy Headteacher) or Julia Parry (DSL)

The governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is Sarah Grosvenor-Brown.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of governors, parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

3.1 The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils, parents and carers
- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties and comply with the law
- Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
- Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance and dedicated training for staff with specific attendance function within their role
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Delegate monitoring of attendance to the link governor and attendance committee including 3 link monitoring visits a year
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary authorising the DHTs to do so as required
- Working with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority.

3.3 The Attendance Champion

The Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school and supporting the vulnerable pupil team with improving attendance for individual pupils
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis and meeting with the school's data manger termly
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues alongside the Family Support Worker (FSW)
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families alongside the Family Support Worker (FSW) and Vulnerable Pupil Team
- Support the use of a range of strategies including TAC (Team Around the Child) meetings and home visits for persistent absentees

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- Manage the Vulnerable Pupil Team and support high standards of attendance through this team
- Promote the benefits of high attendance;
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.

3.4 The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the attendance champion and the Headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- The attendance officer can be contacted on attendance@shefford.cbeds.co.uk

3.5 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress
- Working with parents to improve attendance and highlighting patterns in attendance to the Vulnerable Pupil Team.
- Supporting a culture of high attendance within the community

3.6 School Office Staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the leadership team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Monitor ParentMail and absence reporting through ParentMail
- Ensure a system is in place for sharing our attendance data with the Department of Education and Local Authority, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law

3.7 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.50am on the first day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child. If the child is in the Early Years Foundation Stage, provide more than 2 emergency contact numbers, where possible.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Request any leave of absence at least 4 weeks in advance by emailing the school office
- Engage with any support strategies put in place to improve attendance
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the school's family support team, who can be contacted via familysupport@shefford.cbeds.co.uk

4.0 Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

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

4.1 Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

4.2 Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however is counted as an absence for the session;
- Shopping trips;
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- Their own or family birthdays;
- Holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends;
- Day trips;
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

5.0 Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a **'persistent absentee'** when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent'**. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

6.0 Absence Procedures

We monitor and review all pupils' absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

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

- If your child is ill report your child's absence via the Absence Module on Parentmail before 8.50am stating how long the absence is likely to be and the specific illness i.e. headache, sickness etc.
- Requests for other absences should be sent via the school email, schooloffice@shefford.cbeds.co.uk
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised;
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before *8.50 am;*
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained in the following NHS website https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/

6.2 If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us;
- If we are unable to make contact with parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding
- Home visits may also be carried out if the child is reported absent, but the school has reason to believe they may be on holiday
- A referral may be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child could be considered to be "missing from education." In certain circumstances this could result in your child being removed from our school roll and you would need to reapply for a place, were one was still available

6.3 If absence continues we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%, and/or where punctuality is a concern;

- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with our Senior Attendance Champion
- Create an individual attendance plan to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child;
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

