



St Mary's CE (Aided) Primary School

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ
(Philippians 1:27a)*

Promoting Good Attendance Policy 2023 - 2024

Version 1

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One family: school, church, home and community.

At St Mary's we believe in a culture where:

- Everyone is special, unique and valued: diversity and difference are celebrated. We are all God's treasure.
- Education is holistic; spiritual and moral growth is nurtured.
Life in all its fullness – John 10:10.
- Inspirational and reflective worship enables all in the school community to encounter the risen Christ.
- Wisdom, knowledge and skills are a focus in everything.
- Everyone does their best at all times with a culture of the highest expectations, respect and consideration for all.
- Everyone can succeed and achieve. Aspiration and inspiration are central to all that we do.
I know the plans I have for you. Plans to make you prosper – Jeremiah 29:11.
- Creativity and joy in learning is valued.
- The spiritual and emotional well-being of all members of our school community is a priority. Resilience and perseverance are developed in all.
- A community of global citizens of God is created through social action – on local, national and global levels.

All of these are underpinned by our spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and experiences; respect of our British values and through our core Christian values of hope, peace, compassion, forgiveness, trust and endurance.

Statement of Intent

St Marys CE (Aided) Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

We aim to work together with parents in order to ensure the high levels of attendance and punctuality for all children. For children to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance provided by the Department for Education.

Contents

School vision	2
Statement of Intent	2
Introduction	4
Expectations of pupils and parents	5
Daily routines	6
Reporting absence	7
Requesting leave of absence	9
Managing attendance	10
Voluntary support, formal support and statutory action	13
Fixed penalty notices	15
Appendix 1 Flow chart showing how schools, and local partners, work with families to improve attendance	16

1. Introduction

1.1 At St Mary's we expect all pupils to:

- Attend every school day
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school prepared for the day

1.2 We believe that attending school, on time, is key to enabling children to make the most of the opportunities we offer to prepare them for their future.

1.3 We will work in partnership with our families to identify the reasons for poor attendance supporting them in addressing any barriers to attendance for their child.

1.4 Promoting good attendance is a matter for the whole school community. This policy sets out our expectations and our approach. Our approach is in line with the Department for Education's guidance (May 2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance' updated September 2023.

1.5 Our approach to securing good attendance is based on the principle of support first. In line with Ofsted's research, can be summarised as *'Listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate.'*

1.6 Every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers.

1.7 In the case of specific illnesses that require pupils to be kept off school, parents should follow public health advice to ensure the wellbeing of the whole school community. These illnesses are Chickenpox, Diarrhoea and Vomiting, Impetigo, Measles, Mumps, Scabies, Scarlet Fever and Whooping Cough – see ['How long should you keep your child off school – checklist poster'](#). This is available in our school office.
Parents should follow the latest public health advice in relation to Covid-19.

1.8 This policy will be applied consistently and fairly. In applying this policy, we will take into account the needs of individual pupils.

1.9 This policy is supported by other school policies and procedures e.g., admissions, safeguarding and child protection, anti-bullying, behaviour and inclusive practice.

1.10 This policy takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equalities Act 2010, the Race Relations Act 2000 and the 1996 Education Act.

2 Expectations

- 2.1 It is our responsibility to maintain a culture that promotes good attendance which is supported by consistently applied systems.
- 2.2 Our dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance is the Headteacher.
- 2.3 Other staff in school who support attendance on a day to day basis are the Attendance Officer, Deputy Headteacher and administration team.
- 2.4 Staff who can provide support on attendance are the Senior Leadership Team (Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, SENDCo) and Attendance Officer
- 2.5 Parents/ carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- 2.6 We are committed to working with parents to promote positive attendance. We expect all our **parents/ carers** to:
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance
 - Contact the school as soon as possible if your child is absent to let us know the reason for the absence and the expected date of return. This should be followed up with a written note as soon as possible
 - Avoid unnecessary absences. For example, pre-planned medical/ dental appointments should take place outside of school hours.
 - Inform us of any change in circumstances that may impact on your child's attendance.
 - Support us by becoming involved in your child's education, acknowledging the value of education and the importance of children receiving the same messages from home and school
 - Work with us to address any barriers to attendance for your child including attending all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.
- 2.7 We expect all our **pupils** to:
- Be aware of when they should attend school
 - Attend all lessons on time and be ready to learn
 - Speak to a member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
 - Communicate with parents/ carers to encourage a written explanation to be shared with school to explain any absence that has happened or is foreseen
 - Follow the school procedure if they arrive late

