



# Attendance Policy



Approved:	February 2023
Review Date:	September 2023



## **1. Aims**

The MAC Attendance Policy is intended to support parents and carers in helping their children make maximum progress in the St John Bosco Catholic MAC schools. The MAC is giving a clear and consistent message that 'Every day counts' and that attendance is essential in order to achieve in all aspects of life. The MAC expects all children on roll to attend every day, when the schools are in session, as long as they are fit and healthy to do so. The schools will do all they can to encourage children to attend and put in place appropriate procedures. The schools will follow clear, consistent procedures so that families and children have a detailed understanding of the policy.

Improving attendance is everyone's responsibility, this policy aims to identify those key responsibilities and approaches.

## **2. Mission Statement**

We nurture the unique God-given talents of every individual, providing a quality, distinctively Catholic education to our diverse community.

## **3. Vision**

We are ambitious for every child. We will achieve the best possible academic outcomes by challenging and supporting every child to achieve the best possible outcomes.

We respect and embrace the diversity of our school communities, cherishing and valuing all equally.

We are a family of schools who work collaboratively sharing our talents and resources for the benefit of all in pursuit of our shared sustainable future.

Our staff and students will bring out the best in each other with high standards of accountability and leadership at all levels.

We prioritise the Catholic life of all of our schools, nurturing the faith and spiritual development of everyone as part of our Parish and Diocesan family.

## **4. Safeguarding**

The MAC and its schools recognise their moral and statutory responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. They endeavour to provide safe and welcoming environments where children are respected and valued. They will act quickly and follow MAC procedures to ensure that children receive help and effective support, protection and justice.

## **5. The Law**

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

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%). At KS4, pupils not

achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 41. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent)<sup>3</sup> and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

For the purpose of this policy and included in DfE guidance, a parent means:

- all-natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

### Board of Directors

The Board has the responsibility for ensuring that there is a constant focus on attendance and that an effective MAC approach working across all schools in line with ethos and policy is in place.

The Board:

- Recognises the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensures school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviews attendance data, discusses, and challenges trends, and helps school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensures school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools.

Improving school attendance begins at board level, as such the Board of Directors take an active role in attendance improvement, supporting the school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with school leaders to set whole school attendance cultures.

This includes:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents.
- Recognising that attendance improvement does not happen in isolation and therefore ensuring it is prioritised in wider improvement strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding. This may include having a link governor or director that focusses on attendance.
- Ensuring the schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent attendance support is provided for pupils who require it most by prioritising the staff and resources needed. This includes ensuring schools engage and work effectively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and wider local partners and services.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils, but that processes and support are adapted to the individual needs of particular pupils. This includes those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.

- Repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school(s)' processes and improvement efforts to ensure they are meeting the needs of pupils as experiences and barriers to attendance evolve.

The Board of Directors will identify and monitor attendance patterns across the schools to identify common issues and barriers and share effective practice between schools. This may include sharing of staff and other resources between schools in the area (especially where a member of staff is supporting pupils from the same family but at different schools run by the trust).

The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring due regard to guidance and compliance with the law on school attendance. The Board of Directors ensures that its schools meet the requirements of the guidance through ensuring all schools leaders have in place:

- An attendance policy which meets the expectations set out in the DfE attendance guidelines which is published and publicised regularly so that it is easily accessible to pupils, parents and staff.
- A procedure for recording attendance accurately in the register and share the required information with DfE and local authorities.
- Effective local partners to help remove the barriers to attendance that go beyond the school gates, including building strong links with local statutory services and the voluntary and community sector.

The Board of Directors provide support and challenge to their schools around current trends on attendance in the school community, by:

- Regularly reviewing attendance data at board meetings. This includes thorough examination of recent and historic trends at a school level as well as benchmarking to comparator schools within the trust, local authority area, region and nationwide.
- Paying particular attention to attendance of pupil cohorts within their school(s) that have historically had poor attendance or that face entrenched barriers to attendance. This may include pupils who have a social worker, are from a background or ethnicity where attendance has historically been low, have a long-term medical condition, special educational needs or a disability, or are eligible for free school meals.
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those focus areas.
- Where a school is identified as struggling with their attendance, the Board will work with school leaders to develop a comprehensive attendance action plan to improve attendance. This is evaluated and reviewed regularly. This may also form part of a wider school improvement plan, including where appropriate school-to-school support from system leaders.
- Where attendance is identified as a risk the Board will hold termly attendance review meetings with each individual school and/or ask them to report on their attendance at defined intervals.