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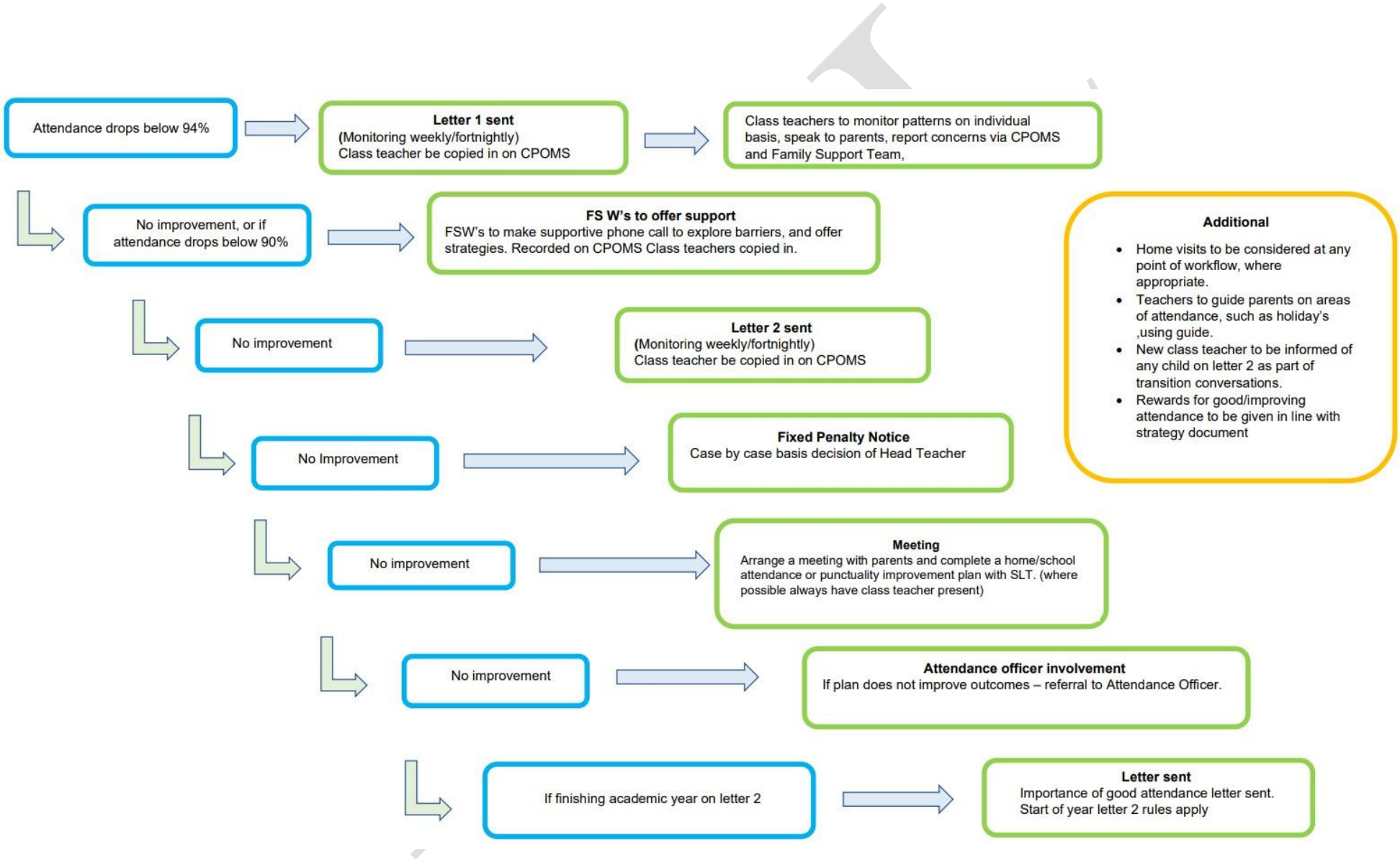
6.4 Flow Diagram: The flow chart below details the different stages and when specific letters are sent to parents.



7.0 Lateness and Punctuality

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

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

Persistent 'Lates' will be followed up by the attendance team in the same way as general attendance.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Shefford Lower School are:

Gates open: 8.35am
Registration starts: 8.40am
Registration closes: 8.50am
End of the school day: 3.20pm

7.1 How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at ***8.40am*** when children can begin to come into school;
- Registers are taken at ***8.50am;***
- Children arriving after ***8.55am*** are required to come into school via the school office. If accompanied by a parent/carer they must sign them into our 'Late Book' and provide a reason for their lateness, which is recorded
- At ***9.20am*****,** in accordance with the Regulations, your child will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence;
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns;
- From time to time a member of school staff will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school.

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with our Attendance Champion, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

8.0 Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health Service, Early Help Worker/Social

Worker/Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Child meeting (TAC) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

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

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness. Where attendance concerns are linked to safeguarding issues, staff should refer to our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for detailed procedures.

See Annex A for summary tables of responsibilities for school attendance.

8.1 Early Years attendance

Strong attendance habbits are supported and encouraged in Early Years. While we encourage regular attendance for all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), we recognise that young children may need time to settle into school routines and may be more susceptible to minor illnesses. When deciding whether a child's absence should be considered prolonged, we will consider the patterns and trends in the child's absences and their personal circumstances, as well as the vulnerability of the child and their parents and the circumstances of their home life. We will work closely with EYFS families to establish positive attendance habits from the start, understanding that building strong home-school relationships during this phase is crucial for long-term attendance success. Where attendance concerns arise, we will take a supportive, family-centred approach, recognising that barriers to attendance in EYFS may differ from those affecting older pupils.

