



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

October 2023

## **Our IFtL Family**

At IFtL, we are committed to developing a family of schools who inspire all of our futures through learning. Schools within our Trust share the same values and ethos; our teams are constantly in the pursuit of development and excellence everyday. We open doors to opportunity and unlock the potential of both our children and our adults so that we all develop the confidence to achieve both our independent and collective ambitions. At IFtL, we are never alone. We know we are stronger together – one united family striving for excellence for all, in everything we do.



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## **Principles**

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence on the part of the parent that can result in legal action.

High levels of attendance are crucial for so many areas of development and gives children the best opportunities to achieve and progress to their maximum potential. It promotes not only their learning and educational abilities but provides many life skills and long-term positive work ethics. Children who have good levels of attendance are more likely to be able to progress socially, have enhanced self-esteem and confidence, develop time management skills, have a good understanding of expectations for future life and develop a respect for the importance of punctuality and attendance.

Importantly, the more time they are in school the more time they have for learning.

A child with 90% attendance, may be considered adequate by some people, but this equates to ½ day missed every week and over a school year that would be one month out of school; that means they are missing 100 lessons.

Any child can at times feel unhappy about attending school. Families may be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties, are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter; it may even make things worse.



## **Aims**

At St Mary and St Giles, we are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Promoting and supporting punctuality

## **Legislation and guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working Together To Improve School Attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [Parental Responsibility Measures for Behaviour and Attendance](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.



## **Definitions**

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Any information about the cause of each absence is always required, if possible in writing, evidence will be required to support some absences.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or other unavoidable causes.

**Unauthorised absences** are those that the staff at school do not consider reasonable, or for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence on the part of the parent and include:

- Keeping children off school without a good reason
- Truancy from a whole session
- Absences that have never been clearly explained
- Children arriving at school too late to get an attendance mark
- Taking holidays during term-time.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The Local Governing Board**

The Local Governing Board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the head of school/headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **The Head of School /Headteacher**

The Head of School/Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- 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

### **The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Deputy Headteacher: Catherine Hoskin.

### **The Attendance Team**

The school attendance team is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with external agencies to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance team are Catherine Hoskin (Deputy Headteacher) and Claire O'Sullivan (Family Support Worker and Safeguarding Officer)

## **Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information on BromCom (the school's information management system).

## **Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Contact the school on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence. Please advise the reason for absence and the expected return date. This needs to be done before the registration period of 8.45am.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

## **Attendance register**

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once at the start of the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.



## **Punctuality**

It is imperative that children learn the importance of punctuality in order to fulfill their own role in society as they grow into young adults. This role modelling of good practice begins in primary school.

- Children are expected to arrive at school between 8.30 am and 8.45 am to ensure the children are settled and ready to start their learning and receive their registration mark.
- Learning activities and some intervention groups occur during this time.
- Registers are taken at 8:45am. Parents of children arriving after this time will be required to sign the late book. Registers close at 9.15am. Children arriving before 9.15 will be marked as late for the session. If a child arrives after 9.15 am, they will be given an unauthorised absence mark. Lateness after 8.45am will be monitored and addressed with conversations with parents to offer additional support where needed.

## **Procedures If Your Child Is Absent**

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

### **First day absence**

Parent/carers must contact the school on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence. Messages can be left on the school answerphone. Please inform the office of the reason for absence and the anticipated day of return. This needs to be done before the registers are taken at 8.45am. Parents can also inform the school via email of their child's absence. We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance. If the school is not contacted, a call home will be made to ensure all children are accounted for and safeguarding procedures will be followed





## **Planned Absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and provides evidence of the appointment if requested. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section titled 'authorised and unauthorised' to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## **Lateness and Punctuality**

It is imperative that children learn the importance of punctuality to fulfil their own role in society as they grow into young adults. This role modelling of good practice begins in primary school.

A pupil who arrives late after 8.45am but before 9.15am when the register has closed will be marked as late for that session but parents will be asked to complete the late book. Entries in the late book will be monitored and support offered to parents/carers whose child is a regular entry.

After the register has closed, children will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session.

## **Following Up Unexplained Absence**

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

- If Parent/ carers do not contact the school and the school is unable to get hold of the parent/carer, the school will conduct a home visit to check the child is safe. This will happen before 11:30am. If we are concerned for the child's safety, a referral will be made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or the police may be called.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving external agencies.



- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- If the school are concerned about a 'Child Missing Education' the Local Authority will be informed and together actions will be taken to ensure the child can return to school. A 'Child Missing Education' is a child who is of compulsory school age, but are either not registered at a school or else not receiving suitable education in place of a school setting.

## **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

### **Approval for term-time absence**

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as visiting a new school, a recognised religious festival, a funeral of a close family relative or taking an external exam.

Since September 2013, it has no longer been possible to authorise family holidays.

For any requests for leave, parents are required to complete the Leave of Absence Form (Appendix 1) PRIOR to the time of absence and submit to the office for Headteacher approval. Family holidays will not be authorised during term time and a Leave of Absence letter (Appendix 2) will be issued to explain that parents/carers may be liable for a fine issued by the Local Authority.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence. The



headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. One day will be authorised for a recognised religious event, but any other days taken before or after this day will be given an unauthorised holiday mark.
- External exam - One day will be authorised for the exam but any other days taken before or after this day will be given an unauthorised mark.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

### **Legal Sanctions**

The local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without

permission

- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

### **Procedures if a child is absent due to persistent illness.**

If a child is persistently ill, school will be able to provide support for the child and the family. Parent/Carers are required to inform the school of medical appointments and if they are absent for long periods during serious illness. In this instance, the school will require written medical evidence, for example, letters or a doctor's visit.

### **Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives and strategies**

St Mary and St Giles School has a whole school attendance target of 96%. Punctuality is monitored regularly and should a child be persistently late, parents/carers will be contacted in the first instance to support punctuality. Attendance figures will be shared with parents when they are a cause for concern and a final attendance figure for the year will be included in the end of academic year report.

### **Procedures**

If a child's attendance falls below 96%, there is a staged response (summarised in the flow chart in Appendix 4):

#### **Stage 1 - Attendance Percentages below 96%**

Initially parents are contacted by a phone call to advise of the attendance figure. Support will be offered to the family if required and appropriate. If the attendance continues to decline or remain



below 96%, a Stage 1 Letter (Appendix 5) will be issued advising of the attendance figure and offering support if required.

### **Stage 2 - Attendance Percentage below 94%**

A Stage 2 Letter (Appendix 6) will be sent out to parents informing them that their child's attendance has dropped below 94% and advising them they are at risk of falling below 90% and being classed as a persistent absentee. The letter will remind parents of the importance of attending school and will invite them in to speak to the attendance officer about their child's low attendance.

### **Stage 3 - Attendance Percentage below 90%**

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, a Stage 3 Letter (Appendix 7) will be sent out to parents informing them that their child has dropped below 90%. Parents/carers will be invited to an Attendance Panel comprised of the Headteacher and Attendance Governor to discuss the details and agree the next course of action. Actions may include reviewing medical evidence, offering additional support, agreeing a parenting contract or informing the Local Authority Attendance Officer with the intent of issuing a fine.

School-age pupils are **persistent absentees** if they miss 10% of sessions or more. Therefore, any pupil with an attendance below 90% will be placed on the persistent absence register. The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of children attending school at this percentage and is required to make interventions to support families. These are called 'persistent absentees' by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence.

### **Fixed Penalty Warnings/Notice**

If the parent or carer has asked for a leave of absence that is not covered by exceptional circumstances, they will be given a warning letter to say that if they choose to go ahead with the unauthorized leave, they may receive a fixed penalty notice from the Local Authority.



If a parent or carer takes their child out of school for a period of time without letting the school know in advance, we will follow our safeguarding procedures. We will endeavour to make contact with parents via phone, text and email to obtain a reason for the absence. We may also carry out a home visit and reach out to other emergency contacts. If the absence is due to exceptional circumstances, proof will be requested i.e. last minute flight bookings.

### **Analysing attendance**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data on a 4 weekly cycle to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

### **Using data to improve attendance**

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance information to class teachers, other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

### **Reducing persistent and severe absence**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority)



considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

### **Responsibility for Attendance**

Parent/Carers and all staff are ultimately responsible for attendance and punctuality matters.

Others responsible within school for attendance include:

Adam Palmer – Headteacher

Catherine Hoskin – Deputy Headteacher

Claire O'Sullivan – Family Support Worker and Safeguarding Officer

Sarah Young – Officer Manager

Bea Vavlas - Receptionist

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with Parents/Carers in the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy



## Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
<b>B</b>	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
<b>C</b>	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
<b>E</b>	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
<b>G</b>	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
<b>H</b>	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
<b>I</b>	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
<b>J</b>	Interview	Approved Education Activity
<b>L</b>	Late (before registers closed)	Present
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
<b>P</b>	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Authorised absence
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Authorised absence
<b>T</b>	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
<b>U</b>	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
<b>V</b>	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Approved Education Activity





<b>D</b>	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>X</b>	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Y</b>	Enforced and partial enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>#</b>	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances



**Appendix 2: Absence Request Form**

## **Absence Request Form**

Please complete this form to notify us that you intend to take your child out of school within term time.

Please note that since September 2013, Headteachers are not authorised to approve any term time holidays. Any holidays taken in term time will therefore be unauthorised and you may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice of up to £60 per child, per parent.

Name of Child(ren)				
Class(es)				
Dates of Absence	From		To	
Reason for Absence				
Signature of Parent/Guardian				
Date				

Headteacher Signature		Date	
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Authorised  Not Authorised



## Appendix 3: Leave of Absence Letter



### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FOR HOLIDAYS**

Dear Parent/Carer,

As part of our commitment to improving the progress and attainment of our pupils, it is our policy not to authorise leave of absence unless in very exceptional circumstances. To clarify, holidays requested during term time are not exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised. All children are expected to attend school; every child should be in school every day.

As per the Department for Education (DFE) attendance guidance, only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Please be aware that, should you take your child out of school, you may be liable to a fine in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £60 if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid it may result in parents being prosecuted in the magistrates' court.

If you feel that there are exceptional circumstances that you have not shared with the school, then please do get in contact so that we can discuss your leave of absence request further.

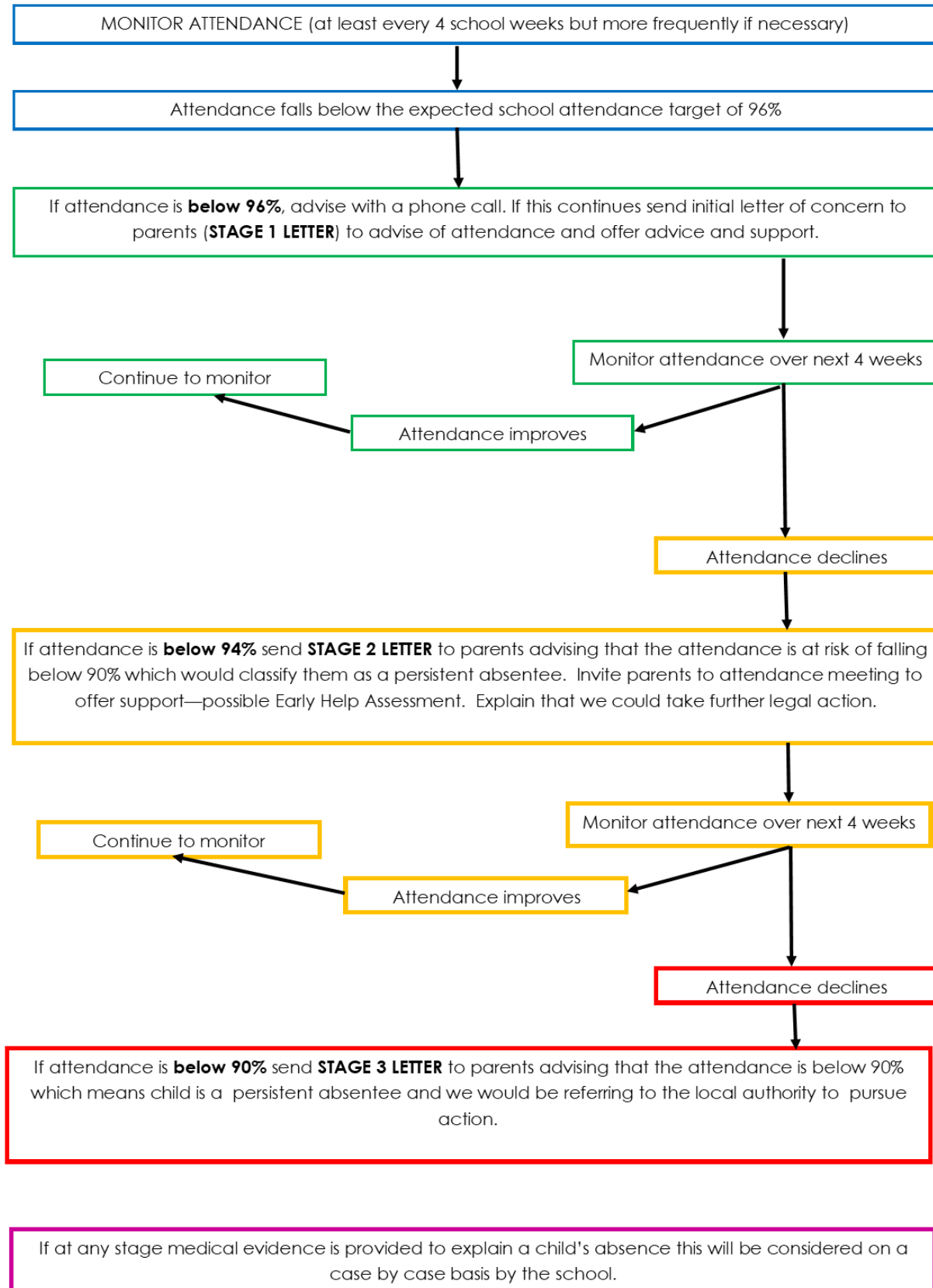
Yours sincerely,

Adam Palmer  
Headteacher





## Flowchart for Attendance Monitoring



## Appendix 5: Stage 1 Attendance Letter

### STAGE 1 ATTENDANCE LETTER

Dear

**Name of Child:**

**D.O.B:**

**Class:**

As part of our commitment to improving the attainment of our pupils, we monitor attendance on a regular basis. During our monitoring we identify any pupil whose attendance causes concern. All children are expected to attend school; every child should be in school every day.

I am writing to advise you that your child's attendance has fallen below the minimum standard of 96%.

Attendance	
Authorised Absence	
Unauthorised Absence	

Education is important. 90% attendance sounds good to some people, but this is ½ a day per week! Over a school year this is 4 weeks which is 100 lessons lost!

Attendance	Days Missed	Weeks Missed	Lessons Missed
95%	9.5	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19	4 weeks	100 lessons

At this stage, we are bringing this to your attention and hope to see improvements in your child's attendance in the next few weeks. If you would like and advice or support in managing your child's attendance, then please do contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Claire O'Sullivan

Family Support Worker



## Appendix 6: Stage 2 Attendance Letter

### STAGE 2 ATTENDANCE LETTER

Dear

**Name of Child:**

**D.O.B:**

**Class:**

As part of our commitment to improving the attainment of our pupils, we monitor attendance on a regular basis. During our monitoring we identify any pupil whose attendance causes concern. All children are expected to attend school; every child should be in school every day.

I am writing to advise you that your child's attendance is **at risk of falling below 90% which would classify them as a persistent absentee.**

Attendance	
Authorised Absence	
Unauthorised Absence	

Education is important. 90% attendance sounds good to some people, but this is ½ a day per week! Over a school year this is 4 weeks which is 100 lessons lost!

Attendance	Days Missed	Weeks Missed	Lessons Missed
95%	9.5	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19	4 weeks	100 lessons

If your child's attendance does not improve the matter **may** be referred to the Local Authority who will commence legal proceedings. This could mean you **may** be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £60 if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents will be prosecuted in the magistrates' court.

I would like to invite you to an attendance meeting on **xxxxxx** to discuss the situation and explore any support that the school can offer. Please confirm your attendance by email or let me know if you would like an alternative date/time.

Yours sincerely,

Claire O'Sullivan

Family Support Worker



## Appendix 7: Stage 3 Attendance Letter

### STAGE 3 ATTENDANCE LETTER

Dear

**Name of Child:**

**D.O.B:**

**Class:**

As part of our commitment to improving the attainment of our pupils, we monitor attendance on a regular basis. During our monitoring we identify any pupil whose attendance causes concern. All children are expected to attend school; every child should be in school every day.

I am writing to advise you that your child's **attendance is below 90% which means they are considered a persistent absentee.**

Attendance	
Authorised Absence	
Unauthorised Absence	

Education is important. 90% attendance sounds good to some people, but this is ½ a day per week! Over a school year this is 4 weeks which is 100 lessons lost!

Attendance	Days Missed	Weeks Missed	Lessons Missed
95%	9.5	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19	4 weeks	100 lessons

(delete paragraph as appropriate)

**You are now required to meet with the Attendance Panel on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.** This meeting will include a Senior Leader, Governor and school staff with responsibilities for attendance. At this meeting you will have the opportunity to make comments and **it will be decided whether we ask the Local Authority to take legal action and issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.** Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £60 if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents will be prosecuted in the magistrates' court.

If the child has medical issues: (delete paragraph as appropriate)

In order to ensure we have all the evidence for your child's absence please could you provide us with a doctor's letter which advises of the medical condition and the impact it has on their schooling so that we can keep this on file.

If there are other issues: (delete paragraph as appropriate)

I would like to invite you to an attendance meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss the situation and explore any support that the school can offer. Please confirm your attendance by email or let me know if you would like an alternative date/time.

Yours sincerely,

Claire O'Sullivan

Family Support Worker

