

St Matthew's CE (Aided) Primary School and Nursery Centre



Attendance Policy 2025 -2026

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Guidance taken from: Working Together to Improve Attendance – August 2024

Senior Attendance Champion: Rebecca Wilson, Acting Headteacher

Governor Attendance Champion: Mark Austin

This policy applies to all pupils at St Matthew's CE (Aided) Primary School and Nursery Centre including non-compulsory pupils (where appropriate). This policy can be found on our website and paper copies are also available from the school office. Our attendance as a whole school September 2024 to July 2025 was 94.64% (excluding nursery). This compares with national figures which stands at 93.1% (2024-2025), *Dfe Pupil Attendance in Schools Sept 1st 2025*.

Introduction

St Matthew's CE (Aided) Primary School and Nursery Centre is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all our pupils. We recognise the importance of regular attendance in maximising the benefit of any educational opportunity. Encouraging and supporting excellent attendance is a crucial part of supporting our pupils to learn effectively. Improving attendance is everyone's business. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance at school is vital for pupils to be successful and to achieve their full potential; it **MUST** be a high priority for schools, governors, LAs, parents and the pupils themselves. By not attending school regularly, pupils decrease the value of the education provided for them; they may also damage the learning of others because fluctuations in the size of pupil groups may restrict the scope for effective teaching. Poor attendance can present a safeguarding concern to schools.

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 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
- 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

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 2025
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body

The governing body 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 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
 - 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
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- The named safeguarding governor will: meet with the headteacher every half term
- Monitor attendance data for the whole school and emerging patterns for groups of pupils or individuals

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, or authorising the school business manager 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 (EHC) plan 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

Attendance monitoring is completed by the Deputy Headteacher and Business Manager, who report to the Headteacher. Attendance monitoring is completed weekly and includes the Pastoral Manager.

The Designated Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance

The designated senior leader (also known as the “Attendance Champion”) 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
- 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 designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Deputy Headteacher and can be contacted via the school office. The Business Manager analyses the data and prepares letters and data for the Deputy Headteacher, who reports to the Headteacher. A weekly attendance meeting is held which includes the pastoral manager so that needs can be identified and actions identified for pupils and parents.

Class staff

Class staff are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using either / for present or N for absent, and submitting this information to the school office:

- Morning registration must be completed by 9.00am
- Afternoon registration must be completed by 1.05pm
- Contribute to and support the continued development of the warm, welcoming, exciting and safe environment for all children.
- Welcome each child into the class by name and with a smile.
- Promote and reward good attendance at all opportunities.
- Welcome pupils who have been absent with warmth – “it’s great to see you – we have missed you and I am really pleased you are better/back” and never say “where have you been? You have missed so much work ...”
- Be aware of absences of each child or patterns in absence in their group and make sure the child is supported in catching up missed work.
- Support individual pupils to achieve attendance targets through implemented tailored reward systems and interventions.
- Communicate with colleagues where necessary if there are any issues resulting from the absence that other staff should know (concern about work missed, response of other children, possible responses of colleagues) but also where there are possible safeguarding concerns reporting to the school’s DSLs.
- Notify the KS lead and Headteacher if there is any suggestion of term time holiday.

Office Staff

Office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system using the correct codes (see Appendix 1)
- Notify the DSL if there are any contextual safeguarding issues which might explain erratic or poor attendance.
- Contribute to and support the continued development of the warm, welcoming, exciting and safe environment for all children.
- Greet the pupils by name and always with a smile and a greeting.
- Make a special effort to provide a warm welcome to pupils returning with anxiety issues
- If necessary, walk the child to the lesson/assembly etc if this is a cause of anxiety.
- Reassure families that the school will monitor the child's welfare carefully during the course of the day and communicate with the family if there are any issues

Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decide 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 (ie lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- 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 their child is expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. Where not possible, inform the school of the child's absence in advance by emailing or phoning the school office.
- If their child's absence rates are increasing and are causing concern, an attendance contract may be used to support parents to make improvements.
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting headteacher, DSL, SENDCo.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time.