Improving attendance requires knowledge of guidance and regulations but also expertise in working with families to remove barriers to attendance and safeguard pupils. Just as those barriers are regularly evolving, so too is the training that school staff require to address them. The Board of Directors will ensure through delegation to school leaders that:

- Training on attendance is included in the schools continued professional development offer for all staff, and that attendance is covered in any MAC wide induction packs. As a minimum this should include all staff understanding:
  - the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances,
  - the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of registers, the school/MAC strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and



improving attendance, and the processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it.

- Dedicated attendance training is provided to any staff with a specified attendance function in their role, including administrative, pastoral or family support staff and senior leaders. In addition, this should include:
  - the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data,
  - and any additional training that would be beneficial to support pupils and pupil cohorts overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance.

## Local Governing Body (LGB)

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor and challenge overall attendance in line with the MAC policy.

The LGB will therefore examine closely information on attendance and absence provided, and seek to ensure that the schools attendance figures are as high as they could be.

In support of the role of the LGB the school will keep accurate attendance records on file and retained in line with the MAC Records Management Policy & Procedures.

If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the attendance team who will contact the parents/carers and discuss the pupil with the Education Welfare Officer. Such cases should be discussed anonymously with the LGB.

## Local Authorities

The local authority, statutory safeguarding partners and other local partners have a crucial role in supporting pupils to overcome barriers and ensuring all children can access the full-time education to which they are entitled. Local authorities are facilitators of wider support needed by individual families and schools to overcome barriers in the short term. They are also strategic leaders that work across a geographical area to remove barriers in the longer term.

As local authorities vary significantly in size, organisational approach and demographics, it is right that the specifics of attendance service delivery and how those roles are discharged should be determined locally to meet local needs of pupils, parents, and schools. As a minimum, however, all local authorities are expected to:

- Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
- Have a School Attendance Support Team which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type):
  - Communication and advice: regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.
  - Targeting Support Meetings: hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.
  - Multi-disciplinary support for families: provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.
  - Legal intervention: take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.

- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School.

## School Attendance Support Team

All local authorities are expected to have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in its area (regardless of type). Each local authority is expected to provide the 4 core functions outlined below free of charge to all schools.

The core functions to be provided to all schools are:

### 1. Communication and advice

Good communication and sharing of effective practice are essential to good multi-agency working. Local authorities are therefore expected to:

- Circulate clear guidance on how schools, the School Attendance Support Team and other partners should work together to provide intensive voluntary and/or formal support for individual pupils and families. This should include clarity around what support schools should already have offered and the point at which the local authority will become involved in individual cases and how the local authority and school will share responsibility in line with the summary of responsibilities table.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice, and with whom Targeting Support Meetings will be held.
- Maintain relationships with school leaders and offer opportunities for all schools (regardless of type) to regularly come together to share effective attendance practice.
- Show leadership and work together with all schools to tackle common issues across the geographical area. This may include agreeing common practices to issues such as term time holidays or follow up for persistent lateness so that families receive the same approach if they have children at several schools.

### 2. Targeting Support Meetings

As patterns of attendance are habitual, early identification and support is essential for individual pupils in need of help. Where barriers go beyond the classroom, this requires schools, local authorities, and other partners to work together to put joint support in place as quickly as possible. To enable this to happen, all local authorities are expected to:

- Organise termly Targeting Support Meetings with each school in their area so the school's attendance leads and their point of contact in the local authority's School Attendance Support Team can identify, discuss, and agree joint targeted actions for pupils who are persistently or severely absent and those at risk of becoming so. This should include agreeing what support the LA will provide and which (if any) other statutory or voluntary services should become involved.
- Use these meetings to build strong relationships and work collaboratively with the school's attendance leads, including providing advice on recording in the register, accessing services or the wider area-wide attendance approach.

The meeting may also include helping a school to identify areas to focus on in their school policies or approaches where they seek it. This may include help with analysing their own data, comparing themselves to other schools in the geographical area or considering how they may learn from or work with other schools who have faced similar patterns or trends.

In areas where scheduled 'Team Around the School' meetings already take place between the school, local authority, and other partners, the school's point of contact in the local authority's School Attendance Support Team may join the existing meeting instead of having a separate Targeting Support Meeting for that school.

### 3. Multi-disciplinary support for families

Where barriers to attendance for a pupil or family are complex and signposting to services is

not sufficient, schools, local authorities, and other services should work together to provide more intensive whole family support to address them as soon as it becomes clear they would benefit from it. Schools and local authorities are also specifically expected to have agreed a joint approach for all severely absent pupils.

Multi-disciplinary support should build on the existing early help offer in local authorities rather than requiring additional resource. In line with early help principles, the family should receive a single assessment, plan, and where necessary, a single lead practitioner. This should be from the team or service best placed to support the family and their needs, which may be the school, a local authority team or service or another statutory partner such as a health professional. For example, in the case of a pupil experiencing barriers to attendance because of a housing issue, the lead practitioner may more sensibly be the family's housing officer.