3 Daily routines

- 3.1 At St Mary's a member of the year group staff and senior leadership meet and greet our pupils at the start of the school day. This begins at 8.45am each day. Pupils line up in their designated area until a member of staff invites them to enter the school building. Pupils can line up, 5 minutes before their entry time.
- 3.2 Attendance registers are taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session.
- 3.3 Our school day begins at:

Class	arrive	Start
N	8.55am	9am
R	8.55am	9am
1	8.50am	8.55am
2	8.50am	8.55am
3	8.50am	8.55am
4	8.50am	8.55am
5	8.45am	8.50am
6	8.45am	8.50am

The morning register will open and be taken from the start time for each class. Any pupil arriving after **9am** when the school gates are closed are required to report to the main school office to sign in and provide a reason for lateness

- 3.4 If arrival is before **9.30am** then the pupil will be recorded as late (Late **before** the close of register).
- 3.5 The school register will officially close at **9.30am**. Any pupil arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session (Late **after** the close of register).
- 3.6 Parents / carers will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in further action being taken to support improved attendance

3.7 Our afternoon session begins at:

Class

N	12.30pm
R	12.30pm
1	12.45pm
2	1pm
3	1pm
4	12.55pm
5	12.35pm
6	12.35pm

with a register taken at 1pm

3.8 Our normal school day ends at:

Class

N	3.30pm
R	3.30pm
1	3.20pm
2	3.25pm
3	3.25pm
4	3.25pm
5	3.20pm
6	3.20pm

4 Reporting Absence

4.1 If a child is absent from school, parents/ carers should contact the school office on the first day of absence providing a reason for the absence and the expected date of return. An absence reporting line is available on the school telephone system.

4.2 If the absence continues, parents / carers should contact the school office **each day of absence** to identify the reason for absence and the expected date of return.

4.3 Where absence is recorded as unexplained, a reason for the absence must be obtained, in writing by no later than 5 school days after the session. This can be via email or dojo message.

4.4 Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

The provision of a letter or phone call does not automatically provide an authorised absence.

Examples of reasons where absence from school will be authorised:

- sickness
- unavoidable medical/dental appointments (proof of an appointment must be provided)
- days of religious observance

- exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement.
- attendance at a music, dance or such exam

Examples of reasons where absence from school will be unauthorised:

- shopping
- staying at home because other brothers/sisters are poorly
- birthdays

Medical/dental appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. If a medical or dental appointment is scheduled during the school day, the appointment letter / card / text / email must be shown to the school office to ensure that it is coded correctly on the attendance register.

NHS Self-Certificate forms for school absence for a self-limiting illness can be submitted. School will accept a NHS Self-Certificate form, for a maximum of 4 school days (8 registration periods), Any absence for 5 school days or more will require evidence from a medical professional, which can include proof of a GP appointment card or sight of prescription boxes/bottles if appropriate.

4.5 If a child is absent, and we have had no contact from the parent / carer to provide a reason for the absence, we will:

- Activate first day calling / messaging procedures after the register is closed at **9.30am**.
- If there remains no contact then a further telephone call will be made later that morning to the parent and, if no response, a call will be made to the pupil's other emergency contacts.
- If we cannot contact a parent and are concerned about the pupil then, a home visit may be carried out by two members of staff – one being a member of the senior leadership team. If the family is supported by a social worker then the social worker will be informed of the absence.

4.6 If we have concerns around a pupil's safety, we may also visit the home of the pupil or request a welfare check to be made by the police.

4.7 We will telephone home if a pupil leaves school without permission.

4.8 St Mary's uses a computerised system for keeping the school attendance records.

The following national codes are used to record attendance information:

CODE	DESCRIPTION
/	Present
#	Planned whole or partial school closure
*	Not yet marked
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)

G	Family holiday (NOT agreed)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
X	Covid related / Non-compulsory school age absence
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll

5. Requesting leave of absence

5.1 A leave of absence will only be granted (authorised) under exceptional circumstances. It is therefore unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. In making our decision we will take into account the specific circumstances and context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. Requests for a leave of absence should be made in writing to the head teacher giving as much notice as possible.

A copy of the school's leave of absence request form can be obtained from the school office – paper copy or electronic copy.

5.2 Term Time Holidays

Parents do not have any legal entitlement to take their child out of school for holidays. Absence for family holidays will only be granted in exceptional circumstances as follows: An exception in the policy is:

- Where parents / carers are employed by the Fire Service or Armed Forces.

Local authority guidelines state that parents / carers should negotiate their holidays with their employers, so that they coincide with the school holiday pattern.

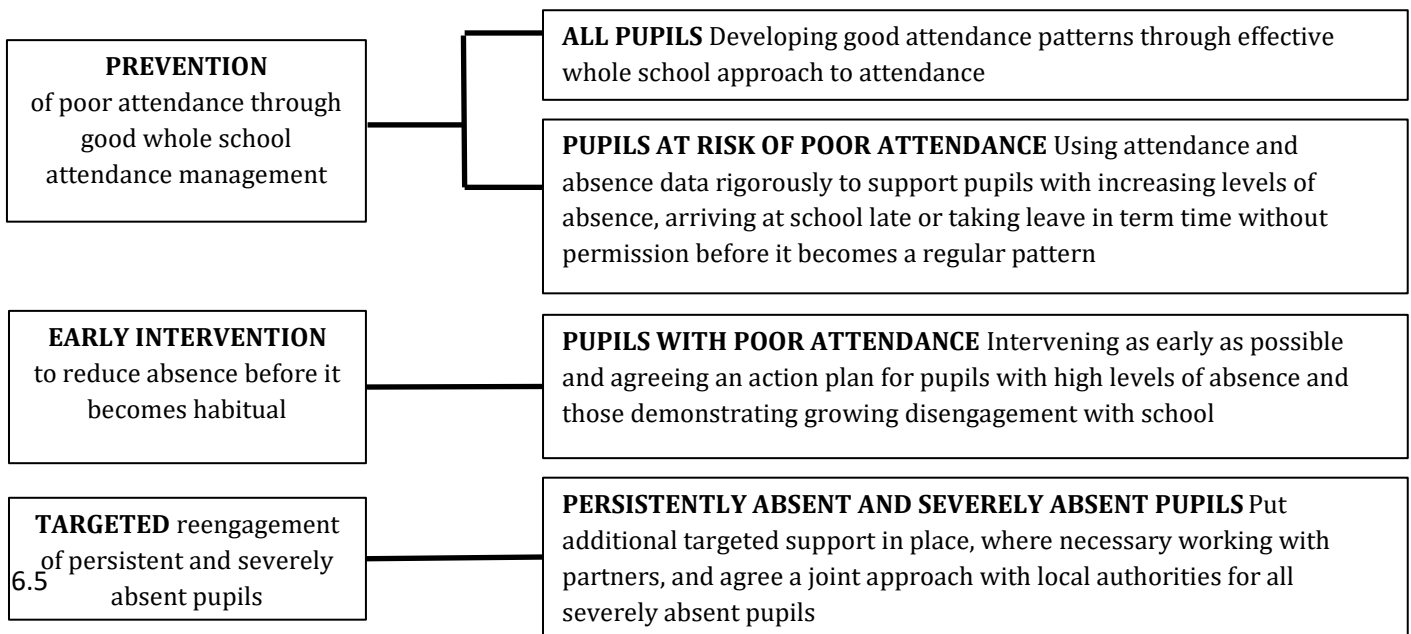
The school's holiday pattern is on the school web site and on our annual Year at a Glance. Where feasible the holiday dates for the next academic year will also be available.

Where these circumstances exist, parents should put their request for a term time holiday absence in writing to the Headteacher. The request should be made at least two weeks before the start of the holiday. The request should be accompanied by a letter from their employer, where this is the reason for the term time holiday absence.

Requests for holidays during term time, which do not meet the above circumstances will not be granted. If parents choose to go ahead with their term time holiday plans without the agreement of the Headteacher, then a fixed penalty fine may be issued for each child who is absent. Non-payment will be referred to Bury Local Authority, which will pursue the fixed penalty under section 444(1) of the Education Act. Each child's absences will be marked in the register as unauthorised. See *section 8*

6 Managing Attendance

- 6.1 We will inform parents about their child's attendance, highlighting any amount of time missed and the impact on learning annually. Any child's attendance that falls below 91% during the half term monitoring – parents / carers will be informed. Where appropriate, parents / carers will be invited in to school for an attendance meeting.
- 6.2 We value and recognise the importance of good attendance. We use the following to promote and celebrate good attendance:
- Meeting the children to greet them before entering school
 - Pastoral support and praise for pupils
 - Attendance monitoring
 - Home / school communications via class dojo
 - Star of the Week awards for attendance
- 6.3 We will regularly analyse attendance data to identify pupils who have consistently high attendance, those who have shown improvements in their attendance and to identify pupils who may be vulnerable (see 6.4 below). We will also analyse specific groups, classes, year groups to inform our strategy in promoting good attendance.
- 6.4 Our approach to attendance management is based on prevention, early intervention and targeted support. We will regularly analyse attendance data to identify pupils who are at risk of poor attendance, have poor attendance or are identified as being either persistently absence or severely absent.



Our strategy for using data to target our work on attendance, including reducing persistent absence (pupils who are absent for 10% or more sessions) and severe absence (pupils who are absent for 50% or more sessions) is based on the table below:

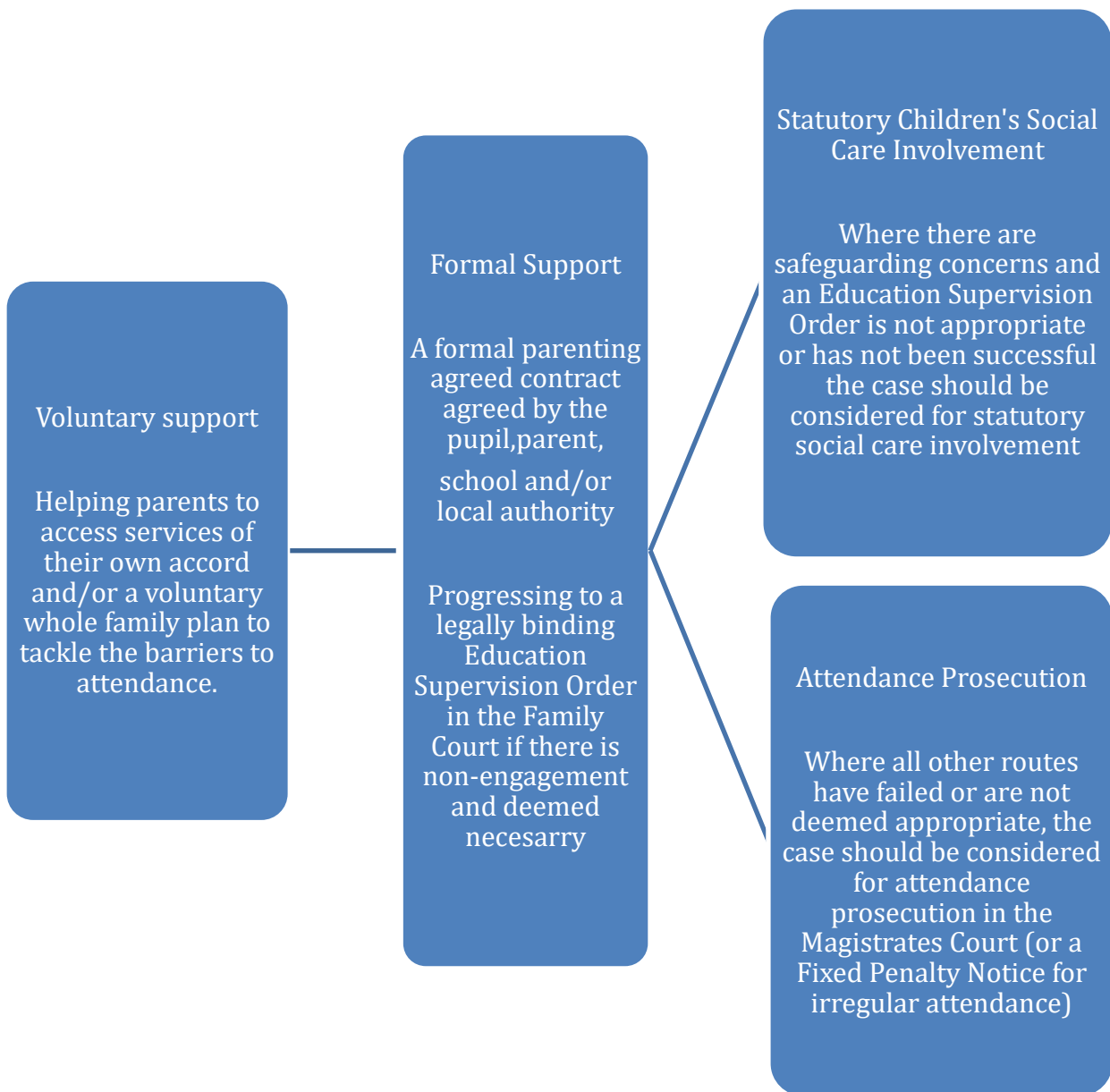
0 – 4 days missed	98 – 100% attendance	PREVENTION Whole school approach/ celebrating good attendance	School to ensure that reason for absence is obtained from parent / carer in line with attendance reporting procedures
5 – 9 days missed	95 – 97.9% attendance	PREVENTION Pupils at risk of poor attendance	Tracking of absence reasons, days and number of absences. Any trends will trigger a parent / carer meeting to discuss further.
10 – 19 days missed	90.1 – 94.9% attendance	EARLY INTERVENTION Pupils with poor attendance	Reporting of any further absences to HT. Increase home / school communications. Letter to parents / carers
20 or more days missed	90% or below attendance	PERSISTENTLY ABSENT 10% or more absence SEVERELY ABSENT 50% or more absence	Letter to parents outlining any additional absence reorting information required for an authorised absence e.g. GP attendance . Formal support plan and regular attendance updates to HT

6.6 We will regularly analyse attendance data to identify pupils or cohorts of pupils that need support. We will focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases.

- 6.7 If we have concerns about a pupil's attendance and/ or their punctuality then we will work in partnership with parents / carers to support improvements. This may involve a meeting in school to support the family in identifying, and addressing, the barriers to attending school and/ or attending school on time.
- 6.8 We recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties and trauma in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help us to identify any additional support that may be needed. It is expected that the child and their family work collaboratively with us to identify the most appropriate support. Where relevant, the support would involve following the Emotionally Based School Avoidance pathway.
- 6.9 We recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.
- 6.10 We will hold regular meetings with the parents / carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable to discuss attendance at, and engagement with, school. This will include pupils who are classed as being persistently absent (10% or more absence), those who are severely absent (50% or more absence), those with patterns of absence and pupils who show an unexpected or unexplained dip in attendance.
- 6.11 Working with parents, we will identify pupils who need support from wider partners and will make the necessary referrals as quickly as possible. With parental / carer consent, this may include exploring Early Help support through the completion of the 'Story So Far' tool, or through discussion within a team around the school meeting.
- 6.12 We will support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- 6.13 If we have any concerns about the welfare and wellbeing of a pupil then, in line with our safeguarding responsibilities, we will make any necessary referrals.
- 6.14 If we have been unable to contact the family, and have not seen the pupil, then we will inform the Local Authority so that joint enquiries can be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures

7. Voluntary support, formal support and statutory action

- 7.1 We will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. These may include:
- A recognised whole school approach that celebrates achievement in school
 - Reward systems for positive behaviours
 - Discussion with parents / carers and pupils
 - Discussion with the Virtual School where the child is looked after and/ or has a social worker
 - Working with attendance professionals, internal and/ or external to the school
 - Attendance panels
 - Attendance support plans
 - Attendance report cards
 - Referrals to support agencies
 - Learning mentors
 - Pupil Voice Activities
 - Friendship groups
 - Personal, social and health education
 - Anxiety-based school avoidance resources
 - Trauma-informed approaches
 - Early help referral options
 - Family learning
 - Reward systems
 - Time limited part-time timetables
 - Additional learning support
 - Behaviour support
 - Inclusion resources
 - Reintegration support packages
- 7.2 Support offered to families, both internally and externally, will be child-centred, trauma informed and inclusive; planned in discussion and agreement with both parents / carers and pupils.
- 7.3 Our approach to attendance management is based on the principles of prevention, early intervention and targeted support. At all stages we aim to work in partnership with parents/ carers to address any barriers to attendance and/ or punctuality together. Where support is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents.



- 7.4 We will work with Bury local authority to use the full range of legal interventions available to us to protect our pupils' right to an education. These are:
- Parenting contracts
 - Education supervision orders
 - Attendance prosecution
 - Parenting orders
 - Fixed penalty notices (see section 8)

7.5 Decisions on which intervention to take will be made on a case-by-case basis after considering the individual circumstances of the family.

8 Fixed penalty notices

- 8.1 School and the local authority will have regard to our safeguarding duties as set out in the statutory guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- 8.2 Fixed penalty notices will be served on parents / carers as an alternative to prosecution where parents have failed to ensure that their child regularly attends the school. Fixed penalty notices will be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school and the absence constitutes an offence. Fixed penalty notices can be issued to each parent / carer liable for the attendance offence/s, which should usually be the parent/carer or parents/ carers with day-to-day responsibility for the pupil's attendance.
- 8.3 We will only use a fixed penalty notice, in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended in 2013, where support to secure regular attendance has not been successful. Fixed penalty notices will be issued for unauthorised holiday in term time.
- 8.4 Fixed penalty notices can be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion the days that the child must not be present in a public place.

Note: This policy meets the requirements of the department for education's working together to improve school attendance guidance and referenced the statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties governing 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) Regulations 2007 (and 2013 amendment)*

This policy should be read alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022, SMPS Child protection and safeguarding policy and SMPS behaviour policy.

Appendix 1 Flow chart showing how schools, and local partners, work with families to improve attendance

EXPECT

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



MONITOR

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



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

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



FACILITATE SUPPORT

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



FORMALISE SUPPORT

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



ENFORCE

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