Recording Attendance

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
- 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 code.

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 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.50am and ends at 3.20pm for KS1 and 3.25pm for KS2

Pupils must arrive in school between 8.40am and 8.50am on each school day

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am

The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm

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 9am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office staff. Unless otherwise agreed, we cannot accept absence reporting from anyone other than the pupil's parent, including older siblings. If no contact is made by the parents a member of the office staff will telephone the parent/carer by 9.30am. If no contact is made by the parent a home visit may be made, if safeguarding concerns are present.

Please inform the office staff of the reason for absence; 'ill/unwell' is not sufficient. This is to ensure our registration coding is accurate. 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.

Where the absence is longer than **2 days**, or 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.

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

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.

- Parents can notify the school of a medical or dental appointment by calling or emailing the school office
- Notify the school of:
 - The reason for the absence
 - The length of their absence
 - When the child is expected to return to school

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 of the requested absence.

Lateness and punctuality

Where a pupil arrives late:

- Pupils arriving after 8.50am will be marked as late (L code) with the minutes of lateness recorded.
- Pupils arriving after 9.20am will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U code). Sessions recorded as a U code count towards the threshold of ten sessions in ten weeks required for the issue of a penalty notice.

Pupils who arrive once the gates are closed at 9.20am will need to report to the main school reception and complete a form with a reason for lateness. Once a child is late 5 times in a half-term the Pastoral Manager or Deputy Headteacher will contact the parents/carers to discuss any issues the family may have with arriving at school on time. Actions may be put into place following this.

Patterns of lateness are tracked weekly and reported to the governing body termly. Parents of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of punctuality and how this might be achieved:

- Parents will be invited to a meeting to discuss the cause of lateness with the Deputy Headteacher/pastoral manager, and support will be offered if appropriate.

- If a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10-week period, a penalty notice may be issued in accordance with Telford and Wrekin's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance.

Parents must collect their child promptly at the end of the school day:

- Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly after 3.30pm, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies.
- If no one is available, the school will place a child into the after-school club and provide the parent/carers with the bill.
- If a child is not collected by 5.15pm, and a parent cannot be contacted, the school will contact Children's Services as this is a safeguarding concern.

Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason
- If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may complete a home visit, contact Children's Services or the police.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance and 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, issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below) as appropriate
- School staff may undertake a home visit where a reason for absence has been provided but there are doubts around the authenticity of the absence or there are wider concerns.

Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels:

- Half-termly attendance updates via the newsletter or website.
- Red – persistent absence, 10% or more, serious concern
- Amber – cause for concern, 4% to 9% - requires immediate improvement
- Green – good attendance, 0% to 3%
- Parent consultations held in October and March
- End of year report

Authorised and unauthorised absence

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
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define "exceptional circumstances" as unexpected, unavoidable, and outside of your control, such as hospitalisation, a serious illness or a bereavement of a close relative. A leave of absence must still be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with, the legislation does not allow for authorisation to be granted retrospectively.

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 or celebration (including a wedding). 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 3 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or school office. The headteacher 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 (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- 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, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
- 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
- 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.

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.

In Telford and Wrekin, this statutory power is delegated to Telford and Wrekin Council's Attendance Support Team. Schools make referrals to the team.

Before referring for 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. 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 and/or legal intervention will be taken instead.

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 Telford and Wrekin's Code of Conduct.

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

Strategies for promoting attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular newsletter and on our website
- Report to you how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- Set targets for the school and display these in the newsletter
- Deliver a stimulating and engaging curriculum that encourages children's enjoyment of school
- Run events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school
- Weekly reward for the class with the best attendance that week – publicised in the weekly newsletter.

Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

- Key adults, which could include the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, DSL, parents, class teacher, Pastoral Manager and SENCO will meet to identify the barriers to good school attendance. If appropriate, the child's views will also be gathered.
- An attendance contract may be put in place to support progress towards improved attendance.
- School-based interventions may be offered: Cool Kids, breakfast club, reward charts, Early Help offer, including referrals to external agencies for support, calm down areas, alternative entrances and pastoral manager support.
- External Interventions may be offered: referrals to Early Help/Family Support Services
- A home-school book will be established to maintain clear communication between the parents and the class staff
- Pastoral Monitoring – the pastoral manager will support the child through the day with academic and social interactions.

Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

- Key adults, which could include the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, DSL, parents, class teacher, Pastoral Manager and SENCO will meet to identify the barriers to good school attendance. If appropriate, the child's views will also be gathered.
- If appropriate, the attendance policy will be implemented alongside the Pupils with Health Needs who cannot attend School and Pupils with Medical Conditions policies.
- The Pastoral Manager may explore the positive and negative influences on absenteeism and build resilience.
- School-based interventions may be offered: Cool Kids, breakfast club, reward charts, Early Help offer, including referrals to external agencies for support, calm down areas, alternative entrances and pastoral manager support.
- A home-school book will be established to maintain clear communication between the parents and the class staff.
- Pastoral Monitoring – the pastoral manager will support the child through the day with academic and social interactions.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

- As soon as parents have informed the school of the expected date of return: class teacher will organise a 'welcome back' pack for the child to receive before they return. It may include messages from the class, timetable for their first day back, a reading book
- Headteacher will meet with the parents (and child if appropriate) in advance of the first day to discuss expectations, reasonable adjustments and individual health care/My Support Plans that may be in place.
- Soft start: parents/child will be given the option to arrive through the school office, where the child will be welcomed by an adult known to them.

- Pastoral Monitoring – the pastoral manager will support the child through the day with academic and social interactions.
- A home-school book will be established to maintain clear communication between the parents and the class staff.

Attendance monitoring

Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly 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 the 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.

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 body.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance and 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.

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 (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing body 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.

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

- The DfE categorise persistent absence as where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.
- The DfE categorise severely persistent absence where a pupil misses 50% or more of possible sessions.
- 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.
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Pupils Safe in Education.
- 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 re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence.
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see above section: sanctions).

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	SIMS Description	DfE Description / Explanation
/	Present (AM)	Present for school morning session
\	Present (PM)	Present for school afternoon session
B	Attending any other Approved Education Activity	Attending any other approved educational activity. Not to be used for Virtual learning
C	Other authorised circumstances	Leave absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Leave of absence – regulated performance	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence – Temporary part-time timetable	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
D	Dual registered	Dual registered to another school
E	Suspended or excluded without alternative provision	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision
G	Family holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised absence as pupil on a family holiday, not agreed, or is taking days more than an agreed family holiday
I	Illness	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
J1	Leave of absence – Interview for employment or transfer to another educational institution	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
K	Alternative provision provided by LA	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
L	Late (before registers closed)	Late arrival before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Reason absence not yet established

O	Absence in other or unknown circumstance	Absence in other or unknown circumstance
P	Participating in sports activity	Participating in sports activity
Q	Unable to attend – lack of access arrangements	Unable to attend the school because of lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance	Religious observance
S	Study leave for public examination	Study leave for public examination
T	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes
U	Late (after registers closed)	Late (after registers closed)
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Attending an educational visit or trip
W	Attending work experience	Attending work experience
X	Not required to attend-non-compulsory school age pupil	Not required to attend-non-compulsory school age pupil
Y1	Unable to attend – Transport not available	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being provided
Y2	Unable to attend – widespread travel emergency	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend – unavoidable partial closure	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed.
Y4	Unable to attend – unavoidable full closure	Unable to attend due to the whole schools' site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend – criminal justice detention	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend – Public Health Guidance / Law	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

Y7	Unable to attend – Unavoidable other than Y1-Y6	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Pupil not on roll	Prospective pupil not on admission requester
#	Planned whole school closure	Planned whole school closure

This is a list of codes where a reason will be required with the attendance code:

Code	SIMS Description	DfE Description / Explanation
B	Educated off-site (not Dual-Reg)	Attending any other approved educational facility.
K	Alternative provision provided by the LA	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
Y7	Unable to attend – Unavoidable other than Y1-Y6	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause.