Rather than holding significant numbers of cases, the School Attendance Support Team should support and advise the family's lead practitioner on any attendance related elements of the plan, be part of the team around the family if necessary, and step in to lead any formal support or legal intervention when required. This could include acting as the responsible officer if support is formalised in a parenting contract, education supervision order or parenting order. A member of the team may, however, act as lead practitioner if they are the most appropriate person.

To facilitate effective multi-disciplinary support for families, the School Attendance Support Team is also expected to:

- Provide schools with information on how to raise concerns and make referrals to early help (and other services) outside of their Targeting Support Meetings so families receive the support they require as quickly as possible.
- Build strong relationships with a range of services and partners that can help with specific barriers to attendance and how to access them. This is likely to include health, youth justice, voluntary and community sector, early help, children's social care, local safeguarding partnerships, special educational needs, educational psychologists, and housing support. The team should meet regularly with leads from these services and ensure they know what their role is in attendance support, why it is important and how they fit into the local authority's wider strategy on attendance. They should also help coordinate strategies and messages on attendance in other partners to improve consistency of approach.
- Build effective data sharing opportunities with different partners as part of the overall data sharing/ governance arrangements in the local partnership to ensure a joined-up approach. Where this is not possible, the team should facilitate opportunities for professionals to come together to coordinate support (such as via case conferencing).
- Work closely with local mental health services, school level senior mental health leads (including school based Mental Health Support Teams where in place), the local School Nursing Service and the local authority's special educational needs and disability team(s) to ensure joined up support for families facing health or disability related barriers to attendance.

Effective multi-agency working on attendance within the local authority and wider partnership requires several key principles to be in place to be effective.

These are:

- A collaborative culture across early help services that puts the needs of the pupil and wider family at the core of its action (not the service delivery).
- Combined staff training and development across early help services, so all staff understand the importance of absence as a symptom of wider need and the benefits of improving attendance to effective outcomes for the whole family.
- Common systems and processes across all local authority family facing teams, including single assessment, planning and case management.
- Setting clear 'success measures' as part of individual and family plans and jointly owning these across all services working with the family.

- An integrated management structure between the local authority's School Attendance Support team and other early help services.
- Where families have multiple needs, aligning of the routes to support to ensure that they receive a holistic, co-ordinated package of support in order to increase the chance of successful outcomes.

#### 4. Legal intervention

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or are not appropriate (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time), the local authority's school Attendance Support Team should liaise with school and the early help lead practitioner or social worker (where applicable) to take forward attendance legal intervention in line with section 5 of the DfE guidance to formalise support and/or enforce attendance. All local authorities are therefore expected to:

- Understand and make use of formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders and use them fairly and consistently.
- Set out clearly for pupils, parents, and schools when and how attendance legal intervention will be used where voluntary support is not appropriate, or where absence was not for legitimate reasons and support has not been engaged with and/or been successful.
- Secure effective joint working between the School Attendance Support Team and statutory children's social care services to work together where there are safeguarding concerns or absence becomes severe. This should include building attendance expectations into children in need and child protection plans where appropriate or considering developing a plan as an intensification of support where formalised attendance support (such as an education supervision order) is no longer sufficient or has not been effective.
- Issue fixed penalty notices in line with local codes of conduct where absence was unauthorised and support has been provided but has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).
- Take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate.

#### 5. Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School Head

In addition to the benefits for all pupils, good attendance at school also provides an additional safeguard for vulnerable pupils. Absence for pupils with a social worker, however, has been historically higher, with a quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker persistently absent compared to less than 10% of those who had never been in need.

Local authorities are expected to make use of their Virtual Schools to:

- Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area, including those looked-after by the local authority.
- Set aspirational targets for attendance of pupils with a social worker in the area, and put in place personal education plans for pupils looked-after.
- Provide training for designated teachers about their role in promoting the attendance of children who have ever needed a social worker.
- Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.
- Work across children's social care services to make sure all social workers recognise the importance of good school attendance, and that attendance is built into every child in need or child protection plan where attendance is a concern.

To facilitate effective working across the local authority, schools are expected to inform a pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences from school. Children missing education



officers or a school's point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team should also inform a pupil's social worker if their name is to be deleted from the school register.

## Principals / Heads of School

It is the School Leaders and LGB responsibility to develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Good attendance is a learned behaviour, and the most effective schools recognise the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. Schools that have good attendance recognise that it is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture.

In building a culture of good school attendance, all schools are expected to:

- Recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- Recognise the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium).
- Recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. Responsibilities should include offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes, oversight of data analysis, and communicating messages to pupils and parents.
- Make sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Make sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding. Where possible this should include attendance or pastoral support staff (either school based or contracted) who can work with families, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders, the local authority's School Attendance Support Team and other partners.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels. In doing so, schools should help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development. It should also include clarity on the short and long term consequences of poor attendance.
- Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include in displays, assemblies or in registration periods. Where used sensitively and without discrimination, this may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year group, class/form and individual level.
- Recognise that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies.
- Recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

The oversight, recording, monitoring and decision making related to attendance is the responsibility of the school leader.

Though it is recognised some tasks may be delegated overall responsibility remains with the school leader.

The school leader will ensure that:

- There are effective day to day practices in place to follow up absence.
- Admissions and attendance registers are accurate.
- There are accurate attendance records on file and retained in line with the MAC Records Management Policy & Procedures.
- The adult leading the class is responsible for completion of the attendance register in the morning and afternoon sessions.
- The attendance team, comprising of the Principal / Head of School, attendance officer and administrative staff are responsible for monitoring the attendance of each class and pupil.
- If the class teachers become aware of an unexpected pupil absence during the course of the school day, they will inform the office or attendance officer immediately.
- If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the attendance team who will contact the parents/carers and discuss the pupil with the Education Welfare Officer.
- The attendance officer or administrative staff will inform the Principal / Head of School on a daily basis of any absent children and also children from whom the school had had no notification of absence from parents.

Where families are connected across MAC schools, liaison with those schools within the MAC will be directed by the Principal / Head of School and one school designated as the lead for the family. Under no circumstance must any family within the MAC but attending different schools be treated less favourably. Approaches to supporting the families and taking relevant action or intervention must be consistent across all schools.

## 7. Recording of Attendance and Categorisation of Absence

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of the following categories:

- Unauthorised absence – this is for those pupils where no absence reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. Permitting absence from the school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carers. Only the school can authorise absence. The school will not assess all reasons as valid.
- Authorised absence – this is for those pupils who are away from the school for a reason that is deemed to be valid (under the Education Act 1996). All requests must be made prior, where possible in writing, to the Principal / Head of School, who reserves the right to decline such requests if the nature of the opportunity is deemed to be inappropriate.
- Approved educational activity – this is for pupils who are undertaking supervised educational activity off-site but with the approval of the Principal / Head of School, for

example, a sporting competition or private music exam.

The school will **not** authorise absences for:

- Holidays in term time;
- Illness of other family members e.g. brother/sister;
- Shopping trips;
- Birthdays;
- Visiting relatives;
- Hair appointments;
- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation;
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified;
- No reason given.

The school may authorise absences for:

- Illness (except where concerns are raised and medical advice does not align with this);
- Family bereavements;
- Medical and dental appointments where proof is available;
- Days of religious observance;
- Fixed term or permanent exclusion.

For **all** absence, the school will require relevant documentation such as:

- Medical appointment information/doctor's notes;
- Flight documentation.

Special and exceptional circumstances must be discussed with the Principal / Head of School. There will be no guarantee that this request for absence will be approved. If supporting documents are not received to confirm your child's reason for absence, then this will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

## **8. Arrival and Registration**

Each school has a published local attendance procedure this will outline the registration times.

Schools must take the attendance register at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session.

On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Attending an approved educational activity as defined in regulation 6(4); or
- Unable to attend school due to exceptional circumstances as defined in regulation 6(5).

Schools must record whether the absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or not.

Schools must record the nature of the activity where a pupil of compulsory school age is attending an approved educational activity.

Schools must also record the nature of the circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Attendance and absence codes as set out in the Working together to improve school attendance document are used in all schools.

Those absences coded N - reason not yet provided should not remain on a register indefinitely, if

the reason is not established within 5 working days, this code should be changed to O.

### Late arrivals

Late arrivals are monitored very closely and where there is continued lateness, the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss the problem. It is essential that children arriving late/leaving early are signed in or out from the school office. The signing in/out register is used in the case of an emergency or fire drill.

If a pupil is late, they are marked as late. If the register has already closed when a pupil arrives late and without satisfactory explanation, it may be classed as an unauthorised absence. This may lead to legal action for not ensuring regular and punctual attendance.

Pupils who arrive late are missing an important part of the school day. Parents/carers are encouraged to help their child get off to the best start by helping them to be punctual and ready to begin the school day in a calm and happy frame of mind.

Punctuality is important because if, for example, a child arrives 15 minutes late each day, they lose almost 2 weeks of education a year.

### Illness

If your child is ill, you are expected to contact the school on the first morning of absence and every day after that. If you are unable to speak to a member of the team, please leave a message when telephoning the school. If the school does not receive information about your child's absence, a member of staff will then contact you via telephone. If the school still does not have a reason for absence, a home visit will take place from a Senior Leader or designated officer to establish the reason for your child's absence.

