Ottery St Mary Primary School

Attendance Policy

Senior Leader responsible for managing this policy	
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Ottery St Mary Primary School: Our Attendance Ethos

At Ottery St Mary Primary School our school values of **'Explore, Challenge, Learn'** are rooted in the belief that every child deserves the opportunity to thrive in school. We know that consistent attendance plays a vital role in enabling this. We are proud to be an inclusive school that embraces a relational approach, recognising that each child and family may face unique circumstances that affect attendance. We understand that barriers to attendance can be complex and varied, and we are committed to working together with families to identify and overcome these challenges in a compassionate and supportive way.

Our school rules, **'Respect, Care, Listen'**, guide our approach to attendance. We value open communication and partnership with families, and we offer support avenues for those who may be finding it difficult to maintain regular attendance. While we follow the statutory frameworks set out by the Department for Education and Devon County Council, our priority is always to engage positively with families, ensuring that legal requirements are met through a lens of empathy, understanding, and collaboration.

Our aim is to foster a school environment where every child feels safe, supported, and motivated to attend, every day.

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Statement of Intent

We want your child to thrive in our school every day. We build strong and enduring relationships because we believe this is the foundation pupils need to fully engage in our community, to feel a sense of belonging and succeed. Every child has a right to access education, and everyone is responsible for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality. At Ottery St Mary Primary School, we are committed to providing the highest quality of education to our pupils and we recognise the clear link between attendance and the attainment of our pupils.

The aim of this Attendance Policy is to enable Ottery St Mary Primary School to provide a consistent practice that actively encourages and supports each pupil to attend school regularly, understanding that attendance is key to wellbeing, learning, and belonging. Ottery St Mary Primary School takes a whole school approach to maintaining regular attendance and to achieve this, all members of our school community have an important contribution to make. It is vital that we work in partnership to ensure that any in-school or out-of-school barriers are removed at the earliest opportunity, this is achieved through early and meaningful support.

We support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly and in addition, promote and support punctuality. We are committed to taking positive action in the line with the Equality Act (2010) regarding the needs of people with protected characteristics. These are age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and marriage and civil partnership. We make reasonable adjustments to avoid anyone with a protected characteristic being placed at a disadvantage. Our relentless approach to ensuring our pupils attend school and receive the education that they deserve, and are entitled to, is central to our school values.

This policy is supported by policies relating to child protection and safeguarding, anti-bullying, behaviour, inclusive learning, equality, special educational needs and teaching and learning. It is our duty to strive for a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils so that they can take full advantage of the opportunities offered. It is vital that your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Therefore, this policy has been created to help support the school in effectively managing absences so that our pupils (your children) can make the most of the educational and life opportunities available to them.

In summary, Ottery St Mary Primary School aims to meet its obligations relating to school attendance by:

• Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence by effectively removing the barriers to attendance,

• Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled,

• Acting early to address patterns of absence,

• Minimising the disruption caused by late arrivals or non-attendance to the quality of the education and provisions for all pupils.

1 Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all school leaders, staff, parents, and pupils.

1.1 For the purposes of this policy, references to 'teachers' include all paid staff responsible for the supervision of pupils.

1.2 For the purposes of this policy, references to 'pupils' include all learners in our school.

1.3 For the purpose of this policy, references to 'school' refers to all education settings, regardless of type.

1.4 For the purpose of this policy and the procedures, we refer to Section 576 of the Education Act which defines the 'parent' of a pupil or young person as:

- Both of their natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although they are not the natural parent, has parental responsibility for the pupil or young person, as defined in the Children Act (1989).
- Any person who, although not the natural parent, has the care of the pupil or young person i.e., a person with whom the pupil lives, irrespective of their relationship to the pupil.

2 Legal Framework

This policy meets the requirements of the Working Together to Improve School Attendance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act (1996)
- The Education Act (2002)
- The Education and Inspections Act (2006)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (Amendment 2010)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (Amendment 2011)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (Amendment 2013)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (Amendment 2016)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) England) Regulations (Amendment 2013)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 All children aged 5 - 16 years must receive suitable education. (Section 7, *Education Act (1996)).* A pupil of compulsory school age who is registered at a school must, by law, attend regularly.

3.2 By law, parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that pupils of compulsory school age attend regularly. (Section 576, Education Act (1996)).

3.3 The Local Authority (LA) must offer educational provision for all children of school age.

3.4 By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed or has been notified that the pupil will attend the school.

3.5 Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

3.6 By law, all schools must keep an admissions' register, the contents of which includes all pupils, their personal details, (including at least two telephone numbers for different safe adults, to ensure that we can always contact someone in the event of an emergency), the date of admission (or re-admission), information regarding parents and details of the school last attended.