8.2 Attendance and Alternative Provision

Where a pupil attends alternative provision (AP), either full-time or part-time, the school retains responsibility for the safeguarding and welfare of that pupil. We will ensure robust arrangements are in place to monitor attendance and maintain oversight of the pupil's education.

Our procedures include:

Daily attendance monitoring: We require the AP provider to notify us of any absence on the same day, using the agreed method of communication. The AP provider must inform us by 9:30am or 1.30 pm for afternoon session, if the pupil has not arrived

Attendance registers: The AP provider maintains their own attendance register, and we record the pupil's attendance on our school register using the appropriate code (B - educated off-site, or D - dual registration, as applicable)

Information sharing: We have a formal agreement in place with each AP provider that sets out expectations for attendance reporting, safeguarding procedures, and communication protocols

Regular review meetings: Our designated member of staff, ARP lead or Inclusion lead, maintains regular contact with the AP provider to review the pupil's attendance, progress, and wellbeing. These meetings take place at least fortnightly.

- **Immediate action on absence:** If the AP provider reports that a pupil has not arrived and we have not been notified of an absence by the parent/carer, we will immediately contact the family and follow our safeguarding procedures if we cannot establish the pupil's whereabouts
- **Parental responsibility:** Parents/carers remain responsible for ensuring their child attends the AP as required and must notify both the school and the AP provider of any absence, following the same procedures as for school-based attendance
- **Reintegration planning:** Where AP is time-limited, we will work with the provider, pupil, and family to plan for successful reintegration to full-time school attendance, with regular reviews of the arrangement

Part-time timetables and AP:
Where a pupil attends AP as part of a part-time timetable arrangement, we will:
- Set a clear proposed end date for the arrangement at the outset
- Regularly review the arrangement to ensure it continues to meet the pupil's needs
- Work towards the pupil returning to full-time education as quickly as possible
- Ensure the arrangement is formally recorded and agreed with parents/carers

This is in line with paragraphs 65 to 70 of the DfE's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance.

Safeguarding: Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is informed of all AP arrangements and maintains oversight of safeguarding for pupils attending AP. We conduct due diligence checks on all AP providers before placement, including safeguarding policies, staff vetting procedures, and health and safety arrangements.

8.3 Part-Time Timetables
In some circumstances, we may implement a part-time timetable for a pupil where this is deemed necessary to support their successful integration into school or to address specific barriers to attendance. In such circumstances there will be a reintegration plan co-produced by professionals and parents. This is most commonly used when a pupil is integrating into our Additional Resourced Provision (ARP), or where a pupil with SEND is experiencing significant anxiety or other barriers that prevent them from accessing full-time education. Any arrangements where a pupil is not in school full-time constitutes a 'part-time timetable' and we follow the DfE's strict expectations around this, including setting a proposed end date for the arrangement at the outset.
Part-time timetables are only ever used as a short-term measure and are implemented with the clear goal of supporting the pupil to move towards full-time education as quickly as possible, while ensuring appropriate support is in place. We recognise that every child is entitled to full-time education and that part-time timetables should be the exception, not the rule.

Our approach includes:
- Formal agreement with parents/carers before any part-time timetable is implemented
- A clear, written plan setting out the days/hours the pupil will attend, the support in place, and the intended outcomes
- A proposed end date agreed at the start
- Regular reviews to assess progress and work towards increasing attendance
- Clear targets and milestones for progression towards full-time attendance
- Appropriate provision for the hours when the pupil is not in school
- Reporting all part-time timetable arrangements to Central Bedfordshire Council
- Close monitoring by our SENCO and Attendance Champion to ensure the arrangement is meeting the pupil's needs and progress is being made

Part-time timetables are recorded on our attendance register using the appropriate code (C - authorised absence due to exceptional circumstances), and we maintain detailed records of the arrangement, reviews, and progress

towards full-time attendance. Parents/carers remain responsible for their child's safety and wellbeing during the hours they are not in school.
We ensure that part-time timetables are only used where there is a clear educational or wellbeing rationale, and we work closely with families, our SENCO, and external professionals to ensure the pupil receives the support they need to return to full-time education.

8.4 Flexible Schooling
Shefford Lower School does not operate a flexible schooling arrangement. All pupils on roll are expected to attend full-time education unless there are exceptional circumstances that warrant a temporary part-time timetable. Flexible schooling is an arrangement where parents choose to educate their child at home for part of the week while the child remains on the school roll and attends school part-time. This is different from a part-time timetable, which is a temporary, school-led intervention to support a pupil's return to full-time education.

The headteacher, Mrs Ross, has discretion to consider requests for flexible schooling on a case-by-case basis. It is the school's strong preference for all pupils to attend full-time to ensure they:

- Access the full curriculum and benefit from consistent teaching
- Develop strong peer relationships and social skills
- Receive appropriate support for any SEND or wellbeing needs
- Make expected progress across all areas of learning

If you believe there are exceptional circumstances that warrant consideration of a flexible schooling arrangement, please contact the headteacher in writing, setting out:

- The educational rationale for the request
- The proposed pattern of attendance
- How you will ensure your child receives a suitable education at home
- How long you envisage the arrangement lasting

Any request will be carefully considered, but approval cannot be guaranteed.

8.5 Elective Home Education - If a child is being removed from school roll in order to be home educated, the school will ensure all relevant safeguarding information is shared with the Elective Home Education team in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

9.0 Local Authority attendance support services

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

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

10.0 National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up

of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11.0 Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Shefford Lower School*, other than at the end of year 4, pa*rents/carers are required to email the school office providing the school with the following information: child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all of our pupils, even those who leave us.

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

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are now **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has

been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

12.0 Absence data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit pupil attendance data to the Department for Education and Local Authority on a daily basis 'Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.' Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe. Where a pupil becomes persistently or severely absent, the Attendance Champion will liaise with the DSL to determine whether there are any safeguarding concerns that need to be addressed. This is particularly important for vulnerable groups including pupils with SEND, looked after children, young carers, and those known to children's social care.

13.0 Strategies for promoting attendance

We want our pupils to succeed and develop their skills. To do this, pupils need to avoid missing lessons and days of school as much as possible. As a school, we want to reward high attendance and not just penalise pupils for poor attendance.

At Shefford Lower a number of strategies are used for rewarding, incentivising and improving attendance – for example, celebrating good attendance in assemblies, with letters, postcards, assemblies and within displays. The school regularly communicates the importance of strong attendance building an attendance culture within the community. Parents receive reports on their child's attendance at least termly.

14.0 Supporting pupils with poor attendance

Our school will make use of the full range of support is available to families as well as potential sanctions to tackle poor attendance. Decision around sanctions and support will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

14.1 Family Support- The school has two family support workers who can assist in supporting families, signposting support, conducting home visits, carrying out Early Help assessments and monitoring attendance contracts. The school has a Home Visits Procedure and ensure staff conducting visits are appropriately trained in safeguarding, including recognising signs of:

- Modern slavery
- Financial exploitation
- Child-to-parent abuse

14.2 Attendance contract

If your school and/or local authority offers parents an attendance contract, add:

We use attendance contracts as a form of attendance support.

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school to address irregular attendance at school. An attendance contract is not legally binding, but it provides a more formal route where previous support has not worked or would not have been appropriate.

Parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and the school cannot agree an attendance contract in a parent's absence.

Where an attendance contract would be an appropriate form of support, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent to discuss how we can work in partnership to improve the pupil's attendance.

Where parents fail to comply with an agreed attendance contract, the school may seek an alternative course of action. In the first instance, this will include discussions with the parents to seek explanations and determine whether the attendance contract remains useful. Where there is further non-compliance following these discussions, the school may take further action.

14.3 Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

14.3.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

If the school becomes aware of barriers that relate to the pupil's needs, we will inform the local authority.

The school will work with families, outside professionals and the local authority in working to remove barriers both in and out of school. This may include designing support, creating reasonable adjustments and a process of regular review and communication. Support will be targeted and personalized to support the pupil in reaching the expected standard of attendance.

14.3.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health

Where pupils are absent from school due to mental or physical ill health, the school will work with families, the local authority and outside professionals to design support and reasonable adjustments and a process of regular review and communication. Support will be targeted and personalized to support the pupil in reaching the expected standard of attendance. The school will work to identify mental health concerns affecting attendance early and provide support. The school's inclusion team, attendance champion, mental health lead and pupil wellbeing lead will work to design appropriate support. Within the PSHE/RSE curriculum children build resilience and wellbeing and there are a number of interventions to support resilience and wellbeing.

14.3.3 Pupils absent due to other barriers to attendance

If the school becomes aware of barriers that relate to the pupil's needs, we will inform the local authority.

The school will work with families, outside professionals and the local authority in working to remove barriers both in and out of school. This may include designing support, creating reasonable adjustments and a process of regular review and communication. Support will be targeted and personalized to support the pupil in reaching the expected standard of attendance.

14.3.4 Pupils absent due to other barriers to attendance

Pupils absent from school due to:

- Having SEND
- Being disadvantaged

- Being known (or previously known) to children's social care
- Young Carers
- Travellers
- Pupils with specific or complex medical conditions

Will be supported by the SENDCo and Family Support Team. The school understands that for some pupils, reaching the 'expected standard' for attendance and behaviour may require reasonable adjustments and/or interventions. The school will endevour to ensure support is timely and appropriate, well-chosen and targeted. The inclusion team will monitor attendance for each vulnerable group and ensure appropriate support is in place.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, the school will inform the local authority.

14.3.5 Mobile Phones

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026's expectations, the school operates as a 'mobile phone-free environment' during the school day. Pupils are not permitted to bring mobile phones to school or use them on school premises during lessons, breaktimes, and lunchtimes.

Exceptions for attendance and wellbeing:

We recognise that for some pupils, access to a mobile phone may be necessary to support their attendance at school and remove barriers to education. We will consider reasonable adjustments to our mobile phone policy on a case-by-case basis for:

- **Young carers**
- **Pupils with medical conditions** who use phone-based health monitoring apps or need to contact parents/carers about their health needs
- **Pupils with anxiety or mental health needs** where phone contact with a parent/carer at specific times forms part of an agreed support plan
- **Pupils with specific SEND** where phone access has been identified as a reasonable adjustment to support attendance

Any request for an exception must be made in writing to the headteacher, setting out:

- The specific reason phone access is needed
- When and how the phone would be used
- How this will support the pupil's attendance and engagement in school

If approved, the arrangement will:

- Be formally recorded and shared with relevant staff
- Include clear expectations about when, where, and how the phone may be used (e.g., stored in the school office and accessed at agreed times)
- Be regularly reviewed (at least termly) to ensure it remains necessary and appropriate
- Be withdrawn if misused or if circumstances change

These arrangements are made to support attendance and wellbeing, not for general communication or social purposes. Further details can be found in our Mobile Phone and Smart Devices Policy.

14.3.6 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Where a pupil has had lengthy absence from school, the pupil will be supported to return to school and a

range of reasonable adjustments will be considered to support the pupil transitioning back into school.

14.3.7 Prolonged absence for children in the EYFS

In cases of prolonged absence, or when a child is absent without notification, we will attempt to contact the child's parents and alternative emergency contacts. When deciding whether a child's absence should be considered prolonged, we will consider the:

- Patterns and trends in the child's absences and their personal circumstances
- Vulnerability of the child and their parents, as well as the circumstances of their home life
- We will also implement our safeguarding procedures in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy which can be found on the school's website. We will conduct an home visit, refer any concerns to local children's social care and/or request a police welfare check.

15.0 Children Missing from Education (CME)

We recognise that children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, we have robust procedures in place to identify children who are missing from education and take appropriate action.

15.1 Our responsibilities include:

- **Notifying the Local Authority:** We will inform Central Bedfordshire Council when we are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the fifteen grounds listed in the regulations (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended), including when a pupil fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more. This notification will be made as soon as the ground for deletion is met and no later than the deletion of the pupil's name from the register.
- **Enhanced information sharing with safeguarding partners:** Where we have safeguarding concerns about a child who is absent or missing from education, we will share information promptly with our local safeguarding partners, including children's social care and the police where appropriate. We will not wait for a child to reach a specific threshold of absence before sharing concerns if we believe the child may be at risk of harm.
- **DSL oversight:** Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Julia Parry, has specific responsibility for oversight of children missing education cases. The DSL will ensure that appropriate enquiries are made, safeguarding concerns are escalated, and information is shared with relevant agencies. The DSL will maintain a record of all CME cases and the actions taken.
- **Making reasonable enquiries:** Before removing a pupil from roll, we will make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child. This includes attempts to contact parents/carers via all known contact methods, contacting emergency contacts, and conducting home visits where appropriate. We will only remove a pupil from roll when we are satisfied that we know where the child is going, or when we have exhausted all reasonable enquiries and notified the Local Authority.
- **Tracking pupils who leave:** When a pupil leaves our school, we require parents/carers to provide us with the name and address of the new school, the date the pupil will start there, and the new home address if this has changed. We will contact the new school to confirm the pupil has arrived and will share relevant safeguarding information in accordance with our information sharing duties.

15.2 Particular vigilance for vulnerable groups:

We pay particular attention to children who may be at greater risk of missing education, including those who:

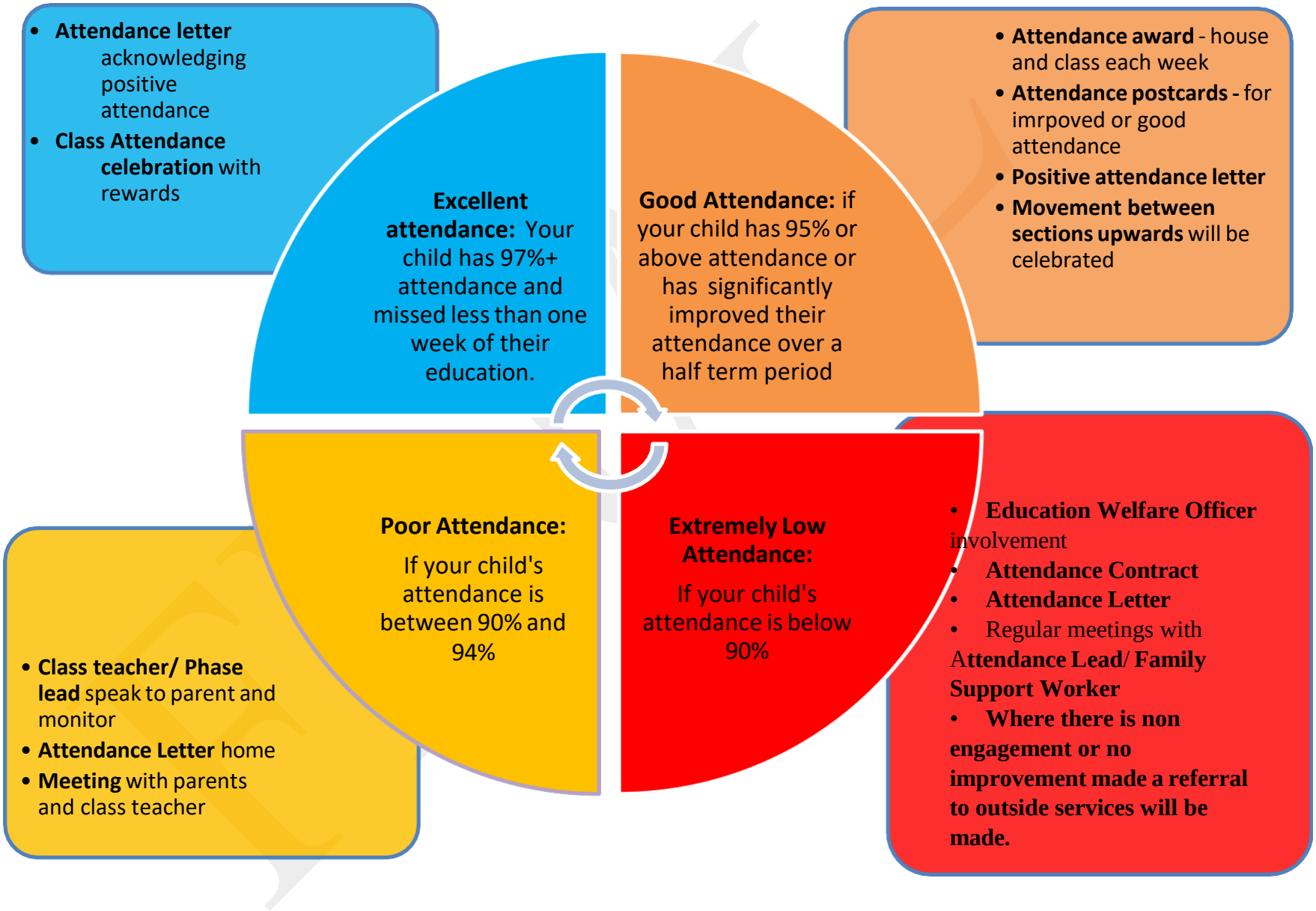
- Have special educational needs or disabilities
- Are eligible for free school meals
- Are looked after or previously looked after
- Are from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Are at risk of forced marriage, honour-based abuse or female genital mutilation
- Are at risk of child sexual or criminal exploitation
- Have mental health needs
- Are young carers
- Have family members in prison or are affected by parental substance misuse

Further details of our procedures for children missing education can be found in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

16 Suspension and Exclusion:

If the school is considering suspending or excluding a vulnerable pupil and/or a pupil who is the subject of a child protection plan or where there is an existing child protection file, we will call a multi-agency risk-assessment meeting prior to making the decision to exclude. This is in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. In the event of a one-off serious incident resulting in an immediate decision to exclude or suspend, a risk assessment must be completed.

The School's Attendance Strategy:



Appendix A

Annex A: DfE guidance Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance. From 19th August 2024

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance__applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

All pupils

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

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.	Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence. Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance and act as lead practitioner if attendance is the only issue and/or the local threshold for formal early help is not met. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. If a case meets the local threshold for formal early help/family support, this 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.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Hold a regular conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so. Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, and there are multiple needs consider whether the threshold for early help is met and facilitate access where it is. Regardless, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner in cases where threshold is met and all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

FINAL

Persistently absent pupils

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

Severely absent pupils

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

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

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

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

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

Support for pupils with a social worker

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Know who the pupils who have, or who have had, a social worker are. Understand how the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced, can have an impact on attendance – whilst maintaining a culture of high aspiration for the cohort. Provide additional academic support and make reasonable adjustments to help them, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there can be a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes. Work in partnership with the local authority at a strategic and individual level, sharing data on attendance including, at an individual level, informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Ensure that all Children's Social Care practitioners, understand the importance of good attendance for pupil's educational progress, for their welfare and their wider development – and understand their role in improving it. Through the work of Virtual School Heads, they should: • Undertake systemic monitoring and data sharing of the attendance of children with a social worker in their area: developing and implementing targeted cohort level interventions to improve attendance. • Provide advice, challenge and training to schools on how to promote and secure good attendance for children with a social worker. • Develop whole system approaches, with social care, to support the attendance of children in need.

Looked after and previously looked after children

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

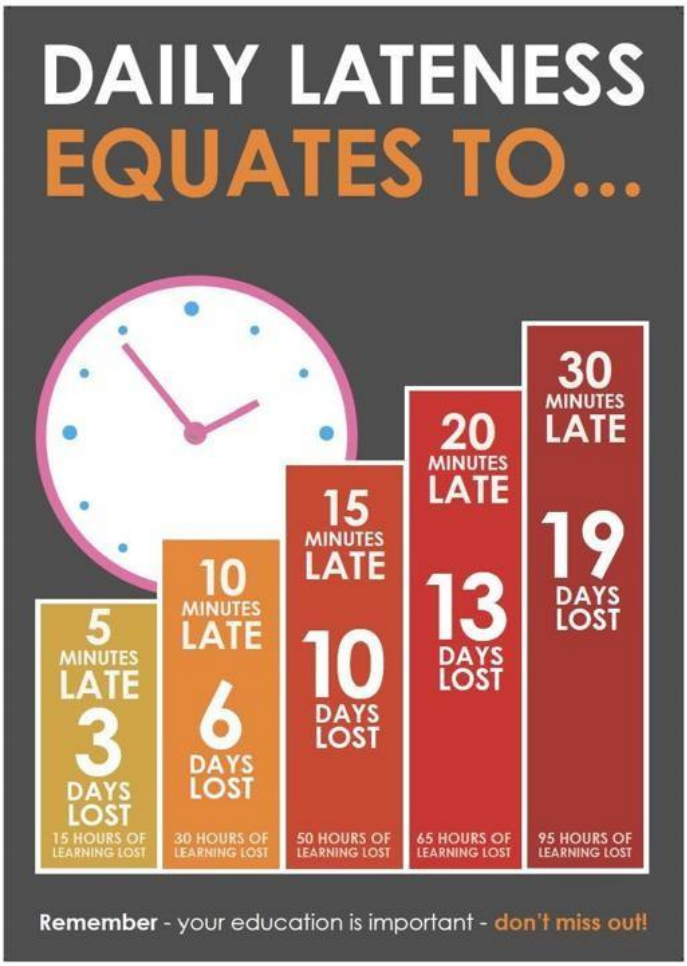
Monitoring

Parents:	Schools:	Academy trustees and governing bodies:	Local authorities:
Schools regularly update parents on their child's attendance. (If parents feel the school and or local authority have not not delivered what they are expected to they should discuss the case with the school and/or local authority's attendance support team.)	The school's Senior Attendance Champion will ensure all school based staff complete their attendance responsibilities in line with the school's policies and procedures. The governing board or academy trust will hold the headteacher or executive leadership to account for their delegated responsibilities and for compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements. They will review progress and provide challenge when required. The board will help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most and ensure that school staff receive adequate training on attendance. Ofsted will expect schools to do all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance as part of the behaviour and attitudes judgement. This includes, where attendance is not consistently at or above what could reasonably be expected, that schools have a strong understanding of the causes of absence (particularly for persistent and severe absence) and a clear strategy in place that takes account of those causes to improve attendance for all pupils. Ultimately, in cases where a school has not met expectations or statutory duties the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.	DfE Regions Group considers multi academy trusts' efforts on attendance as part of decision making. Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections.	DfE Regions Group monitors local authority efforts as part of regular interaction. 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. 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.

Appendix B – Posters




EVERY DAY COUNTS!
School and future success starts with good attendance!
100%
OUTSTANDING
ATTENDANCE LADDER
98%
IMPRESSIVE
4 DAYS ABSENCE | 20 HOURS OF LEARNING LOST
96%
GOOD
6 DAYS ABSENCE | 30 HOURS OF LEARNING LOST
93%
NEEDS TO IMPROVE
13 DAYS ABSENCE | 65 HOURS OF LEARNING LOST
90%
CONCERNS
19 DAYS ABSENCE | 95 HOURS OF LEARNING LOST
80%
SERIOUS CONCERNS
29 DAYS ABSENCE | 145 HOURS OF LEARNING LOST
Remember - your education is important - don't miss out!


DAILY LATENESS
EQUATES TO...
5 MINUTES LATE
3 DAYS LOST
15 HOURS OF LEARNING LOST
10 MINUTES LATE
6 DAYS LOST
30 HOURS OF LEARNING LOST
15 MINUTES LATE
10 DAYS LOST
50 HOURS OF LEARNING LOST
20 MINUTES LATE
13 DAYS LOST
65 HOURS OF LEARNING LOST
30 MINUTES LATE
19 DAYS LOST
95 HOURS OF LEARNING LOST
Remember - your education is important - don't miss out!