Where a child is absent for more than three days, the school will make a follow up telephone call or send a text message to ask about their progress. At this stage, the school would expect that your child has made a visit to the GP as this is a significant proportion of the school week and substantial learning has been missed. The school staff will expect to see documentation to support this absence; either a prescription or a note from the GP will be requested by the school. If the school does not receive supporting documentation your child's absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

### Medical Appointments

The MAC expects that, wherever possible, a child will attend a medical appointment outside school time. Doctors and Dental receptionists will usually try to accommodate, if requested. If this is something that cannot be prevented, the school will need a copy of the appointment letter/card in order to authorise the absence. It is expected that the child will attend the school prior to, or return after the appointment. Children who do not return to school after an appointment will be recorded as having unauthorised absence. The school will authorise one session for most medical appointments and only in exceptional circumstances will absence be authorised for two sessions (a full day). Details of exceptional circumstances should be discussed with the Principal / Head of School.

## **9. Term Time Holiday and/or Extended Leave**

The law states that parents do not have a right to take their child out of school for a holiday and/or extended leave during term time. Any absence from school will have an impact on a child's education. The MAC and its schools firmly believe that good attendance should be encouraged and promoted.

The MAC and its schools adhere to Government legislation and will therefore not authorise any holidays and/or extended leave in term time.

There is no right time to have a holiday and/or extended leave during term time, as your child is missing out on learning time. Only in exceptional circumstances will leave be granted.

The Principal / Head of School sets out the requirements for permission to be granted for term time leave. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal / Head of School's discretion. This is in line with section 444 of the Education Act 1996, Local Authority guidance and agreed MAC Policy.

Unauthorised absence is accumulative and where unauthorised absence reaches 10 sessions (5 days) or more, throughout the academic year, a referral will be made to the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service. The Education Welfare Service will then issue a penalty notice on behalf of the school.

Penalty notices are issued at a fine of £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days. This would increase to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days and could lead to further court proceedings if unpaid.

Procedure (for requests for absence during term time in exceptional circumstances):

- Any parents/carers wishing to apply for term time leave of absence (in exceptional circumstances) must apply to the Principal / Head of School of the school in advance and in writing by completing the relevant request form which may be obtained from the school.
- The school will inform parents that arrangements for the potential absence should not be made without the prior agreement of the school to authorise the leave (in exceptional circumstances).
- The school will reserve the right to ask for proof of the leaving and return dates, as well as other supporting documentation.
- The school will reserve the right to arrange a meeting between a senior member of staff and parents/carers to discuss potential extended leave and/or holiday plans.
- Where leave of absence is granted (in exceptional circumstances), the Principal / Head of School will determine the number of days the pupil may be away from the school.
- The school will advise parents/carers whether the absence may be authorised in the event of a request for extended leave in exceptional circumstances.
- Where an absence is not agreed by the school the parents/carers will be informed.
- Where parents fail to adhere to the school's decision not to authorise leave of absence, the issue of a penalty notice will be considered.
- The school will promote the positive impact of not taking leave in term time.

## 10. Irregular School Attendance

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parents/carers. If this is unsuccessful, the school will refer to other agencies e.g. School Nursing, if the problem appears to be medical, for example. In other cases, the school will seek advice from the Education Welfare Service and/or other agencies, which can lead to pupils being fast tracked. In essence, this means that where attendance does not improve over an agreed period then a penalty notice will be served to the parents/carers. The national minimum attendance level is 90%. If a child falls below this, they are considered to be a persistent absentee and the school must intervene to bring about rapid improvement.

### Continuing Absence

Where an absence reaches more than 20 days, for example, extended leave not authorised by the Principal / Head of School, a parent may lose their child's school place, which may result in them being removed from roll. This would mean that should the child return, parents/carers would have to re-apply for a place to the school through the normal admissions route.



### Non-statutory Lower Foundation (nursery) Irregular Attendance

Even though Nursery attendance is non-statutory, the MAC and its schools believe that good school attendance is vital from the minute any child begins receiving an education. Where absence becomes consistently irregular, the school will work with parents/carers to address their concerns e.g. meetings with Senior Leaders. However, if attendance continues to cause concern, other agencies may be involved to bring about rapid improvement.

### Religious Observance

The MAC and its schools recognise the value of school attendance and of community cohesion. The MAC takes account of religious observance and the impact of its recognition on community cohesion when setting term dates and holiday patterns.

### Attendance Rewards

MAC schools will use a rewards system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance.

Recording of attendance is included within individual school reports to parents.

## **12. Persistent and Severe Absence**

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, schools should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.

If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools and local authorities should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, conduct a full children's social care assessment. Further information is available in the statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education.

In all cases, schools and local authorities are expected to make patterns of both persistent and severe absence a focus of their regular data monitoring and identify pupils and cohorts who need targeted attendance support as quickly as possible. Both persistent and severe absence should also be central to school, MAC, and local authority level strategies for improving attendance.

## **11. Procedure for Tracking and Improving Attendance**

During any of the below activities, internal support may be provided, as well as external referrals to agencies, in conjunction with parents e.g. School Nursing, Early Help and the Education Welfare Service, to provide the necessary support to ensure their child attends school every day.

#### Day to Day (including Child Missing Education):

- Make an initial response (ranging from: text message, telephone call and/or home visit) on the first day of absence. When a home visit is made, a calling card will be left to make the parents aware a member of staff has visited their house.
- The school will endeavour to make all reasonable enquires to ascertain the whereabouts of the child and the reason for absence, as above. If the school fails to make any contact with the parents, a member of staff may telephone the Education Welfare Officer or the Police to complete a safe and well check.
- In exceptional circumstances, where concerns are raised, a referral to Social Care may also take place.

#### Weekly:

- Analysis of all absence and attendance codes for monitoring purposes.
- Analysis of the Late Log detailing all late children. (Both before and after registration closes).
- Phone calls and/or meetings, as required, to discuss individual circumstances, including lateness and/or absence.

#### Half-Termly:

- Send a 'Level 1 Attendance – Cause for Concern' letter which informs parents that their child's attendance has fallen below 90% (minimum national school attendance level) and is being closely monitored to ensure they do not become a persistent absentee.
- Send a 'Level 2 Attendance – Cause for Concern' letter which informs parents their child's attendance is still below 90% and if it does not improve they will be invited to a meeting.
- Send a 'Level 3 Attendance – Cause for Concern – Meeting Request' letter which informs parents that their child's attendance has significantly fallen below 90% (minimum national school attendance level), has shown no improvement since the last half term or is consistently causing concern, after being closely monitored. These children are then classed as a persistent absentee.
- Send a 'Level 4 Attendance- failed to attend meeting' letter which informs parents they need to contact school to discuss their child's significantly low attendance and further action may be taken.
- Senior Leaders analyse and discuss attendance during half termly Pupil Progress Meetings.
- Attendance data is reported to the MAC for analysis. Attendance is reported to the senior leaders and governors (summary of statistics analysed for monitoring, assessing targets and implementing improvement), covering:
  - Individual class attendance
  - Whole school attendance
  - Persistent absenteeism
  - Analysis of groups of learners e.g. SEND

#### Yearly:

- During various points throughout the year, school attendance is reported through the School Census.
- Attendance data is reported to the MAC for analysis.
- Attendance is reported to all parents within their 'End of Year Report'.
- A Yearly Attendance Summary is reported to the senior leaders and governors (summary of statistics analysed for monitoring, assessing targets and implementing improvement), covering:
  - Individual class attendance
  - Whole school attendance
  - Persistent absenteeism

- Analysis of groups of learners e.g. SEND

## **12. Children who Cannot Attend School because of Health Needs**

The Government's policy intention is that all children, regardless of circumstance or setting should receive a good education to enable them to shape their own futures. Therefore, alternative provision and the framework surrounding it should offer good quality education on par with that of mainstream schooling, along with the support pupils need to overcome barriers to attainment. This support should meet a pupil's individual needs, including social and emotional needs, and enable them to thrive and prosper in the education system.

The Government has issued statutory guidance which local authorities (LAs) must have regard to when carrying out their duty to arrange suitable full-time education (or part-time when appropriate for the child's needs) for children who are unable to attend a mainstream or special school because of their health. This duty applies to all children and young people who would normally attend mainstream schools, including academies, free schools, independent schools and special schools, or where a child is not on the roll of a school. It applies equally whether a child cannot attend school at all or can only attend intermittently.

LAs are responsible for arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils, and for other children who – because of illness or other reasons – would not receive suitable education without such provision. This means that where a child cannot attend school because of health problems, and would not otherwise receive a suitable full-time education, the LA is responsible for arranging provision and must have regard to this guidance.

There will be a wide range of circumstances where a child has a health need but will receive suitable education that meets their needs without the intervention of the LA – for example, where the child can still attend school with some support; where the school has made arrangements to deliver suitable education outside of school for the child; or where arrangements have been made for the child to be educated in a hospital by an on-site hospital school. The Government would not expect the LA to become involved in such arrangements unless it had reason to think that the education being provided to the child was not suitable or, while otherwise suitable, was not full-time or for the number of hours the child could benefit from without adversely affecting their health. This might be the case where, for example, the child can attend school but only intermittently.

LAs are responsible for arranging suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, would not receive suitable education without such provision. This applies whether or not the child is on the roll of a school and whatever the type of school they attend. It applies to children who are pupils in academies, free schools, special schools and independent schools as well as those in maintained schools. Further information for families can be accessed by contacting the relevant LA.

## **14. Children with Medical Conditions or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.**

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, schools should be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

This should include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health

services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. In addition, schools should work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day. Please see further details on SEN support.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
- Ensure data is regularly monitored for these groups including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. Please see further information on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school.

In all cases, schools should be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents and they should talk to pupils and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

## **15. Part-time Timetables**

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised.

All part-time timetable arrangements must be reported on a termly basis to LGB. Only in exceptional circumstance should part-time timetable be put in place.

## **16. Children Missing Education (CME)**

Children Missing Education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and who are not receiving a suitable alternative education (for example at home). These children may be at a greater risk of harm. The Local Authority's Education Welfare Service is responsible for monitoring and tracking young people who are not in the education system, and for supporting their entry into a school.

A child going missing from education, which includes within the school day, is a potential indicator

of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation. Unauthorised absences will be monitored and followed up in line with the school's attendance procedures, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions. All staff are aware of the signs of risk and individual triggers including travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

All pupils will be placed and removed from admission and attendance registers as required by law.

The school will collect, where possible, at least two emergency contact numbers for each pupil. The school will inform the local authority of any child removed from the school's admission register. The school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend for a continuous period in line with the local authority's procedures.

If a child goes missing from education the school has a responsibility to make reasonable enquiries to find the child. If they are unable to do so they should refer to the Local Authority's CME Officer in the Education Welfare Service.

Including day to day attendance procedures, as well as cases of CME, the school will:

- Make an initial response (ranging from: text message, telephone call and/or home visit) on the first day of absence. When a home visit is made, a calling card will be left to make the parents aware a member of staff has visited their house.
- Endeavour to make all reasonable enquires to ascertain the whereabouts of the child and the reason for absence, as above. If the school fails to make any contact with the parents, a member of staff may telephone the Education Welfare Officer or the Police to complete a safe and well check.
- In exceptional circumstances, where concerns are raised, a referral to Social Care may also take place.
- Inform the EWO if any child is absent for 20 consecutive school days and no reasonable explanation has been provided.
- Inform the local authority of any child removed from the school admission register.

#### **14. Children who are Collected Late from the School/are Uncollected from the School at the End of the Day**

If a child is not collected at the end of the school day, with no known reason, then a member of staff will contact the first parental contact to find out if there is a reason why their child has not been collected. If this first contact is unavailable, then other telephone numbers will be contacted from the list on the child's personal information. The school, where possible, will ensure it has at least two emergency contact numbers.

If a child is collected later than 4pm, this will be internally recorded by the school. Should this situation continue to reoccur, then the Principal / Head of School will request a meeting with the parents.

When no contact can be made, the child will be distracted and placed into an after-school club, or in a shared area (charges may apply), with members of staff to keep them calm. During this time, other members of staff will continue to try and make contact with the child's family. A member of the school's Safeguarding Team must be made aware.

In the rare occasions, where a child is not collected from the school, at the end of the day, with no specific reasons, then the schools Designated Safeguarding Lead would make a Social Care Referral, which may also include contacting the Police. During this time, the child and staff would stay in the school, for as long as required, to ensure this situation was resolved correctly.

#### **15. Missing Child**

Due to other supervision procedures, there are a limited number of situations where a child could



be missing and these are:

1. Where a child is separated from their class because they are genuinely lost, for example, during a class trip.
2. Where a child deliberately escapes from the school grounds e.g. if they are unhappy or seeking attention.
3. Where a child is collected from the school by an unauthorised adult.
4. Where a Y6 child, after walking home alone, has not reached home or the school.

Should a child become lost the following action must be taken:

- The member of staff must alert a Senior Leader and a Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately who must make enquiries with relevant members of staff as to when the child was last seen and where.
- Staff should keep calm and remember the welfare of the other children with regard to supervision and security.
- Ensuring that the remaining children are sufficiently supervised and secure, as many other staff members must search the buildings and outdoor areas thoroughly starting with the immediate vicinity of where the child was last seen. The priority must be to find the child. Staff should keep in touch using school walkie talkies where available.
- If the child cannot be found within ten minutes:
  - The police are to be informed by the Principal / Head of School or other senior leader, giving them necessary details.
  - If on a school trip, the lead member of staff should contact the school to inform a Senior Leader that a child is missing. Appropriate advice and discussion will take place via telephone, as required.
  - The parents should be contacted and informed by a Senior Leader or member of Admin Staff. If a child is missing due to examples 2 and 4, under 'Missing Child' above, they should be asked to stay at home in case the child arrives and they should be asked to describe the most likely route from the school to home and asked if there is any place that the child might usually go?
  - The parents should be asked to contact the school immediately if the child turns up and inform them that the police have been called. The school will explain that a member of staff will contact them if they have any more information.
  - The school staff will continue to search, opening up the area of the search to places outside of the immediate school/location vicinity.

When the situation has been resolved, members of staff must review the reasons for it happening and ensure measures are taken to ensure that it does not happen again. An incident report will be completed and the school will ensure that all of the details are passed on to the Principal / Head of school immediately.

## **16. Collected by an Unauthorised Adult**

If the end of day collection system is followed correctly, then no child should be collected by an unauthorised adult.

All parents provide the school with a 'list' of adults who are authorised to collect their child, on a regular basis, as well as the relationship of this person to the child e.g. Sandra Smith – Grandma. Only with the permission of parents, in writing, will children be released with an older sibling, aged 11 – 16 years old.

If for any reason, a parent is unable to collect their child from the school, they must telephone the school and state the name of the designated adult who will collect their child, as well as the relationship to the child. The reception staff will report this to the appropriate year group staff.

When the designated adult picks up the child, they will be asked to provide their name, relationship to the child and the class password.

If a parent informs staff, when dropping their child off at the school, that another adult will be picking up their child that evening, this again will be reported to the appropriate year group staff.

If any of the above information has not been received, a child will not be released under any circumstances and a member of staff will contact the child's parents to confirm the situation. If, however, a child is released to an unauthorised adult, then the following action must be taken:

The member of staff must alert a Senior Leader who must make enquiries with relevant members of staff as to the circumstances and if it was the parent of another child who collected the pupil.

- If the authorised adult or parent is present in the school, a member of staff will check with them whether they know who the collecting adult was, giving descriptions.
- If the authorised adult is not present in the school, then they will be contacted by the reception staff and/or Senior Leader, to clarify the arrangements. However, if the situation remains unresolved, and a child has been released with an unauthorised adult, all efforts will be made to find the child/unauthorised adult. The Principal / Head of School will contact the police, as appropriate.

When the situation has been resolved, members of staff must review the reasons for it happening and ensure measures are taken to ensure that it does not happen again. An incident report will be completed and the school will ensure that all of the details are passed on to the Principal / Head of School immediately.

## 18. Penalty Notices

The MAC and its schools have adopted a consistent approach to encouraging and promoting attendance. Where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for absence, the local authority will be asked to arrange the issue of a penalty notice.

Parents/carers and pupils are supported at the school and by external agencies to overcome issues that prevent regular school attendance through a wide range of intervention strategies. Where interventions fail, penalty notices are an appropriate intervention to get pupils back into an school or alternative education.

Criteria for the issue of a Penalty Notice:

Circumstances in which a penalty notice might be issued include:

- Irregular school attendance;
- Overt truancy;
- Parentally condoned absences which are not authorised by the school;
- Unauthorised holidays in term time;
- Persistent late arrival at the school (after the register has closed);
- Being in a public place in the first five days of an exclusion; and
- Pupils on the 'Fast Track to Attendance' scheme (which means 12 weeks have been given to improve the pupil's attendance).

A penalty notice will usually be restricted to two per pupil per academic year. In situations where a parent/carer meets the criteria for more than one penalty notice to be issued, because there is more than one child with irregular attendance, multiple notices may be issued.

To ensure consistent service of penalty notices the following criteria will apply in accordance with local authority guidelines (this may vary across authorities, please check using the links below):

- Where there are at least 10 sessions (half days) recorded as unauthorised absence due to a holiday in term-time; or

- Where a child has at least 10 sessions (half days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months' period. A suitable circumstance is where a parent continually fails to provide a reasonable or acceptable explanation for a pupil's absence; or where a pupil has a record of unauthorised absence from school and the circumstances appear to have been avoidable; or
- Where a child who has been excluded is present in a public place during the first five days. A penalty notice will be issued on the first occasion if appropriate after considering the parent's action or inaction which led to the child being in a public place at a prescribed time, the parent's justification if any, and the parent's attitude to having failed to meet their statutory responsibility.

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/learning-and-school/education-support-service/school-attendance-advice/>

[https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools\\_and\\_learning/399/school\\_attendance](https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/399/school_attendance)

[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50157/education\\_legal\\_intervention\\_referral/690/pupil\\_attendance\\_advice\\_for\\_schools\\_and\\_professionals](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50157/education_legal_intervention_referral/690/pupil_attendance_advice_for_schools_and_professionals)

<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools-in-walsall/school-attendance>

#### Payment of Penalty Notices:

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the penalty notice. Payment of a penalty notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice.

If the penalty notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period, the local authority may prosecute the parent/carer.

If a penalty is not paid, the fact a notice has been issued and unpaid can be used as evidence in a subsequent prosecution.

#### Retention of Receipts and Revenue Collection:

The local authority retains revenue from the Penalty Notice Scheme to cover the costs of issuing and enforcing notices or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

## Working together to improve attendance

13. Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:



