

# The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School



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The Good Shepherd,  
in all we say and do*

## **Attendance Policy 2024-2025**



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## 1. Context

At The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School, our attendance policy is based on our Catholic ethos and guiding principles. As such it has the purpose of reflecting our approach to being places of safety and love in which our children are supported to be the best they can be.

We believe that a large aspect of that is reliant on fostering full attendance for all our children. We understand the significant impact that absence from school has on children's educational attainment, social development and life chances and, as such, strive to make every effort to support children and parents in overcoming any barriers there may be to attending school in every session.

It should be made clear that the fostering of belonging underpins our Catholic ethos and that attendance will be managed positively, by ensuring that children and families feel loved and valued. They will receive positive messages about the contribution they make to our school and every effort will be made to ensure that our educational offer is attractive, engaging, inclusive and that children want to be in our school. We want the best for our children. At The Good Shepherd we recognise that the best for our children is in being able to access the opportunities through life, that high attendance at school provides. As such, this policy aims to ensure that our community is valued and that every effort is made to ensure children are not isolated or separated through absence.

Regular school attendance is crucial for pupil success, as evidenced by numerous studies. For instance, data from the Department for Education shows that pupils with attendance rates above 95% are more likely to achieve higher grades. Additionally, research indicates that pupils who attend school regularly are 20% more likely to pursue higher education. Beyond academic performance, consistent attendance is linked to better life chances; data reveals that individuals with higher educational attainment are more likely to secure stable employment and have higher earning potential throughout their lives. Therefore, maintaining good attendance is vital for both academic success and long-term personal and professional development.

## 2. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and Catholic ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.



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- 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 make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

### **3. Legislation and guidance**

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- It also refers to:
- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

#### **4.1 The central team**

The central team of the trust is responsible for:

- Regularly collecting and analysing attendance data from all schools within OLICAT to identify trends, patterns, and areas of concern.
- Develop and implementing draft attendance policies and procedures that align with national guidelines and best practices.
- Providing training and support to school staff on effective attendance management strategies and the use of attendance tracking systems.
- Overseeing intervention strategies for pupils with poor attendance, including working with families and external agencies.
- Preparing and presenting attendance reports to the MAT board, highlighting key issues and progress towards attendance targets.
- Ensuring all schools within the MAT comply with statutory attendance requirements and internal policies.



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- Allocating resources effectively to support attendance initiatives, such as funding for attendance officers or attendance improvement programs.
- Maintaining clear communication channels with schools, parents, and external stakeholders regarding attendance expectations and initiatives.
- Continuously evaluating the effectiveness of attendance policies and interventions, making improvements as necessary.
- Identifying and supporting vulnerable pupils who may face barriers to regular attendance, ensuring they receive the necessary assistance.

These responsibilities help ensure that attendance is effectively monitored and managed, contributing to better educational outcomes for all pupils within OLICAT.

## **4.2 The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
  - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority.
  - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and Catholic ethos.
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources.
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs.
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance.
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
  - The importance of good attendance
  - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
  - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers



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- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

#### **4.3 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The 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, and/or authorising the Senior Attendance Champion to be able to do so.
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers.
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels.

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

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school.
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis.
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance.
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff.
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed.



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- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues.
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.

The ATTL2 senior leader responsible for attendance is Dominique Smith and can be contacted via the school contact details.

#### **4.5 The attendance officer**

The school attendance officers are 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 education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Advising the Headteacher/Designated Senior Leader for Attendance when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

The attendance officers are Amy Treadgold Nelson and Emma Harris and can be contacted via the school contact details.

#### **4.6 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance by 9.00am for morning sessions and by 13.15pm for afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1).

#### **4.7 School office staff**

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers and pupils about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parents/carers and pupils to senior staff where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

#### **4.8 Parents**

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them).
- Parents are expected to:
- Make sure their child attends every timetabled session on time.



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- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority.

#### **4.9 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend every timetabled session, on time.

### **5. Strategies for promoting attendance**

To encourage high attendance, our school offers a variety of incentives and rewards designed to motivate pupils and recognize their commitment. These incentives include certificates of achievement, special recognition assemblies, and tangible rewards such as gift vouchers or school merchandise. Additionally, pupils with exemplary attendance records may be eligible for special privileges, such as participation in exclusive school events or trips. By celebrating and rewarding high attendance, we aim to create a positive whole school culture where pupils feel valued and motivated to attend regularly.

We also work with our pupils to ensure that they understand that full attendance at school also offers long term rewards. High attendance is not only beneficial for immediate academic outcomes but also has a significant impact on pupils' future life chances. Consistent attendance ensures that pupils receive the full benefit of their education, leading to better grades and higher levels of achievement. Research shows that pupils with high attendance are more likely to pursue higher education and secure stable, well-paying jobs. Furthermore, the discipline and responsibility developed through regular attendance are essential skills that contribute to long-term personal and professional success. Therefore, maintaining high attendance is crucial for both academic excellence and future opportunities.

### **6. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school**

#### **6.1 Supporting pupils who are absent**

Our school is dedicated to supporting pupils who are absent due to mental health difficulties, in line with current mental health guidance for schools. We understand that mental health challenges can significantly impact attendance, and we are committed to providing the necessary support to help pupils return to school. While we are not equipped to offer distance learning, we will make every effort to create conditions that facilitate a smooth reintegration into our school environment. This includes offering flexible attendance arrangements, providing access to school-based mental health services and working closely with families to develop individualised support plans. Our goal is to ensure that all pupils benefit from a supportive school community, which is essential for their academic success and overall wellbeing.



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## **6.2 Support for pupils returning to school**

Reduced or non-attendance at school by a child or young person is often rooted in emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues. Non-attendance can include not attending entirely for prolonged periods or regularly missing whole days at school. It can also include:

- Not going to their classroom
- Not staying in class
- Not attending some lessons
- Avoiding some physical spaces or people.

In all of these instances the school will take a therapeutic approach delivered by our Family Support Worker, Una Auburn to attendance and will work closely with the child and family to identify causes of absence and to put intervention in place to remove any barriers to attendance.

This may include strategies such as:

- Ensuring that all pupils have at least one adult at school who knows their strengths and concerns well - this is especially important at times of transition.
- Building a school culture that recognises all emotional reactions as normal, and helps pupils feel safe to express their emotions.
- Supporting the child or young person in developing effective emotional regulation strategies.
- Providing quiet or safe spaces for pupils to access if they are experiencing intense emotions
- Providing opportunities for pupils to contribute to decision-making in the school, helping them feel that their voices are valued and heard.
- Working to reduce everyday stressors in the classroom for pupils who easily become overwhelmed.
- Checking in regularly with pupils to see whether any agreed adaptations or strategies are working and useful, and adjusting if not.
- Where a pupil has an education health and care plan (EHCP) and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority and a multi-agency intervention will be facilitated to support an improvement in attendance.

## **6.3 Support for pupils with poor mental health**

The Good Shepherd is committed to supporting the attendance of pupils with mental health difficulties, including anxiety and depression. We recognise that these challenges can significantly impact a pupil's ability to attend school regularly. This includes promoting a supportive and inclusive school environment where pupils feel safe and understood. We provide training for staff to recognise signs of mental health issues and to respond appropriately. Additionally, we offer



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access to school-based mental health services, such as counselling and support groups, to help pupils manage their mental health and reduce barriers to attendance.

In collaboration with parents and carers, we develop individualised support plans for pupils experiencing mental health difficulties. These plans may include flexible attendance arrangements, such as part-time schedules or gradual reintegration into the classroom, to accommodate the pupil's needs. We also maintain open communication with families to monitor progress and adjust support as necessary. By implementing these strategies, we aim to ensure that all pupils, regardless of their mental health challenges, have the opportunity to succeed academically and develop essential life skills. This approach not only supports regular attendance but also promotes long-term wellbeing and positive life outcomes for our pupils.

### **6.3 Support for pupils with SEND**

Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) face unique challenges that can significantly impact their school attendance. Research indicates that children with SEND are more likely to experience higher rates of absenteeism due to factors such as health issues, lack of appropriate support, and increased social vulnerability. To address these challenges and close the national attendance gaps, our school adopts a holistic and inclusive approach. This includes developing individualised education plans (IEPs) tailored to each pupil's needs, providing access to specialised support services, and ensuring that all staff are trained to recognise and respond to the specific requirements of SEND pupils. In instances in which pupils identified with a SEND need are not meeting attendance requirements, their IEP will strive to address these barriers and provide adequate support to remove these barriers.

## **7. Attendance monitoring**

Attendance is a school priority. This is linked to school attainment and progress that the school has embedded systems to ensure it is systematically monitored. Attendance is tracked in real time and interventions for any unknown absence will be swift. Larger analysis of attendance data will be done, at least weekly through a number of different lenses. This will enable us to highlight any emerging trends, relating to the attendance of a child, a group of children or absence linked with specific lessons, days or periods in the day.

### **7.1 Monitoring attendance**

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality,) regularly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so that data can be accessed regularly and securely.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.



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The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

## **7.2 Analysing attendance**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance.
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence.
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

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

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis.
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families.
- Provide regular attendance reports to staff to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads).
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.

## **7.4 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. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.



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- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
  - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
  - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
  - Explain the help that is available
  - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
  - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant.
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence.
- Implement sanctions, where necessary.

### **7.5 Children missing in Education**

A child is considered “missing from education” when they are not registered at a school or receiving suitable education otherwise, such as through homeschooling, for a significant period. This can include prolonged unexplained absences or a failure to enrol in school at the appropriate age.

According to the statutory guidance on children missing education, we have several key responsibilities to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. Firstly, we must maintain accurate and up-to-date attendance records for all pupils. [If a child is absent without explanation, we will contact the parent or carer on the first day of absence and continue to make every effort to locate the pupil. If a pupil is absent for 20 consecutive school days without a reasonable explanation, we will make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer \(EWO\) after conducting reasonable enquiries to locate the pupil. Additionally, we will be continuously assessing the safeguarding risk associated with the absence and, if considered high, we will contact the police and/or social care. We are also required to share information with local authorities and other relevant agencies to help identify and support children missing from education.](#) This collaborative approach ensures that children receive the necessary support to return to education and reduces the risk of harm or exploitation.



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## **7.6 Attendance and safeguarding**

Regular school attendance is a crucial safeguarding measure, serving as a vital protective factor for children. Poor attendance can be an early indicator of various safeguarding concerns, necessitating prompt and thorough investigation.

### **Legal Framework and Safeguarding Responsibilities**

The school adheres to the following legislation and guidance with specific focus on safeguarding:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (latest version)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest version)
- Children Act 1989 and 2004

As per these documents, the school has specific safeguarding responsibilities related to attendance:

- Identify and respond to patterns of absence that may indicate wider safeguarding concerns
- Report children missing education (CME) to the local authority within agreed timescales
- Investigate unexplained absences promptly as a potential safeguarding issue
- Ensure robust procedures to identify and support pupils at risk of harm

### **Safeguarding Concerns Related to Attendance**

Poor attendance may indicate:

- Neglect or abuse at home
- Risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) or child criminal exploitation (CCE)
- Involvement in county lines or other forms of exploitation
- Forced marriage or female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Radicalisation or extremism

### **Safeguarding Actions and Referrals**

When attendance raises safeguarding concerns, the school will:

- Conduct a thorough safeguarding risk assessment for pupils with concerning attendance patterns.
- Engage with pupils and families to assess potential safeguarding risks and offer appropriate support.
- Implement a safeguarding-focused response:
  - Early intervention for emerging safeguarding concerns
  - Multi-agency approach for complex cases
  - Intensive support and monitoring for high-risk situations



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- Make timely referrals to safeguarding partners and relevant agencies:
  - Children's Social Care for child protection concerns
  - Police for immediate danger or crime-related issues
  - Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for allegations against staff
  - Channel program for radicalisation concerns
- Implement specific safeguarding measures:
  - Safety plans for vulnerable pupils
  - Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) for domestic abuse cases
  - Child protection plans as directed by Children's Social Care
- Ensure robust procedures for reporting and supporting children missing education (CME) as a safeguarding priority.
- Designate a senior leader responsible for attendance who will work in close collaboration with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Provide regular staff training on recognizing and responding to safeguarding indicators in attendance patterns.
- Maintain detailed records of all safeguarding actions taken in relation to attendance concerns.
- Regularly review and update safeguarding policies and procedures in light of attendance-related safeguarding issues.

## 8. Recording attendance

### 8.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic 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 during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- Any amendment to the attendance register will include:
  - The original entry
  - The amended entry



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- The reason for the amendment
  - The date on which the amendment was made
  - The name and position of the person who made the amendment
  - See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.
- 
- We will also record:
    - Whether the absence is authorised or not
    - The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
    - The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for six years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 08.45 and ends at 15.15.

Pupils must arrive in school between 08.45 and 08.55 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 08.45 and will be kept open until 08.55. The register for the second session will be taken at 13.00 and will be kept open until 13.15.

## **8.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 09.00 by calling the school office, who can be contacted via telephone e-mail (01604 714399/office@tgs.nor.olicatschools.org) or My Child at School (MCAS).

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness, as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Depending on the circumstance, or if there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

## **8.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. To request a leave of absence, the parent/carer should present the appointment confirmation to the School Office. However, we encourage parents 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 must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible.



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#### **8.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

- After the register has closed at 08.55 will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

#### **8.5 Following up unexplained absence**

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

##### DAY ONE:

- By 9.30, the school will send a text message to the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- If no contact has been made, the school will call the pupil's parent by 11.00. If the school cannot reach a pupil's parent, they will try the pupil's emergency contacts. The School Office will share this information with the Designated Senior Leader for Attendance or the Headteacher in their absence.
- If no contact has been made by the parent, the school will conduct a Home Visit by 15.00 and will post a slip if unsuccessful.
- The school will then identify whether the absence is approved or not and 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(s) for which the pupil was absent.

##### DAY TWO:

- The School Office will repeat the 'Day One' steps as outlined above.
- If no contact has been made by the parent or emergency contact and the second home visit is unsuccessful, the school will make a Safeguarding MASH referral and log onto My Concern.
- A letter will be posted to the family home asking parents to get in contact urgently.

##### DAY THREE ONWARDS:

- The School Office will continue to send a text message by 09.30 and if no response a phone call will be made by 11.00.
- Calls and texts will be logged on the school online register each day.
- If by day 10, no correspondence has been received and the child is still absent from school, the School Office will complete a Child Missing in Education (CME) referral form with the local authority. The referral number will be logged on My Concern and the register.



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#### OTHER:

- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with the school will escalate through punitive and legal measures including the issuing of notices to improve, issuing of penalty notices or any other legal intervention as is appropriate as outlined in section 9 (below).

### **8.6 Reporting to parents**

The school will regularly inform parents and carers about their child's attendance and absence levels and will work with parents to ensure that attendance of pupils is high.

## **9. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

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

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion and countersigned by the Designated Senior Lead for Attendance, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

'Exceptional circumstances for school absence' refer to rare, significant, and unavoidable events that justify a pupil's absence from school. These circumstances are typically one-off events that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours. Examples include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care for a child looked after by the Local Authority, or a housing crisis that prevents attendance. Schools assess each request individually, and the decision to



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authorise an absence under exceptional circumstances is at the discretion of the headteacher and Designated Senior Lead for Attendance.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office and the school website. The Senior Leadership team (SLT) may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health 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 parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, barges (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.
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made).

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school.
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration).
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority.
- Attending work experience.
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.



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## 9.2 Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

### Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks).
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil.
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution.
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate.

A penalty notice may also 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 suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days. If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.



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In severe cases of non-compliance with attendance expectations and/or lack of positive reaction to penalty notices the local authority may bring a prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000 or a prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment.

### **Notices to improve**

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences.
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#).
- Details of the support provided so far.
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with.
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis.
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period .
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

## **10. Processes relating to absence**

The school absence process, informed by research from the Children's Commissioner and other recent studies, emphasises early intervention and a proactive, supportive approach. When a pupil begins to show signs of frequent absenteeism, the school will promptly contact parents or carers to discuss the issue and understand any underlying causes. If absences continue, a formal letter will be sent home, followed by a meeting with parents to develop a tailored support plan.

### **10.1 Absence management process**

Our school target is 97% and each individual child's target is 100% attendance.

All pupils whose attendance falls below 96% for that individual term will be monitored weekly and



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will be treated as a child 'at risk of persistent absence'. Persistent absence is the official term for more than 10% of absence during the school year. This could be referred to as PA.

As a school operating within West Northamptonshire Council, we may choose to refer cases when the absence threshold is met for further investigation by the Local Authority. This could result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

Attendance definitions are set up to help everyone to understand when attendance becomes a cause for concern.

These zones are:

**Outstanding Attendance** is 100%.

**Expected attendance** is above 97%.

**Cause for concern and monitoring:** Attendance is between 92% and 95.9%. Attendance will be monitored closely and reviewed regularly to check it is improving. We aim to work in partnership with parents to support any barriers to increasing attendance.

If there is no improvement it becomes a cause for concern and action. If improvement is seen, text message 'Attendance Improvement' is sent to parents to thank them for their continued support.

**Cause for concern and action:** Attendance is below 92%.

**Persistent absence** is classed as below 90% but any absence close to this is monitored and a letter may be sent to parents/carers regarding this. An attendance contract may be put in place. In cases of unexplained persistent absence, we will seek advice from the SASO (School Attendance Support Officer).

**Severe absence** is defined by the DfE as being 50% of sessions missed.

All pupils whose attendance falls below 96% for that individual term will be monitored weekly and will be treated as a child 'at risk of persistent absence'. Persistent absence is the official term for more than 10% of absence during the school year. This could be referred to as PA.

For continued attendance concerns, support will be offered to encourage the child to raise their attendance to above the school target using our staged escalation system.

- **Stage Zero** – parents/carers are made aware of the fall in attendance by a telephone call or message from the school to outline attendance concerns. Parents may receive a letter detailing the call.
- **Stage One** – a formal letter (ATTL1) is sent to the parents/carers to outline the school's major concerns in relation to the absence of the child. Advice will be given at this point that further absences will result in a parenting contract.



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- **Stage Two** – a formal meeting with the Designated Senior Leader for Attendance or Headteacher to discuss attendance and agree strategies to achieve targets (ATTL2).
- **Stage Three** - a formal parenting contract invitation is sent to the home address and a meeting would be held in school to draw up formally the reasons for absence and for support to be put into place to ensure the regular attendance of the child. A home visit to conduct the meeting may take place if parents fail to attend without notice.
- **Stage Four** – a formal review of the parenting contract to map any progress in the nominated period will be carried out. This meeting will be followed by three potential outcomes:
  - Attendance has improved enough and, as such, the child will be taken off the parenting contract and will be informally monitored.
  - Attendance has not improved enough, or the child would benefit from another review period, and therefore will be invited to review his or her attendance again in 4-6 weeks.
  - Attendance has continued to decline and therefore a referral to the Local Authority will be completed by the school.

Parents are made aware that the Headteacher and Designated Senior Leader for Attendance may escalate the process and/or make a referral to the Local Authority during any point of the escalation process if they feel attendance is deteriorating at a pace which may harm continuity of learning.

## **10.2 Attendance management plans**

An individual tailored attendance management plan for a pupil may include the following elements:

**Attendance History:** Detailed records of the pupil's attendance percentages, trends, and patterns.

**Current Barriers:** Identification of any current risk factors or barriers to attendance, such as health issues, family circumstances, or transportation problems.

**Academic Targets:** Specific academic goals and milestones, with dates for review.

**Support Strategies:** A list of strategies to support the pupil's attendance, such as mentoring, counseling, or peer support programs.

**Parental Involvement:** Expectations and roles for parents or guardians in supporting the pupil's attendance.

**School Interventions:** Details of school-based interventions, such as meetings with attendance officers, personalized learning plans, or adjustments to the school timetable.

**External Support:** Referrals to external agencies or services that can provide additional support, such as mental health services or social care.

**Monitoring and Review:** A schedule for regular attendance review meetings to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments to the plan.



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**Rewards and Incentives:** Information on any rewards or incentives for improved attendance, such as certificates, recognition, or privileges.

**Communication Plan:** A clear plan for ongoing communication between the school, the pupil, and their family to ensure everyone is informed and involved in supporting the pupil's attendance.

These components help create a comprehensive and supportive approach to improving a pupil's attendance, addressing both immediate needs and long-term goals.

### 11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

### 12. Links with other policies

Several school policies are closely linked with the attendance policy, ensuring a comprehensive approach to pupil wellbeing and academic success. These include:

1. **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy:** Ensures the safety and wellbeing of pupils, addressing any issues that might affect attendance.
2. **Behaviour Policy:** Outlines expectations for pupil conduct, which can influence attendance and engagement.
3. **Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy:** Provides support for pupils with mental health challenges, promoting regular attendance.
4. **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy:** Ensures that pupils with additional needs receive appropriate support to attend school regularly.
5. **Parental Engagement Policy:** Encourages active involvement of parents in their child's education, which can positively impact attendance.
6. **Anti-Bullying Policy:** Creates a safe and supportive school environment, reducing absenteeism due to bullying.
7. **Health and Safety Policy:** Ensures a safe school environment, which is essential for regular attendance.
8. **Homework Policy:** Supports academic engagement and reinforces the importance of regular school attendance.
9. **Exclusion Policy:** Manages exclusions in a way that minimizes disruption to a pupil's education and attendance.

These interconnected policies work together to create a supportive and effective educational environment, promoting regular attendance and overall pupil success.



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#### Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
<b>Attending a place other than the school</b>		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
<b>Absent – leave of absence</b>		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment



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<b>J1</b>	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>C2</b>	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
<b>C</b>	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>Absent – other authorised reasons</b>		
<b>T</b>	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>I</b>	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
<b>E</b>	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
<b>Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause</b>		
<b>Q</b>	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
<b>Y1</b>	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their



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		home and the transport normally provided is not available
<b>Y2</b>	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
<b>Y3</b>	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
<b>Y4</b>	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
<b>Y5</b>	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In police detention</li> <li>• Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or</li> <li>• Detained under a sentence of detention</li> </ul>
<b>Y6</b>	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
<b>Y7</b>	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
<b>Absent – unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
<b>O</b>	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be



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		recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
<b>U</b>	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
<b>Administrative codes</b>		
<b>Z</b>	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
<b>#</b>	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays



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## Appendix 2: Parent Contract

### **Urgent Re: Attendance**

#### The Good Shepherd Parent Contract



#### **Pupil Information**

- **Name:**
  - **Year Group:**
  - **Class/Teacher:**
  - **Date:**
- 

#### **Attendance History**

- **Attendance Percentage:**
  - **Trends and Patterns:**
- 

#### **Current Barriers**

- **Health Issues:**
  - **Family Circumstances:**
  - **Transportation Problems:**
  - **Other Barriers:**
- 

#### **Academic Targets**

- **Specific Goals:**
- **Milestones:**



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- **Review Dates:**

---

## **Support Strategies**

---

### **Parental Involvement**

- **Expectations and Roles:**
- **Communication with Parents:**

---

### **School Interventions**

- **Meetings with Attendance Officers:**
- **Personalized Learning Plans:**
- **Adjustments to Timetable:**
- **Other Interventions:**

---

### **External Support**

- **Referrals to External Agencies:**
- **Mental Health Services:**
- **Social Care:**
- **Other Support:**



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### **Monitoring and Review**

- **Review Meeting Schedule:**
- **Progress Monitoring:**
- **Adjustments to Plan:**

---

### **Rewards and Incentives**

---

### **Communication Plan**

- **Ongoing Communication with Family:**
- **Updates to Pupil:**
- **Involvement of School Staff:**

---

By following this tailored attendance Parent Contract, we aim to support the pupil in overcoming barriers to attendance and achieving their full academic potential within the supportive environment of The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School.

Signed (Parent/Carer) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed Attendance Team \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



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Appendix 3: ATTL1

REF: ATTL1

**Attendance Concern**

Parent/Carer 1 Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Carer 2 Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Pupil name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

We are writing to you today, as we are concerned about your child's attendance at The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School.

Your child's current attendance is \_\_\_\_\_% = \_\_\_\_\_ days absence which is below our school expectation of 97%, as per our Attendance Policy.

Your child's attendance will now be monitored for the next four school weeks \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ to \_\_/\_\_/\_\_. During this time, we expect an improvement to be made.

At The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School, learning happens quickly and therefore absence can put your child at a disadvantage compared to their peers.

If you request any further information, please refer to our Attendance Policy which can be found on our website or you can request a copy from the School Office.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Team



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Appendix 4: ATTL2

REF: ATTL2

**Attendance Warning**

Parent/Carer 1 Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Carer 2 Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Pupil name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

As per the previous letter sent on \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ and continued monitoring, we have seen no improvement in your child's attendance. During the monitored four weeks, your child's attendance did not reach the schools expectation of 97%, as per the Attendance Policy. Your child's attendance for this four week period was \_\_\_\_ %. Therefore, we request you to attend a meeting to discuss our concerns:

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

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Venue: The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School

It is important that you attend this meeting to prevent Local Authority involvement. Please contact our Family Support worker via the School Office if you require any support to secure your child's regular and timely arrival at school. Please refer to our Attendance Policy which can be found on our website or you can request a copy from the School Office.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Team



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## Appendix 5: ATTL3

REF: ATTL3

### **Urgent re: Attendance: Parent Contract Meeting**

Parent/Carer 1 Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Carer 2 Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Pupil name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

We are writing to you concerning the irregular attendance of your child at The Good Shepherd which as you are aware is causing concern. We request your attendance to a Parenting Contract meeting for the following date and time:

Date:

Time:

Location: The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School

Participants:

### **What happens during a Parenting Contract meeting?**

The aim of this meeting, is to explore the reasons behind your child's irregular school attendance and to draw up a Parenting Contract to improve the attendance at school.

### **What happens if my case is referred to the Local Authority?**

- Further investigation could take place to ascertain if an offence of failing to ensure the regular attendance of your child at school has taken place.
- A fixed penalty notice could be issued.
- A PACE Interview could be held under caution in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

### **What happens if I am convicted of failing to ensure the regular attendance of my child at school?**



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You should be aware that if convicted of an offence of failing to ensure regular attendance of your child at school under **Section 444, 1 / 1A Education Act 1996**, you could be fined up to **£1,000/ £2,500 and/or receive a term of imprisonment not exceeding 3 months.**

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to both parents for each child taken out of school.

### **What happens if I have any special requirements in order that I may attend the meeting?**

Should you have any special requirements, please do not hesitate to contact the school so that arrangements can be made prior to the meeting.

### **Who can help me regarding my child's attendance at their school?**

At The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School, we have our Family Support Worker who can support parents with their child's attendance. Parents can also discuss medical concerns and receive daily absence support from our Family Support Worker.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school should you have any further questions prior to the meeting or, if the meeting time is not convenient, and you wish for it to be rearranged. I hope that you will work with us to improve your child's attendance and avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented.

Please refer to our Attendance Policy which can be found on our website or you can request a copy from the School Office.

Yours sincerely,

The Attendance Team



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## Appendix 6: Leave of Absence Request Form



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### Leave of Absence Request Form

The school's policy is not to ~~authorise~~ holidays from school during term time.

Absences ~~may~~ be authorised in exceptional circumstances only.

**When requesting an absence during term time parents/carer** are requested to consider the following:

- > By missing lessons will my child fall behind or fail to make progress?
- > Will missing lessons interfere with preparation for national tests?
- > Has my child missed lessons during the school term due to ill health or other absences?

For further information, please refer to the following website:

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/attendance-support/attendance-and-behaviour-advice-parents>

Child's Name: ..... Class .....

Reason for absence: .....  
.....

From ..... To ..... No of Days .....

**Please note:**

If you take your child out of school for an accumulative total of 5 days or more (10 sessions) (90%) over a period of ten weeks, the school will deem this as irregular attendance and will consider a referral to the Local authority for consideration of legal action. This could include:

A Penalty Notice payable up to £180 fine.

Prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000.

Prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment.

**Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to both parents for each child taken out of school.**

Signature of Parent/~~Carer~~ ..... Date: .....

Print Name: .....

Signature of 2<sup>nd</sup> Parent/~~Carer~~ ..... Date: .....

Print Name: .....

I confirm that the above request has been considered and that this absence will be recorded as:

☐ ~~Authorised~~ – given the exceptional circumstances

☐ ~~Unauthorised~~

Signature of Headteacher..... Date.....

Signature of Designated Senior Attendance Lead..... Date.....

**For office use only:**

☐ Referral to LA?

☐ Parent/~~Carer~~ informed?

☐ Coding applied on

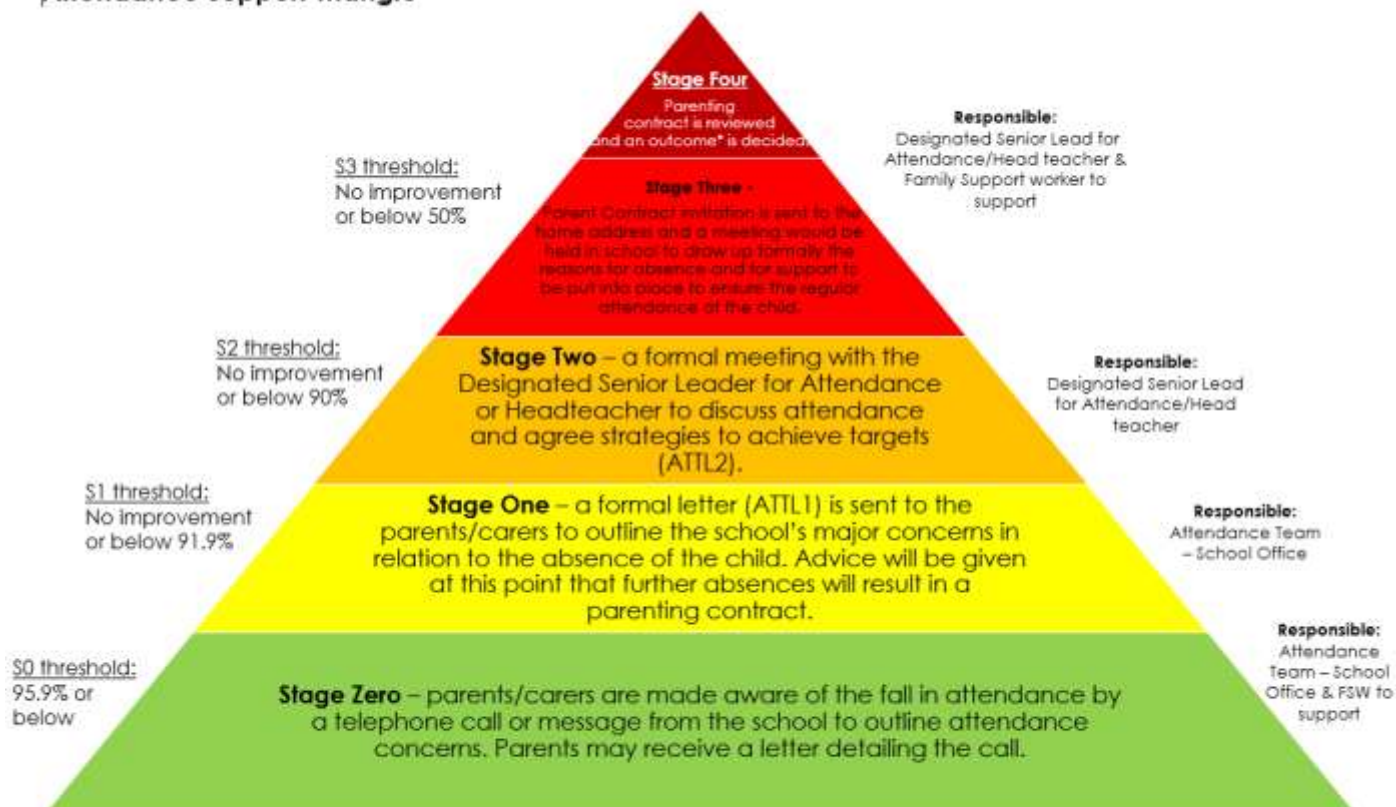
Staff Initial \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



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## Appendix 7: Attendance Support Triangle

### Attendance Support Triangle



\*Outcomes following the review of a parenting contract:

- This meeting will be followed by three potential outcomes:
  - Attendance has improved enough and, as such, the child will be taken off the parenting contract and will be informally monitored.
  - Attendance has not improved enough, or the child would benefit from another review period, and therefore will be invited to review his or her attendance again in 4-6 weeks.
  - Attendance has continued to decline and therefore a referral to the Local Authority will be completed by the school.

Parents are made aware that the Headteacher and Designated Senior Leader for Attendance may escalate the process and/or make a referral to the Local Authority during any point of the escalation process if they feel attendance is deteriorating at a pace which may harm continuity of learning.