Appendix 2

Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time

1. Parents wishing the school to consider granting leave in term time should read these notes carefully and then complete and send the request form below to the Headteacher. This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered **before** the desired period of absence. (Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any planned absence before receiving the school's decision regarding their request). In any event the request form must be received by the school at least four weeks before the leave in term time requested dates to allow sufficient time for appropriate consideration.
2. The granting of leave of absence in term time is, by law, a matter for consideration and decision by the Headteacher. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time. The Department for Education (DfE) Guidance '*Working Together to Improve School Attendance (Feb 2024)*' states that: *Generally, the DfE does not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.* Telford & Wrekin Local Authority (LA) policy supports that view. Where such requests are made, the Headteacher should decide if there are **exceptional circumstances** before the leave is granted, if the leave is granted the Headteacher has the discretion to agree the duration of that leave.
3. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents therefore, need to consider very carefully before making any request for leave in term time, the demands of the National and wider School Curriculum especially at the Key Stage assessment stage. In considering a request, the school may also take account of: -
 - the **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request;
 - whether the child is compulsory school age;
 - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements;
 - whether the same trip could be taken during the 13 weeks school is closed to pupils?
 - students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will **not** normally be granted leave of absence.
4. Where parents have pupils in more than one school, a separate request must be made to each school. The Headteacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. However, there is an expectation that all schools involved will communicate and all agree a decision whether to authorise or not. It is hoped that if this situation arises parents will be persuaded to accept the reasons for refusal given and, thereby, withdraw any leave requests.
5. Where requests for a grant of leave in term time are received from only one parent the response letter – agreeing or refusing – will be either addressed to both/all parents where they live at the same address or to each where they do

not. This is to ensure, particularly in the case of a refusal, that both or all parents are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring a refusal as the refusal letter clearly states that each parent may receive a penalty notice.

6. Should the school decide to grant the leave. but the child **does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave in term time period) and, no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence or, make known the whereabouts of the child, **his/her place at the school could be lost.**
7. Should the School decide **not to grant the leave** and parents still take their child out of school the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £160 per parent per child. This Penalty Notice fine will be reduced to £80 if paid within the first 21 days. Failure to pay the £160 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings, which could ultimately result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or imprisonment of up to three months.

Request for Leave during Term Time

Date.....

To: The Headteacher of:.....(School)

I request permission for leave in term time from school for my child:

(full name)

from (date) to (date) for school days.

My child will be accompanied during the leave by:

(parent/carer) and (parent/carer).....

The **exceptional circumstances** and reason for this request are: -

(If necessary, please continue on a separate sheet and attach it to this form)

I have (an)other child(ren) in (an)other school(s) as follows

Child(ren) (full name(s) School(s)

.....

Name of 1st Parent/Carer(s) **Signed**

Current address.....

Mobile No:.....

Name of 2nd Parent/Carer(s) **Signed**

Current address.....

Mobile No:.....

Please return the completed form to the school office. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether your request is authorised or not. Please do not confirm any holiday booking until you have confirmation of permission for the leave in term time from the Headteacher.

For Office Use Only

Date request for leave in term time received by school

Current Attendance.....%

Last Year's Attendance.....%

Number of unauthorised absence sessions during previous 10 school weeks

Re: **Siblings:** other schools confirmed?

What action are other schools taking?

.....

Leave in term time Agreed/Not Agreed

Request for leave is **agreed/is not agreed** for the above pupil to take leave during term time between the above dates.

Signed Job Title.....

Print Name Date

Notification of decision: Date letter sent to parent

Any notes: