

Temple Meadow Primary School



Temple Meadow
Primary School

Growing together, learning together

Attendance Policy

Safeguarding Policy Statement

This policy is part of the wider umbrella of Keeping Children Safe in Education - and Temple Meadow's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Policy Ownership: (Deputy Headteacher & School Business Manager)

To SLT:	Sept 2025
To Staff:	Sept 2025
To Governors:	Sept 2025
Document Live date:	Sept 2025
Updates:	
Next Review Date:	Sept 2026

Introduction

At Temple Meadow Primary School, we recognise that positive interactions and good attendance are essential in order for children to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, well-being and wider life chances.

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.

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. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of this 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 child has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that children succeed whilst at school;
- ensure that children 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, local Headteacher Associations, the Local Authority and parents and carers. 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 children’s attendance.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE’s statutory safeguarding guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

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

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which children 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 children must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the Headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Key people responsible for attendance matters at Temple Meadow

Local Authority: School Attendance Support Services

Headteacher: Mrs Van Straaten

Deputy Headteacher: Miss Dale

Pastoral Support Keyworkers: Ms Daniels, Mrs Blount and Mrs Sprigg

School Office: Mrs Jones, Mr Haywood and Mrs Screamon

School Business Manager: Mr Maton-Collingbourne

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any child's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting regular attendance

We believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our children from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and well-being.

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

Name: Miss Dale

Email address or contact details: tm.admin@meadow.sandwell.sch.uk 01384 569021

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

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our outward facing communications;
- Promote the benefits of high attendance;
- Accurately complete admission attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law;
- Celebrate excellent attendance by promoting and reporting individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance;
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress;
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.

Understanding types of absence

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

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

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.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

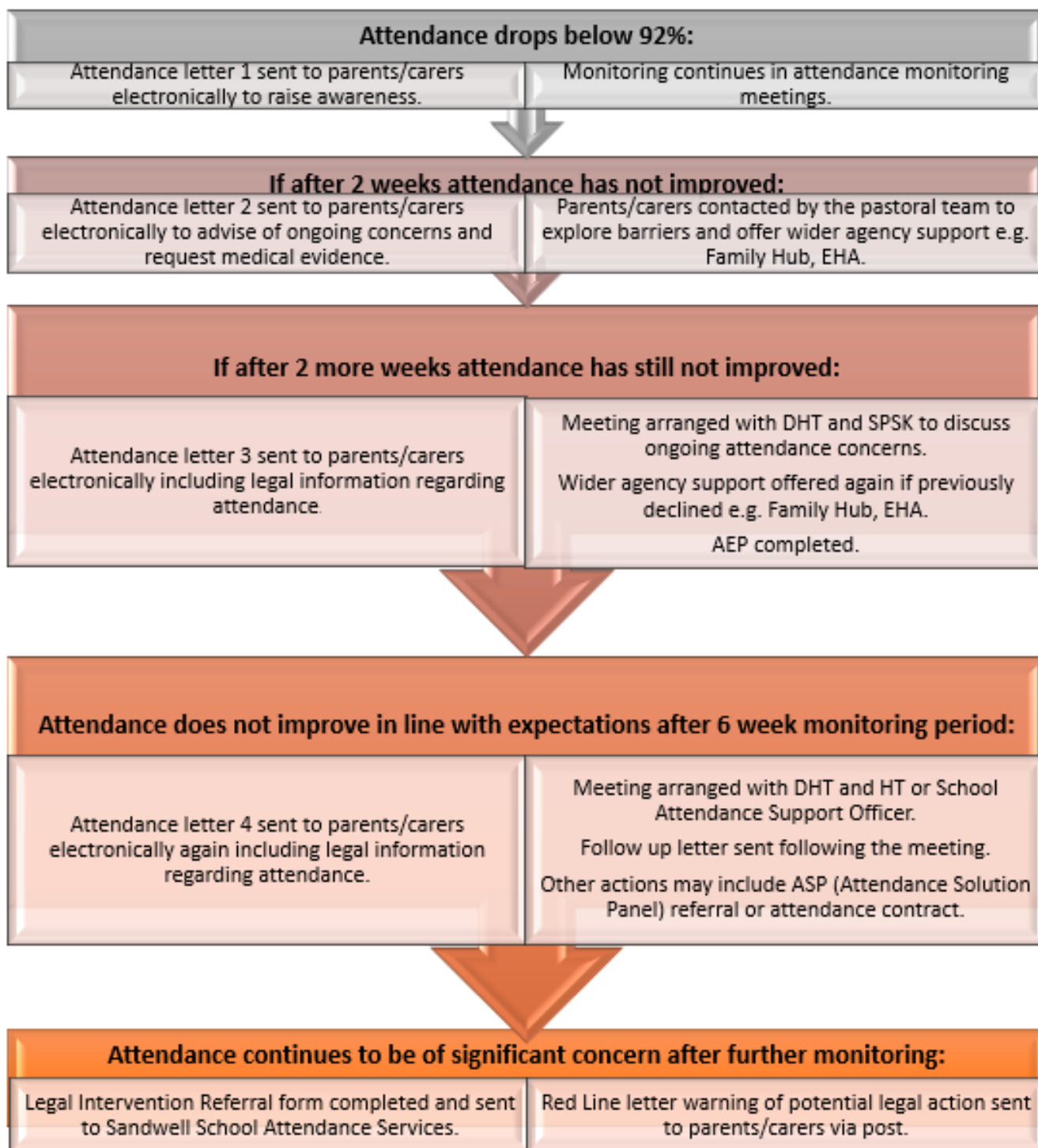
A child is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need the full support and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

We monitor all absences thoroughly. If your child is in danger of being or is a persistent absentee you will have been informed as attendance has dropped over time. Persistent Absentee children are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance management system.

A child who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent**'. Children 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. Attendance below 50% is classified as **Educational Neglect**; in these instances school will seek advice from Sandwell Children's Trust.

Persistent Absentee and Severely Absentee children and their parents will be subject to a meeting with Senior staff and/or the Headteacher to discuss absence issues with them. Additionally, we may seek advice and support from School Attendance Support Services. We may also seek support when a child has a pattern of unauthorised lateness.

Persistent Absence monitoring procedures



If at any time attendance drops below 50%, this is viewed as Educational Neglect. School will seek advice from Sandwell Children’s Trust in these instances.

Absence Reporting Procedures

Ways to report an absence:

- Telephone number: 01384 569021
- Email: tm.admin@meadow.sandwell.sch.uk
- Absences can also be reported via the My Child at School (MCAS) App
- Speak to a member of the school office in person

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

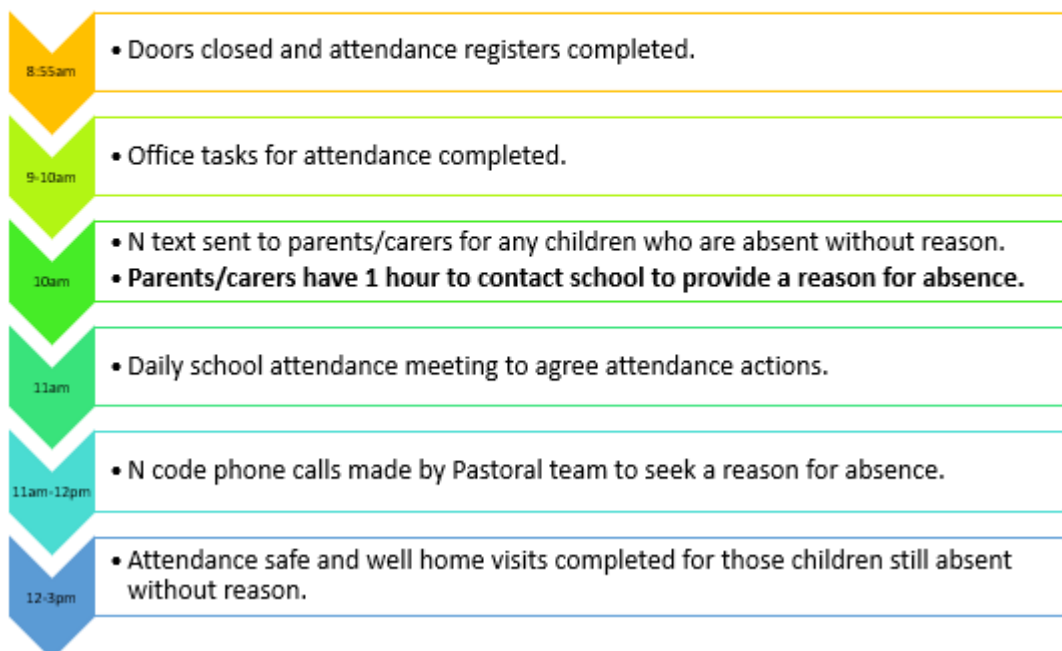
- Contact the school or report via the MCAS app on the first day of absence before 9:30am (see above) and provide a reason for absence – ‘unwell’ is not sufficient to allow us to authorise an absence.
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, 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 9:30am;
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and that you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS and Sandwell Council Guidance on School Absence and Childhood Illness (annex 3).

We monitor and review all children’s absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

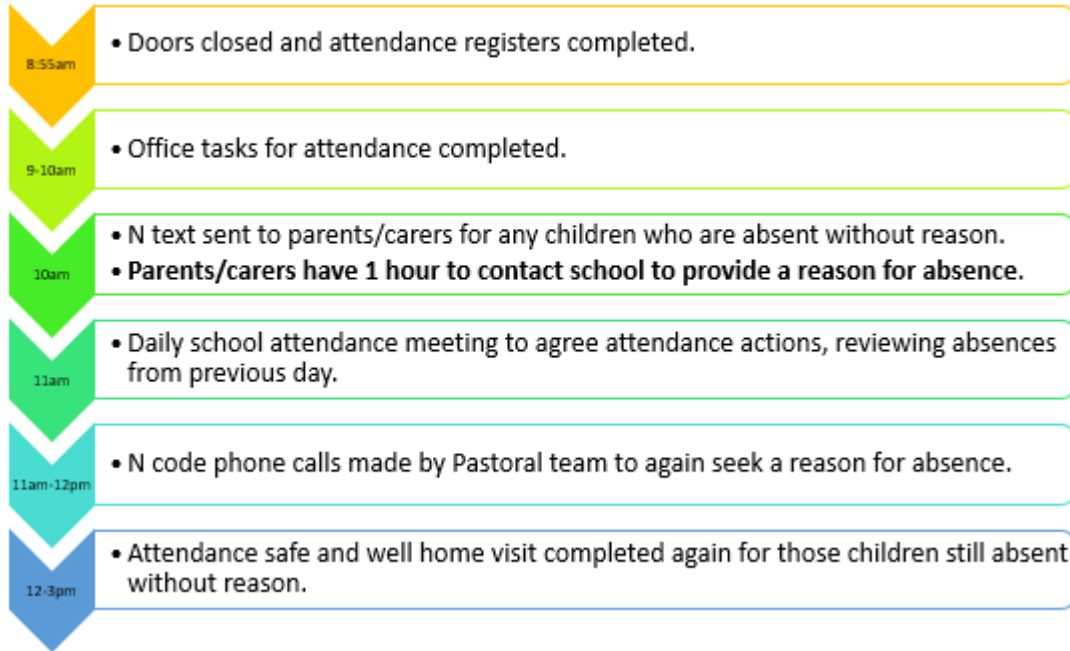
If a child is absent without a reason being provided, the following procedures are followed:

Parents/carers must provide a reason for any absence each day their child is absent from school. We request that this is done before 9.30am.

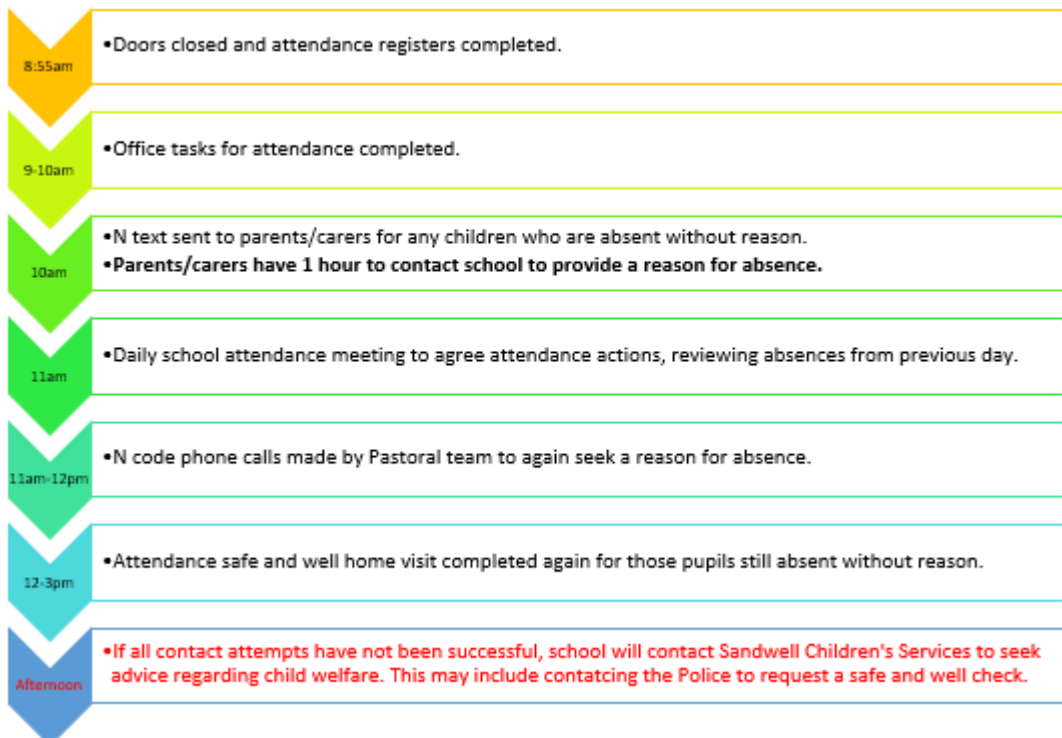
Child absent without reason – day 1



Child absent without reason – day 2



Child absent without reason – day 3



If the absence continues we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 96% and/or where punctuality is a concern;
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with a member of our attendance team and/or the Headteacher;

- Create a personalised support plan, such as an attendance contract or attendance engagement 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.

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.

Children 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.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all children at Temple Meadow Primary School are:

Gates open: 8:40am

Doors open: 8:45 - 8:55am

Registration in class: 8.55am

Unauthorised lates: arrival after 9.30am.

If you have arrived after the doors have closed at 8:55am, you will need to accompany your child to the late arrival waiting area opposite the school office (this is clearly signposted).

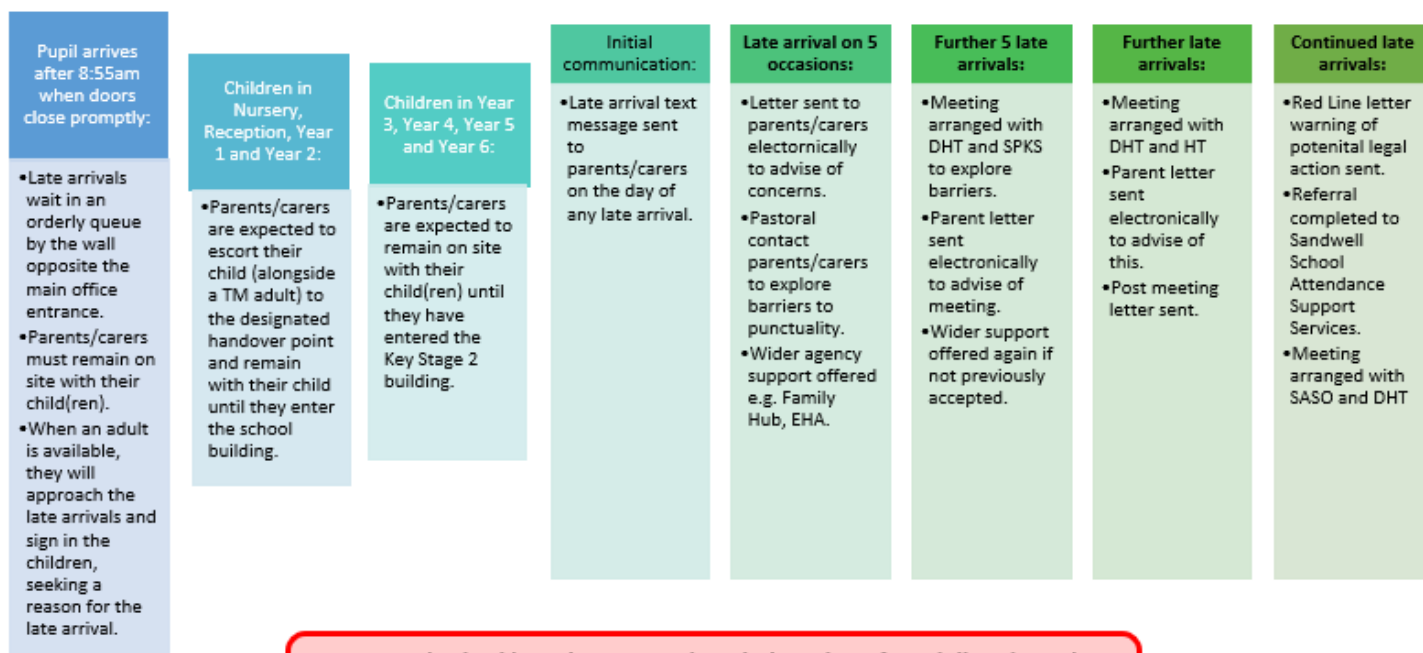
How we manage lateness:

- Late arrivals are asked to wait in an orderly queue by the wall opposite the main office entrance.
- Parents and carers **must** remain on site with their child(ren).
- When a school adult is available, they will approach the late arrivals and record the child(ren)’s details as well as seeking an appropriate reason for the late arrival.

Children in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery • Reception • Year 1 • Year 2 	After being signed in, parents and carers are expected to escort their child (alongside a TM adult) to the designated handover point and remain with their child until they enter the school building.
Children in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 3 • Year 4 • Year 5 • Year 6 	Parents and carers are expected to remain on site with their child(ren) until they have entered the Key Stage 2 building.

Lateness and punctuality monitoring and procedures

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 a member of the attendance team and/or the Headteacher, 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.



10 unauthorised lates in a 10 week period can be referred directly to the Sandwell Legal team for prosecution.

Contact Details

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to always have your contact numbers. As part of Keeping Children Safe in Education, it is recommended that schools hold two current contact numbers for every child.

Local Authority attendance support services

The Schools Attendance Support Service works 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 (see Annex B for the Sandwell Code of Conduct) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

School Attendance and the Law

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

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

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

National Framework for Penalty Notices

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

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

See Annex B for the Sandwell Code of Conduct.

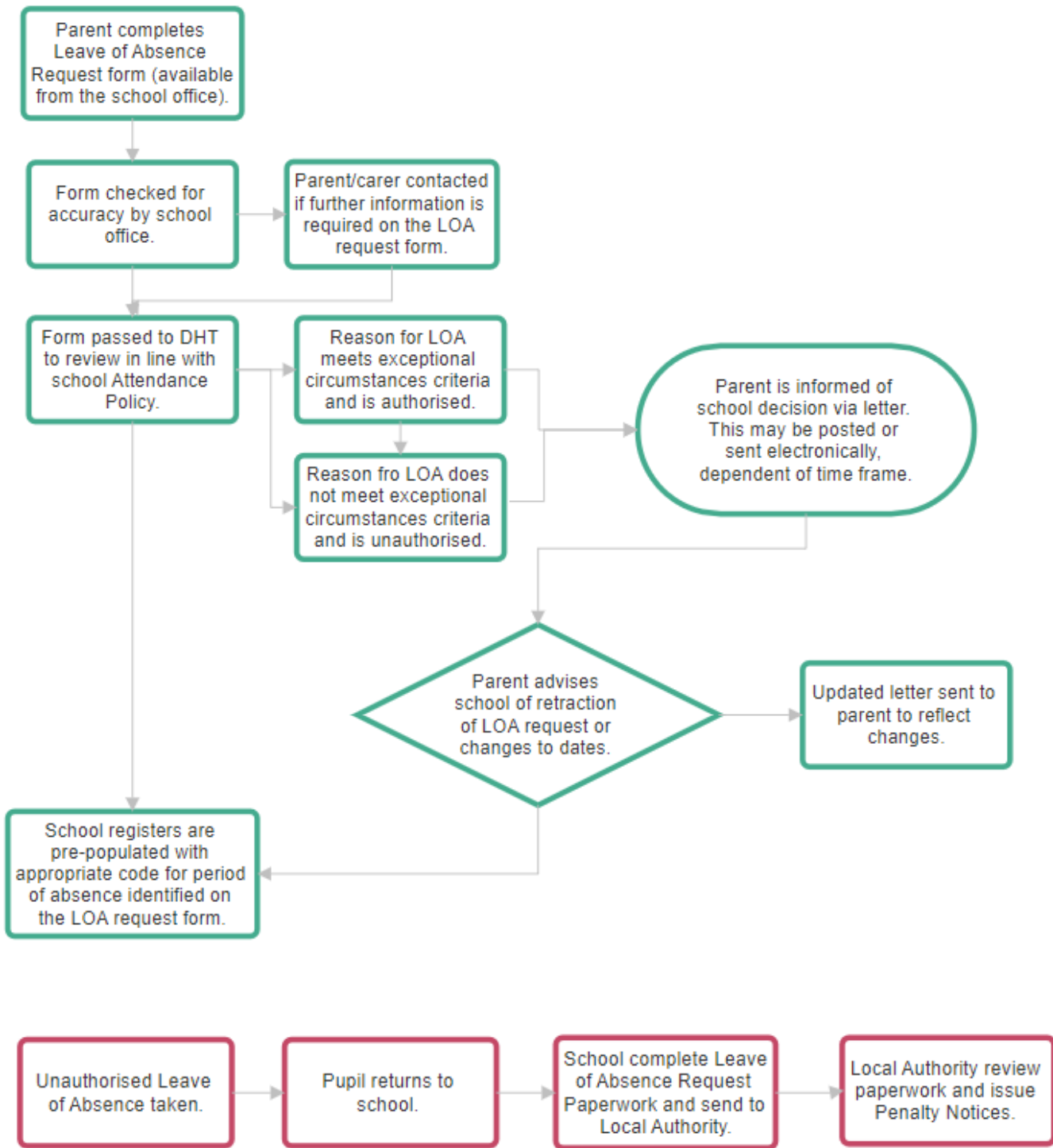
There is no entitlement in law for children to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is “in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

At Temple Meadow 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 her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Sandwell Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

Examples of exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted in term time – evidence may be requested (Authorised)	Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional (Unauthorised)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funeral of a parent, grandparent or sibling (days for travel are not authorised) • Sudden loss of housing • Out of school programs such as Music, Arts or Sports operating at a high standard of achievement • Weddings of parents and siblings (1 day) • Religious observance (1 day only) 	<p>Including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holidays during term time (U.K. or abroad) • Trips to visit a sick relative or family event • Pilgrimages by parents. These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). • Birthdays • Looking after family members • Childcare solutions

Our Leave of Absence Procedures



It is important that parents are aware that under unavoidable circumstances where families take longer lengths of leave (20 school days) we reserve the right to remove children from our roll. The Department for Education have confirmed 'a student may only be removed from roll after 20 days of consecutive absence, if the whereabouts of that student is unknown. If the whereabouts are known, then the school should deal with the situation as unauthorised absence'.

Medical conditions

It is always a parent's responsibility to provide medical evidence from an appropriate medical professional regarding school absence due to long term medical conditions. If a parent believes their child should be absent from school linked to infection control, these factors and or situations should be clearly outlined for school by the medical practitioner.

Where a child has an ongoing medical condition and there is medical evidence from a Consultant/medical practitioner that the child has not been fit enough to attend school for at least 15 school days or more (these do not have to be continuous days), the school will support the child via a referral to the Albright Education Centre/a registered provider for children who are unable to leave home because of ill health.

Religious observances

It is really important that your child attends school regularly. As a school, we understand that there are religious festivals that are celebrated throughout the year. We will only authorise 1 day for religious observances during each festival. We record this as code R (this will count to overall attendance percentage). At times, school may need to seek confirmation of the day set for religious observance by a parent's religious body; in this instance school will invite parents to provide a letter from their place of worship.

Revision Leave

In some circumstances, parents may request two authorised days of study leave to enable the child to revise for transition related exams. This does not include KS2 SATs.

Part-time Timetables

In some exceptional circumstances, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet an individual child's needs. This would be agreed through a meeting between the Headteacher and the parent/carer(s) and the details confirmed in writing, including a review date. Any changes to the part-time timetable is always communicated with the parent/carer(s) through meetings and written communications. The Local Authority is also notified of this. In line with the part-time timetable agreement, any missed sessions of school are authorised.

Inclement weather

The school follows the Sandwell Safeguarding Policy on Emergency Closures regarding absences due to inclement weather. In summary, if the school closes completely, all children will be marked as Y (forced or partial closure).

School targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for our school is **96%** and we will keep you updated regularly about our overall attendance performance.

Throughout the school year, we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our school newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Temple Meadow Primary School is committed to safeguarding children and fully meets all expectations set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education. Children absent from education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered children at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children absent from education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victim of harm, exploitation or radicalisation and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. Temple Meadow is committed to effective information sharing between

parents, schools and local authorities which is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

At the end of each term, we reward children with good attendance and those whose attendance has improved significantly. We reward the following attendance:

- Good attendance for the term (attendance above 96%) – termly reward consisting of a certificate, pencil and sticker. Each child is added to a prize draw for the chance to win an Art set. There is one prize for Early Years and Key Stage 1 and a prize for Key Stage 2.
- 100% attendance for the year – annual certificate. Children also receive all the rewards outlined above for 100% attendance for the term. We recognise that this is an outstanding achievement and reward children with a trip to Haden Hill Park at the end of the summer term. Those children who attend on a part time timetable are not eligible for this reward.
- Most improved attendance – each term, the child whose attendance has improved the most in each year group receives a certificate and a trophy to display in class. At the end of the year, all the winners are entered into a prize draw for their parent/carer to win a voucher.
- Individual trackers, rewards and incentives may be implemented for key children as part of their attendance support plan as required.

Throughout the year, we acknowledge improved attendance for key families and children whereby additional support has been provided in regards to attendance. This is done through parent conversations and letters.

Transition between schools

Outgoing Children:

When a parent is considering a school move, they must complete a Transfer Request form, these can be requested at the school office. Temple Meadow will always notify the Local Authority when we have been advised that a child is changing schools and has completed the transfer process. As part of this transfer, Temple Meadow will always contact the receiving school to ensure they are aware of any safeguarding or attendance concerns. Child information will be shared via a CTF (common transfer file). If a child does not return to school without appropriate notification, we have a duty to make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child. This will include working alongside the local and other authorities to send correspondents to the known address, contact relatives, conduct home visits and speak to neighbours.

Incoming Children:

As a trust school we adopt the Sandwell Local Authority Admissions Policy; we therefore have a duty to notify the Local Authority within 5 days of adding a child's name to the admission register. As part of our commitment to safeguarding we would always seek up to date child information from the previous school.

Request to Home Education

Parents have a duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age are receiving a suitable full-time education. Some parents may elect to educate their children at home and may withdraw their children from school at any time. At Temple Meadow we would always expect parents to attend a meeting with the Headteacher if they were considering home schooling. Parents are asked to complete a 'Request to Home Educate' form which will aid the discussion between parents and the school. Following these discussions, if a parent still feels that this is the best option for their child, Temple Meadow has a duty to inform the Local Authority. Once the Local Authority have made the relevant checks regarding the home provision Temple Meadow will remove the children from our register. Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan can still be home educated but the local Authority have a duty to continue to review the EHCP annually to ensure that the provision continues to be appropriate for the child and their needs are being met.

Suspensions

Temple Meadow is responsible for arranging full time education for suspended children from the sixth day of a fixed period suspension.

Absence data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual children or groups of children when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit child attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis Education (Information about Individual Children) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. Persistently and severely absent children 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.

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

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

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

Persistently absent pupils

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

Severely absent pupils

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

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

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

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

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

Support for pupils with a social worker

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Know who the pupils who have, or who have had, a social worker are.</p> <p>Understand how the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced, can have an impact on attendance – whilst maintaining a culture of high aspiration for the cohort.</p> <p>Provide additional academic support and make reasonable adjustments to help them, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there can be a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the local authority at a strategic and individual level, sharing data on attendance including, at an individual level, informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.</p>	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	<p>Ensure that all Children's Social Care practitioners, understand the importance of good attendance for pupil's educational progress, for their welfare and their wider development – and understand their role in improving it.</p> <p>Through the work of Virtual School Heads, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand the child's barriers to attendance – including the development of Personal Education Plans.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Have high expectations for the cohort – with expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the local authority Virtual School Head to develop and deliver high quality Personal Education Plans for looked-after children that support good attendance.</p> <p>Work directly with parents to develop good home-school links that support good attendance. For previously looked-after pupils this could include discussion on use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding managed by the school.</p>	<p>Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.</p> <p>Monitor and review attendance of the cohort and consider how school policies, including behaviour policies, are sensitive to their needs and support good attendance.</p>	<p>Promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children – doing everything possible to minimise disruption to education when a pupil enters care.</p> <p>(LA that looks after the child:) Appoint an expert Virtual School Head (VSH) – will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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:
<p>Schools regularly update parents on their child's attendance.</p> <p>(If parents feel the school and or local authority have not delivered what they are expected to they should discuss the case with the school and/or local authority's attendance support team.)</p>	<p>The school's Senior Attendance Champion will ensure all school based staff complete their attendance responsibilities in line with the school's policies and procedures.</p> <p>The governing board or academy trust will hold the headteacher or executive leadership to account for their delegated responsibilities and for compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements. They will review progress and provide challenge when required. The board will help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most and ensure that school staff receive adequate training on attendance.</p> <p>Ofsted will expect schools to do all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance as part of the behaviour and attitudes judgement. This includes, where attendance is not consistently at or above what could reasonably be expected, that schools have a strong understanding of the causes of absence (particularly for persistent and severe absence) and a clear strategy in place that takes account of those causes to improve attendance for all pupils.</p> <p>Ultimately, in cases where a school has not met expectations or statutory duties the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.</p>	<p>DfE Regions Group considers multi academy trusts' efforts on attendance as part of decision making.</p> <p>Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections.</p>	<p>DfE Regions Group monitors local authority efforts as part of regular interaction.</p> <p>Ofsted may consider the local area partnership's approach to improving attendance of children and young people with SEND as part of the SEND Area Inspection, and the local authority's approach to improving attendance for children with a social worker through inspecting local authority children's services.</p> <p>Ultimately, in cases where a local authority has not met expectations or statutory duties the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.</p>

Schools Attendance Support Service – updated June 2024

PENALTY NOTICE CODE OF CONDUCT

1. The purpose of this local code of conduct is to ensure that penalty notices for school absence are issued in a manner that is fair and consistent across Sandwell. The code sets out the arrangements for administering penalty notices in Sandwell and must be adhered to by anyone issuing a penalty notice for school absence in this area. The code complies with relevant regulations and the Department for Education’s national framework for penalty notices as set out in the ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ guidance.

Consultation

2. This code has been drawn up in consultation with the headteachers and governing bodies of state funded school and the local police force.

Legal Basis

3. The regular, punctual attendance of pupils at the school where they are registered is both a legal requirement and essential for students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them.
4. Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the Education Act 1996. They can only be issued in relation to pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, pupil referral units, academy schools, alternative education provision academies, and certain off-site places as set out in section 444A(1)(b).
5. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) set out how penalty notices for school absence must be used.
6. A penalty notice can only be issued by an authorised officer, that is, a headteacher or a deputy or assistant head authorised by them, an authorised local authority officer or a police constable. In Sandwell, penalty notices will be issued by authorised local authority officers at the request of a Head Teacher, someone authorised by them, or at the request of a police officer.
7. The national framework for penalty notices is published in statutory guidance ‘Working together to improve school attendance’. It provides further national guidance on the operation of penalty notice schemes for school absence in England.
8. Schools and the local authority will decide which parent(s) to involve in attendance legal intervention according to the circumstances of each individual case.
9. A parent includes any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty notices will usually be issued to the parent or parents with day-to-day responsibility for the pupil’s

attendance or the parent or parents who have allowed the absence, regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence.

Rationale

10. Research published by the Department for Education in May 2022 found pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.
 - ~ Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.
 - ~ Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.
11. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and often the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.
12. Where difficulties arise with school attendance, professionals should take a ‘support first’ approach in line with the DfE’s ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ guidance, only resorting to legal enforcement when necessary. The aim is that the need for legal enforcement is reduced by taking a supportive approach to tackle the barriers to attendance and intervening early before absence becomes entrenched.
13. The national framework for penalty notices is based on the principles that penalty notices should only be used in cases where:
 - ~ support is not appropriate (for example, where a term time holiday has been taken) or where support has been provided and not engaged with or not worked, and
 - ~ they are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance for that family.

Circumstances where a penalty notice for absence may be appropriate

National Threshold of 10 sessions in 10 school weeks

14. The national threshold is met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:
 - ~ Code G: the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday
 - ~ Code N: the circumstances of the pupil’s absence have not yet been established
 - ~ Code O: none of the other rows of Table 3 in Regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies)
 - ~ Code U: the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)
15. A school week means any week (Monday to Sunday) in which there is at least one school session. The 10 school-week period may span different terms or school years – for example: 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the summer term in one school year and a further 8 within the autumn term of the next school year.
16. When a school becomes aware that the national threshold has been met, they must consider whether a penalty

notice can and should be issued or not and where appropriate, a referral made to the Council's Schools Attendance Support Service.

Truancy Sweep

17. During or following a truancy sweep, a penalty notice may be issued in relation to the absence and the local authority will retain the discretion to issue a penalty notice before the national threshold is met.

Excluded pupils

18. Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion.

Repeated penalty notices

19. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not achieving the desired change in behaviour, they may not be most appropriate tool. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period.

Key considerations prior to the issue of a penalty notice for school absence

20. The following considerations will be made before issuing a penalty notice to ensure consistency of approach.
21. Where children do not have current attendance concerns and where support is not appropriate (for example, where the parent takes the child on an unauthorised leave of absence in term time), consideration will be given to:
- ~ Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour or would one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
 - ~ Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010
 - ~ Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given the local authority would be accepting responsibility for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment?
22. In cases where support is appropriate to address historic / ongoing irregular attendance concerns, consideration will be given to:
- ~ Has sufficient support been provided? Support is defined as any activity intended to improve the pupil's attendance and should be tailored to the individual circumstances relating to the pupils absence. Where appropriate schools should work closely with the appropriate partner agencies.
 - ~ Is a penalty notice the best tool available likely to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this family or would one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
 - ~ Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010
 - ~ Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given the local authority would be accepting responsibility for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment?
23. If the answer to the above questions is 'yes', then a penalty notice (or a notice to improve in cases where support is appropriate) will usually be issued, providing it is in the public interest to do so.

Notice to improve

24. A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.
25. A notice to improve may be issued by either the school or the local authority.
26. The school and/or the local authority will determine whether a notice to improve is appropriate or not. It may not be appropriate where it is not expected to have any impact on a parent's behaviour (e.g. the parent has already received one for a similar offence).
27. A notice to improve must state the timescales for the improvement period which should be no more than 20 school days. School will monitor attendance during the improvement period following a notice to improve being issued.
28. Where there has been sufficient and/or sustained improvement of attendance, it is not expected that further legal intervention will be necessary at that stage. If there has been no or insufficient improvement of attendance, further consideration will be given to the issue of a penalty notice.

Penalty notices issued for absences from 2024/25 school year onwards

29. For issuing penalty notices for absences occurring after the start of the 2024/25 school year, the "preceding 3-year period" means the period of 3 years ending with the date on which the penalty notice is issued.
30. Where no penalty notice has been issued to the parent in respect of an individual child in the preceding 3-year period, the amount of the penalty is £80 where the amount is paid within the period of 21 days beginning with the date on which the notice is issued, rising to £160 between days 21 and 28.
31. Where a penalty notice has been issued to the parent in respect of an individual child in the preceding 3-year period, the amount of the penalty is £160 and is payable within 28 days.
32. Where 2 previous penalty notices have been issued and the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within the rolling 3-year period, a penalty notice will not be issued. Instead, an alternative strategy or legal intervention will be used having considered any previous penalty notices which were unpaid and any subsequent prosecution of offences.
33. For the purpose of the escalation process, previous penalty notices include those not paid (including where prosecution was taken forward if the parent pleaded or was found guilty) but not those which were
 - ~ withdrawn
 - ~ issued in respect of an excluded pupil
 - ~ issued in respect of an absence prior to the start of the 2024/25 school year

Withdrawing a penalty notice

34. A penalty notice may be withdrawn if
- ~ it ought not to have been issued or issued to the person named as the recipient;
 - ~ the notice contains material errors;
 - ~ the issuer did not comply with this code of conduct; or
 - ~ after the expiry of the last date for payment the penalty notice is unpaid and the local authority has neither instituted proceedings for the offence to which the notice relates nor is contemplating such proceedings.
35. Where a penalty notice has been withdrawn, notice of the withdrawal shall be given to the parent and any amount paid by way of penalty in pursuance of that notice shall be repaid to the person who paid it.
36. No proceedings shall be continued or instituted against the parent for the offence about which the withdrawn notice was issued or for an offence under S444 of the Education Act 1996 arising out of the same circumstances, except where it was withdrawn due to a material error and a further penalty notice was issued at the same time as withdrawal of the original notice.

Payment of penalty notices

37. The arrangements for the paying penalties will be detailed on the penalty notice. The local authority will retain any revenue to cover enforcement and administration of justice costs as detailed in legislation.

There is no statutory right of appeal to the local authority against the issue of a penalty notice. The local authority issue penalty notices at the request of the Headteacher/Principal. Any dispute/challenge about penalty notices must be referred to Headteacher/Principal.

How authorised officers will work together

38. Authorised officers should work together to ensure that penalty notices are used when likely to be effective and change behaviour.
39. On receipt of the relevant referral form(s) from the school or the police, the local authority will continue to issue penalty notices on their behalf.
40. An authorised local authority officer will decide whether proportionate support has been provided, and whether that support has worked or not.
41. The local authority will inform the school if, and why, a referral is not being progressed. It will also inform the school about whether penalty notices are paid, withdrawn or prosecuted for non-payment. They will do this half termly by way of email.
42. Where pupils move between local authority areas and it is necessary to establish whether a penalty notice has previously been issued, Sandwell can be contacted by email at crossborder_pn@sandwell.gov.uk

43. Where pupils attend school within Sandwell but live in a different local authority area, Sandwell will accept referrals from Sandwell schools for children on their roll.

Annex C – Illness Absence Guidance

[DfE external document template \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)