3.7 Pupils will be removed from roll only when they complete their education stage, transfer to another school, move out of the area or emigrate or following a parental request for elective home education. We follow statutory guidance for removing pupils from roll and notifying the local authority. Further information can be found in Appendix 6.

3.8 There is a clear link between attainment and attendance. Under **Section 444**(**1**) of the **Education Act 1996** (EA 1996), a parent commits an offence if they fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school where the child is registered. We therefore enforce the use of statutory action to encourage and promote attendance, this is done to ensure that all pupils can benefit from their legal right to receive an education.

3.9 School will communicate attendance concerns to the pupil's social worker, if they have one or The Virtual School Head, if the pupil is a looked after child. This will be done as soon as there is an attendance concern and immediately upon becoming a persistent absentee. Unexplained absences will also be communicated to the social worker and Virtual School Head, where relevant.

3.10 We have a roles and responsibilities framework outlined in Appendix 3 to complement this policy. This defines agreed roles and responsibilities for parents, pupils, and staff. This includes the new responsibility for our School Attendance Champion who is **Katie McLelland.**

4 Definitions

4.1 A pupil is classed as absent if they arrive after the register has closed or if they do not attend for any reason.

4.2 An authorised absence is when approval has been given in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be absent for a specific (legal) purpose, or we have accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence from a parent or carer. This may include:

- An absence for illness for which we have granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments may be granted leave where every attempt has been made to arrange outside of school hours, has been unsuccessful and so cannot be avoided, or where the appointment is a genuine emergency
- Religious or cultural observances for which we have granted leave. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents or pupil belong. Where necessary, we will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance
- An absence due to a change to exceptional circumstances

4.3 An unauthorised absence is defined as one where we are not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Reasons may include:

- Parents keeping children from attending unnecessarily or without reason
- Missing sessions before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival after the register has closed
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Leaving our school without authorisation during the day

4.4 Persistent Absence is defined as: 10% or more of sessions missed (based on each pupil's possible sessions). Absences may be authorised or unauthorised.

4.5 Severe Absence is defined as: 50% or more of sessions missed (based on each pupil's possible sessions). Absences may be authorised or unauthorised.

4.6 Persistent lateness is defined as pupils who have five or more late marks recorded in a single half-term.

5 Monitoring and Reviewing Attendance

5.1 We recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. We monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the year. We recognise that certain groups of pupils may be more at risk of poor attendance and will provide support and assistance wherever possible.

5.2 We set challenging attendance targets for the whole school.

5.3 Pupil-level absence data is collected regularly and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. We compare our attendance data to the national average.

5.4 Specific measures are taken to monitor attendance. These processes are embedded and regularly checked to ensure the effective safeguarding of all pupils through specific tailored interventions. Data on attendance is collected and analysed a minimum of once a half term. Key analysis is made of:

- Patterns of absence
- Patterns of lateness
- Patterns of medical appointments
- Correct and consistent use of absence codes
- Trends in reasons for absence, for example, use of the C code, leave of absence and exclusions

- Trends in particular groups of children for example, pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

5.5 Attendance data informs action planning and supports the identification of key priorities in our school development plan and future revisions of this policy. The attendance data will be reported to the Headteacher and all other relevant staff, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families. Data will also be used by the school to monitor the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies.

6 Reviewing this Policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years or in the following circumstances:

- Changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- As a result of any other significant change or event
- If the policy is determined not to be effective

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Key Personnel

Headteacher	*Mark Gilronan*

Contact Details	Email	*admin@ottery-primary.devon.sch.uk*
	Telephone	*01404 812977*
Senior Attendance Champion		*Katie McLelland*
Contact Details	Email	*admin@ottery-primary.devon.sch.uk*
	Telephone	01404 812977
Office Manager		*Sarah Pearman*
	Email	*admin@ottery-primary.devon.sch.uk*
	Telephone	01404 812977
Governor responsible for attendance		*TBC*
	Email	clerk@ottery-primary.devon.sch.uk
	Telephone	01404 812977

Appendix 2 - Maintaining an Attendance Register

1.1 The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the pm session. It will mark whether each pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

2.2 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 making the amendment

2.3 The school gates are open from: 8:50am. The school day starts at 9.00am. All pupils should be in their classroom at this time.

2.4 The first (morning) registration session starts at 8.50am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their designated classroom by 9.00am. The register closes at 9.15am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend before this time. Attendance after the register closes will receive a mark to show that the pupil is on site, (U) but will count as an absent mark.

2.5 Pupils arriving late should report to the main school office and sign in via the office staff.

2.6 The second (afternoon) registration session starts following the year group's lunchbreak – 1.00 for EYFS and KS1 pupils and 1.30 for KS2 pupils. In terms of attendance recording and data collection it is the ***last afternoon register*** that is taken for the day.

2.7 If a pupil needs to leave school during the day, they must sign out at the main reception with a parent once authorisation has been given from the office manager.

2.8 Pupils educated off-site are monitored daily for their attendance at the off-site/alternative provision. Staff work closely with the staff at the off-site provision, the pupil, and their parents to support the pupil to maintain good attendance.

3. Recording Attendance

3.1 The national absence and attendance codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the Census. The data helps schools, local authorities, and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for absence. See Appendix 4 for the DfE attendance codes.

3.2 There should be no pre-population of codes and individual school tracking systems which monitor the whereabouts of pupils educated off-site, must be robust and quality assured regularly.

3.3 Where pupils are dual registered, are on voluntary service or are taking part in other approved educational activities, the register will be updated following regular discussion and information sharing with the other establishment.

3.4 Katie McLelland will check the missing register report throughout the day and report any registers that have not been completed.

4. Reporting Absence

4.1 It is the responsibility of the parent to inform us of a pupil absence and to inform us of any changes to contact details.

4.2 Parents are expected to inform us of their pupil's absence before 9.00 a.m. on each day of absence providing the reason for absence and when their pupil will be returning to school. We will contact parents and/or other listed emergency contacts where no contact has been made.

4.3 The first day of absence must be reported via phone or in person contact – answerphone messages may be followed up by the office staff to ascertain reasons for absence. An email is not suitable for the first day of absence, absence reporting is not accepted via the MyChildAtSchool app.

4.4 Where required, we may conduct reasonable enquiries with friends or neighbours and will carry out welfare home visits as necessary. If no contact is made, we may request a welfare check from the police.

5. Reasons for Absence

5.1 Appointments

5.1.1 As far as possible, medical, and dental appointments should be made outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to us prior to the appointment.

5.1.2 Pupils must attend before and after the appointment wherever possible. If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the day, they must be signed out by an adult listed on the pupil's record. Should a pupil arrive late following an appointment, they should report to the school office to be signed in by a member of the office staff.

5.1.3 Absences for medical appointments will be recorded with an M code.

5.2 Religious Observance

5.2.1 Parents must inform us, in advance, if absences are required for days of religious observance. We will authorise absences where a reasonable request is made. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, we will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

5.2.2 Absences for religious observance will be recorded with the R code.

5.3 Illness

5.3.1 In order to make informed decisions about their pupil's fitness for attending parents are encouraged to refer to the NHS guidance 'Is My Child Too Ill for School?'. Any authorisation of absence through illness is done so at the discretion of the Headteacher or member of staff delegated to carry out this task.

5.3.2 In the case of an illness which lasts for five days or more (or four days in the event of an INSET day or Bank Holiday), parents may be asked to provide additional medical evidence before authorising the absence, however this will only be requested if there is any genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness. In this instance, if medical evidence is not provided, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

5.3.3 Where attendance is of a serious concern, we may require medical evidence to authorise any further periods of absence through illness. This will be determined on an individual basis. Parents will be notified of this by letter. Telephone calls and handwritten notes from a parent will not be accepted as medical evidence when attendance is a serious concern. For the purpose of this policy, 'serious concern' may be defined as: repeated unexplained/unauthorised absences or 3 x separate illnesses within a half term where no medical condition or underlying health issues have been identified.

5.3.4 Acceptable forms of medical evidence include:

- Medical card with one appointment entered with the pupil's name and surgery stamp included, signed by the receptionist
- Letter from a professional such as a hospital consultant
- Evidence of consultation with NHS 111
- Medication prescribed by a GP
- Copy of prescription
- Print screen of medical notes / call log
- Letters detailing hospital appointments Doctor or GP 'sick notes' are not required, and we do not expect parents to request these from their GPs.

5.3.5 In some cases, a pupil may be absent for long term due to an illness or injury. We will liaise with families to ensure children return to school quickly and that there are no safeguarding concerns. On occasions where this is not possible, and the Section 19 threshold is met, we will make a referral to the Local Authority Medical Panel which provides educational opportunities for pupils who are unable to attend their regular school.

5.4 Traveller Pupils Travelling for Occupational Purposes

5.4.1 Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes covers Roma, English and Welsh Travellers, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Circus workers, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers), Showman and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be a mobile family with no fixed abode and they are travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with us, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

The aim for the attendance of Traveller students, in common with all other students, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act (1944), Section 86, states that a Traveller parent/carer is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e., 200 half days) in a year. It is important to note that this is only relevant when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is regularly attending school when that trade/business permits following a request from parents (and the minimum 200 session criteria is met).

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller pupils is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties to ensure that their child is receiving a suitable education when not at school.

It is parent's responsibility to:

- Ensure that your child's ethnicity has been registered with the school. You can ask the school to correct this or update it.
- Ensure you tell your child's school ahead of time. 2 weeks' notice is useful.
- Your children should attend as much school as possible.
- It is the parent's responsibility to ensure their child is accessing at least 100 days (200 sessions) of school in any 12-month period.
- To have regular contact with their child's school whilst travelling. Once a week is suggested.
- To support their child to complete the work set by schools whilst travelling.
- If staying in a new area for a week or more, the parent/guardian can register their child for a temporary place at any school – called 'dual registration'.

It is the school's responsibility to:

- Allow Traveller pupils to travel with their parents for work purposes.
- Create work packs for their pupils to complete when away.
- Arrange times for at least a weekly 'check in' with the family. This can be through a call or email.
- Contact the Local Authority if they have concerns.
- Mark pupil's work and provide valuable feedback.
- Ensure missed opportunities such as parents evening, vaccinations and careers advice are supported on the pupil's return.

5.4.2 **Pupils 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.

School will:

- Work with parents to improve attendance, be mindful of the barriers pupils face, make reasonable adjustments, and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. It is also expected that parents will engage with the support offered both internally and with external partners to ensure our children have all the support they need to thrive.
- Encourage positive conversations so that a good support plan can put in place including making reasonable adjustments – following the school pathway for attendance. **See Appendix 7 for further information**
- Consider possible explanations for absence including Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). **See Appendix 5 for further information.**
- Work with parents to consider 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.
- Ensure relevant referrals are made for pupils who are too ill to attend school, which may include medical panel (under section 19) and or medical agency support such as CAMHS.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers this may include 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 and consider whether a time-limited, closely monitored and reviewed, phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.

6 Requesting Leave in Term Time

6.1 Absence for purposes of leave during term time can only be authorised by the Headteacher, within the boundaries set by the Education (Pupil Registrations) (England) Regulations (2006). “Head Teachers may not authorise leave during term time except where the circumstances are exceptional.” Under the Regulations, retrospective authorisation for leave in exceptional circumstances is not permitted.

6.2 The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional circumstances’ are that they are: ‘rare; significant; unavoidable and short’. Holidays during term time will not usually be considered as exceptional circumstances. The following guiding principles apply:

- Term-times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off a year including weekends and school holidays. We will rightly prioritise attendance.
- The decision to authorise a pupil’s absence is wholly at the Headteacher’s discretion based on their assessment and merits of each individual request.
- If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term-time, then it would be normal to authorise absence for such an event – holidays are therefore not considered ‘exceptional circumstances’. It is acceptable for the Headteacher to take a pupil’s record of attendance into account when making absence-related decisions.
- We will take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if this prevents them from being able to take family holidays during scheduled holiday time.
- We have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with special needs and/or disabilities.

6.3 Family emergencies need careful consideration before decisions about attendance are made. It is not always appropriate or in the best interests of the pupil to miss education for emergencies which are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school with support from staff and peers can provide children with stability. The school routine can offer a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty. Relevant members of staff will work with parents to decide what is in the best interest of the pupil.

7 Persistent and Severe Absence

7.1 Pupils with 90% or less attendance are classified as Persistent Absence (PA). PA includes both authorised and unauthorised absences.

7.2 Pupils with 50% or less attendance are classified as Severe Absence (SA). SA includes both authorised and unauthorised absences

7.3 PA pupils, when required, will have bespoke action plans to try to improve their attendance to above 97%. This will be monitored by Katie McLelland. Pupils who are PA will be discussed as a potential concern at weekly attendance review meetings, as part of SLT meetings. Where pupils have an identified special educational need, the schools SENCO will also provide support, so that the impact of needs are clearly understood and appropriate, supportive actions are taken.

7.4 The school's strategy for tackling persistent absence, can be found in Appendix 7.

8 Following Up Absence and Taking Statutory Action

8.1 We will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason. Any pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for more than one week will be referred to Dan Western (DSL) and Mark Gilronan (Headteacher).

8.2 Unexplained absences will be followed up on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence and the school will identify whether the absence is approved or not. The school will identify the correct code to use and will input it as soon as the reason for absence in ascertained. This will take no longer than 5 working days after the session.

8.3 In the case where the reason for absence cannot be ascertained by the school and no reason has been issued for the pupil's absence, the school will initiate safeguarding procedures and the DSL will decide on the best course of action to ensure the safety of the pupil, following procedures for children missing in education as outlined in the document from the Department of Education.

8.4 Where it is appropriate, a member of staff may carry out a 'Return to School Interview' to discuss the absence and to offer any support. Following three separate periods of absence the interview will be carried out by a senior member of staff such as Dan Western (DSL).

8.5 It may occasionally be necessary to inform parents that no further absences will be authorised for a particular pupil unless medical evidence is provided. This decision can only be made by Mark Gilronan (Headteacher) in consultation with the DSL team and where relevant, the SENCO Emily Monks.

8.6 It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure their children receive appropriate education. Failing to send children to school regularly without good reason is a criminal offence. Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their pupil, where the pupil is of compulsory school age. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, in line with the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may consider:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- Singular incidences of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is seen in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

8.7 Issuing Penalty Notices: each parent receives a penalty notice for each pupil who has unauthorised absence. If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. 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 the parent or withdraw the notice. In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

8.8 Taking Parents to Court for unauthorised absence: The Education Act (1996) Section 444(1) states that courts can fine each parent up to £1000 per pupil, order payment of prosecution costs and/or impose a Parenting Order.

8.9 Taking Parents to Court for Persistent Unauthorised Absence: The Education Act (1996) – Section 444(1A) states that courts can fine each parent up to £2500 per pupil, order payment of the prosecution costs, impose a Parenting Order and/or sentence parents to a period of imprisonment of up to three months.

9 Children Missing from Education (CME)

9.1 We have due regard to our statutory duty to safeguard pupils who are CME. We follow the Local Authority's processes for reporting pupils missing from education. The DfE guide can be found here.

9.2 If a pupil fails to return following a period of absence, investigations will be made by staff to their whereabouts. If our investigations fail to contact the parents/pupil the case will be referred to the Local Authority Children Missing Education (CME) Team within 20 days.

10 Attendance Causing Concern

10.1 Specific measures to monitor attendance are embedded and regularly checked to ensure the safeguarding of all pupils through specific and tailored interventions.

10.2 *Ottery St Mary Primary School* records and collects attendance data using our Data Management System, BromCom. We recognise that there are groups who nationally, and within our local setting, are more vulnerable and susceptible to lower attendance patterns such as children who are defined as Pupil Premium, and pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities. We work with families to overcome any specific

barriers that children may be facing regardless of these needs to ensure that pupils access all their education.

10.3 Where attendance is deemed to be a concern, we talk to pupils and parents, initially following the SAM process (School Attendance Meeting). From this, there may be one of several outcomes:

- Initiate simple reasonable adjustments
- Continue with SAM process
- Develop a plan with the pupil and their parent as appropriate (possibly following the ATTEND process, or alternatively our EBSA support materials)
- Initiate a multi-agency Early Help Assessment (EHA), in the instance where additional agencies have active involvement in the case.

See Appendix 7 for more information.

10.4 If the conversation with the pupil indicates a serious safeguarding concern, we will follow our safeguarding procedures as set out in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

11 Supporting the Attendance of Every Pupil

11.1 We use a variety of strategies to encourage attendance:

- Building strong and enduring relationships with our pupils so they feel a sense of belonging in our school community
- Ensuring that the first 15 minutes of every day are prioritised for relational meet and greet approaches and that there is access to breakfast for pupils who need it.
- Verbal encouragement and praise
- Creating personalised and achievable targets for pupils, based on their medical needs and/or additional needs that is realistic and appropriate for each individual, through dialogue and partnership with families (eg SAM, SEN, EBSA or Early Help process)
- Creating safe spaces for pupils to thrive
- Teach and model a love of learning, helping families to see the value of the education that is offered to them
- Look at the effect on attendance of decisions made at school level, for instance ending terms on a Monday or Tuesday
- Be aware of the complexity of different contexts and the pressures that families might experience, which may in turn contribute to poor attendance; for instance, in areas where many parents perform seasonal work and are unable to take holidays over the summer break.

11.2 We recognise that not all children, particularly those who are most vulnerable, are able to achieve 100% attendance through no fault of their own. We celebrate improvements in attendance and contextualised good attendance for individual pupils.

12 Ethnic Minority Pupils

12.1 Pupil registration regulations states that absence should only be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application. It is important to note that

Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

12.2 The following might be considered as exceptional circumstance for ethnic minority pupils:

- Religious festivals: the school should authorise any absence where the parent/carer's religious organisation sets the day as a religious festival.
  For example: There are two key festivals in Islam, Eid-ul-Fitr (celebration that takes place at the end of Ramadan, the period of fasting) and Eid-ul-Adha (festival of sacrifice). The dates of these key events are set according to the Islamic calendar. Muslim families usually need to take one or two days to celebrate these important festivals. Absences may be recorded as R.
- Religious rites e.g. Bar Mitzvah, Holy Communion. The Headteacher will consider each request for leave of absence individually to determine the number of days approved.
- Close family wedding if dates cannot be during school holidays.
- Illness or death of an immediate family member; the head teacher should consider time needed for the length of journey when child needs to travel abroad.
- Child, parent/carer requires medical treatment overseas or elsewhere in the UK due to language barrier or requiring specialist treatment elsewhere.
- Length of journey from abroad; the Headteacher will consider length of journey or limited regional flights.
- Cultural celebrations such as Chinese New Year or Diwali. Cultural celebrations give children a feeling of belonging and make them feel part of their culture. This sense of identity is like a natural buoy for a child's emotional health.
- Children attending their annual exam in their home country. There are exams which are compulsory in some EU countries. They are normally during holidays but can occasionally be requested during term time.
- Child, parent/ carer's visa have been revoked and they need to return to their birth country whilst pursuing the renewal of a visa.

Appendix 3 – Framework of Responsibilities

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents, and the child, therefore, **Ottery St Mary Primary School** expects everyone to uphold their responsibilities for promoting attendance at school.

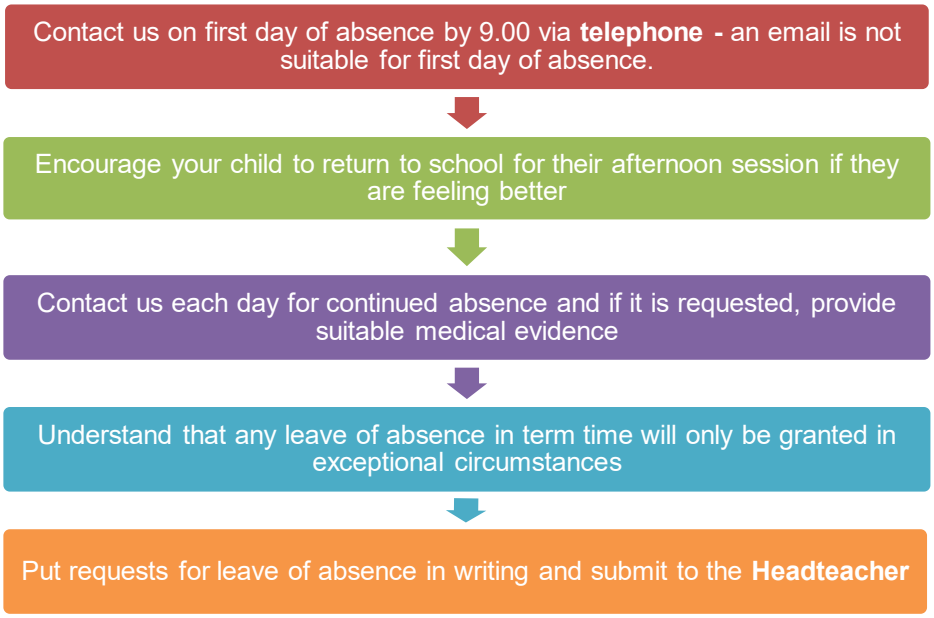
To do this everyone must understand their role in promoting a positive culture of attendance and be clear about what is required of them individually as well as how they need to work together in partnership with others.

Parents

- Ensure pupils attend regularly and punctually.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- Do everything you can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- Work with the school and your child to address any in-school barriers to attendance and support their learning by taking an interest in what they have been doing at school.

- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that you child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that your child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact for your child.
- Provide proof of medical appointments that can only be attended during the school day.
- Make early contact with us when you become aware of problems with your child attending school.
- Attend meetings if concerns are identified.
- Participate in Early Help Meetings, or other absence related meetings, if required.
- Support attendance contracts where appropriate.
- Support us in actioning agreed interventions/action plans.

Please follow this process if your child is going to be absent from school:



Pupils

- Attend school every day and every timetabled lesson punctually
- Acknowledge positive behaviours needed both inside and outside of our school
- Adhere to our systems for late registration
- Adhere to attendance contracts if they are in place
- Aim for the highest possible attendance
- Discuss concerns about your attendance or punctuality with a trusted adult in our school, especially if you are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on your attendance and/or learning
- Attend all lessons ready to learn with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for your class. Lesson times will be made clear through your school timetable

Support Staff

- Understand that promoting pupil attendance is the responsibility of all staff. Be curious, aware, vigilant, well-informed and listen to what children say about the barriers to accessing education
- Assist in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Build on a culture of challenge when addressing persistent illness absences with parents
- Challenge parents when no reason has been provided for an absence
- Complete return to school interviews with pupils when required
- Escalate concerns where required as per the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Participate in training in relation to attendance

Teachers

- Understand that promoting pupil attendance is the responsibility of all staff. Be curious, aware, vigilant, well-informed and listen to what children say about the barriers to accessing education
- Ensure attendance has a high profile within the class
- Consider whether a pupils known, or not yet identified, SEN could be impacting on attendance and whether provision and/or further reasonable adjustments should be made, including making adaptations to Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision (OAIP)
- Take registers at the beginning of every lesson including when the lesson is also the legal registration session
- Build a culture of challenge when addressing absences with parents. Treat all pupils and parents with dignity and model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school
- Challenge parents when they do not provide a reason for absence
- Communicate with parents positively. Teachers should discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing. Teachers should challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like (this is outlined in more detail in figure 1 below).
- Complete return to school with pupils when required.
- Escalate concerns as per the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Analyse and report attendance figures for each pupil to parents regularly.
- Discuss attendance with parents at every opportunity (celebrate good attendance as well as concerning attendance).
- Participate in training relating to attendance as appropriate

Where a pupil or family need support with attendance, the school will identify the best placed person to support. This person should remain consistent, and the school will draw on positive relationships to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing.

The Attendance Officer

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Offer support and guidance on attendance where needed
- Monitor and analyse attendance data and ensure these are sent regularly to class teachers
- Benchmark attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Provide regular attendance reports to school staff and report concerns about attendance to the Designated Senior Leader and Governor responsible for attendance
- Monitor pupils with attendance below 95% with regular communication with both the pupil and their parents
- Escalate concerns where required as per the Safeguarding and Pupil Protection Policy
- Work with Attendance Improvement Officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advise the Headteacher and Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance when to issue fixed-penalty notices

School Attendance Champion

- Take a lead in promoting pupil attendance ensuring it is the responsibility of all staff.
- Be aware, vigilant, well-informed and listen to what children say about the barriers to accessing education
- Develop a clear strategy and vision for improving attendance
- Work with the SENCO, where relevant, to ensure any SEND needs are fully understood, including how these may impact on attendance, and to ensure that the provision in place meets needs and supports good attendance
- Monitor daily attendance for vulnerable pupils and track weekly attendance patterns and trends for all pupils, delivering intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families. This needs to include patterns of attendance for individual pupils, cohorts, and groups but particularly for pupils with attendance below 90%
- Support all staff to monitor attendance patterns and tackle attendance concerns effectively by providing regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors / subject leaders so they can facilitate discussions with pupils (this also includes any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads).
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends including analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance.
- Work with the leadership team and the School Attendance Governor to benchmark the school's attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented ensuring there is regular and positive communication with parents
- Ensure attendance is a standing agenda item for every team meeting and use practice examples to explore safeguarding themes and review relevant policy, procedures and code of conduct on a regular basis
- Conduct return to school interviews where required
- Set annual school attendance targets with the Headteacher
- Work on proactively on building strong relationships with families
- Support staff to offer Early Help where necessary and work with Attendance Improvement Officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Work with the LA, agencies, and safeguarding partners to overcome barriers to attendance
- Advise the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Attend welfare home visits where required
- Escalate concerns when deemed appropriate as per the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Lead attendance training for staff and governors
- Communicate attendance concerns to the pupil's social worker, if they have one or The Virtual School Head, if the pupil is a looked after child. This will be done as soon as there is an attendance concern and immediately upon becoming a persistent absentee. Unexplained absences will also be communicated to the Social Worker and Virtual School Head, if the pupil has one.

Senior Leadership Team

- Take a lead in promoting pupil attendance ensuring it is the responsibility of all staff. Be curious, aware, vigilant, well-informed and listen to what children say about the barriers to accessing education
- Ensure attendance has a high profile across the school.
- Work on proactively on building strong relationships with families.
- Build on a culture of challenge when addressing persistent illness absences with parents.
- Attend welfare home visits where required.
- Escalate concerns where required as per the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Liaise with Attendance Lead, DSL, Behaviour Lead and SENCo as appropriate to discuss attendance concerns for individual pupils.
- Participate in appropriate training in relation to attendance.
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters and ensure that adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities.
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring our school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance e.g., deletion from school roll is adhered to for example.

Headteacher

- Take a lead in promoting pupil attendance ensuring it is the responsibility of all staff. Be aware, vigilant, well-informed and listen to what children say about the barriers to accessing education
- Ensure the attendance policy is implemented consistently across the school
- Ensure attendance is a target in performance appraisals

- Ensure attendance has a high profile across the school in all communications
- Monitor school level absence data with the School Attendance Champion and report data to the Local Governing Board
- Support other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Agree with the Attendance Lead when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Decide whether to grant leave during term time for exceptional circumstances
- Ensure attendance training is including provided to staff annually

Local Governing Board

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- Review the implementation of the School Attendance Policy
- Ensure the school fulfil their statutory duties
- Ensure the importance of school attendance is promoted across policies and procedures
- Ensure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Discuss the targets for attendance with the Headteacher and review progress towards these at Board meetings.
- Regularly monitor attendance figures through data analysis at Board meetings. Ask questions about attendance trends and be curious about what is being done to challenge and prevent persistent poor absence

Figure 1:

There are 190 school days each year, this means that there are 175 non-school days a year.

Attendance %	Rating	Days absent	Description
100%	Perfect Attendance	0	This is the best chance of success for your child
97%	Good Attendance	5.7	
95%	Improvement Required	9.5	Less chance of your child succeeding as it is harder for them to make progress
90%	Concern (Persistent Absence*)	19	
50%	**Severe Absence****	**95**	**Serious Concern** **Missing this much education is not fair on your child and will result in legal action**

*Persistent Absence is defined as: 10% or more of sessions missed (based on each pupil's possible sessions). Absences may be authorised or unauthorised.

** Severe Absence is defined as: 50% or more of sessions missed (based on each pupil's possible sessions). Absences may be authorised or unauthorised.

Appendix 4 – Attendance Codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late Arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
K	Attending education provision arranged by the LA	Pupil attends college courses or unregistered provision such as home tutoring
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school

W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
C1	Authorised leave of absence	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	Authorised leave of absence	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
J1	Authorised leave of absence	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study Leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller absence	Mobile pupil with no fixed abode from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised Absence		
G	Unauthorised Holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
Other		

Q	Not a possible attendance	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel because of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Y1	Not a possible attendance	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Not a possible attendance	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Not a possible attendance	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Not a possible attendance	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Not a possible attendance	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Not a possible attendance	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Not a possible attendance	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half term/bank holiday

Appendix 5 – Creating a Positive Attendance Culture

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, therefore, Ottery St Mary Primary School expects everyone to uphold their responsibilities for promoting attendance at School.

To do this everyone must understand their role in promoting a positive culture of attendance and be clear about what is required of them individually as well as how they need to work together in partnership with others.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

For a positive attendance culture to be fully embedded across our school, it needs to be a holistic approach and not seen in isolation. Ottery St Mary Primary School develops a positive attendance culture through, though not limited to, the following strategies:

- Ensuring our curriculum is rich and engaging for all pupils
- Finding opportunities to develop a sense of belonging
- Emphasising the school values of Explore, Challenge, Learn
- Embedding the school rules of Respect, Care, Listen
- Ensuring a relational approach is at the heart of our pedagogy and practice
- Understanding Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and taking research informed steps to support EBSA where It is identified (see our EBSA handbook resources)
- Ensuring all staff are well trained and given the skills to confidently support families when making attendance calls
- Ensuring that weekly SLT and DSL meetings have attendance as a standing item
- Coordinating safeguarding, SEN and attendance meetings to ensure the best targeted support for families
- Using focussed meetings, including those with additional agency involvement, to ensure support for improving attendance
- Working with the LA proactively, not just for legal intervention, penalty notices are used as a last resort when appropriate

Appendix 6 – Removing a child from the school roll (As a school, we will always be professionally curious when following these processes)

Best practice processes

Elective Home Education (EHE):

The Statutory Notification and the EHE form, together with the Safeguarding form must be submitted on the day of receiving the de-registration letter from the parent with a copy of the letter. The pupil should be taken off roll from the day the school receives the letter or in cases where the parent is giving advance notice of the date requested. Do not backdate it to an earlier date than receipt of the letter even if the parent requests this. The school should confirm that the pupil has been registered with the LA as EHE to ensure that they have assumed responsibility for the pupil. Do not just assume that because the school has submitted the paperwork it has all gone through. An offer of an Exit Interview by the school should be made to all parents who write to school to withdraw to EHE their child.

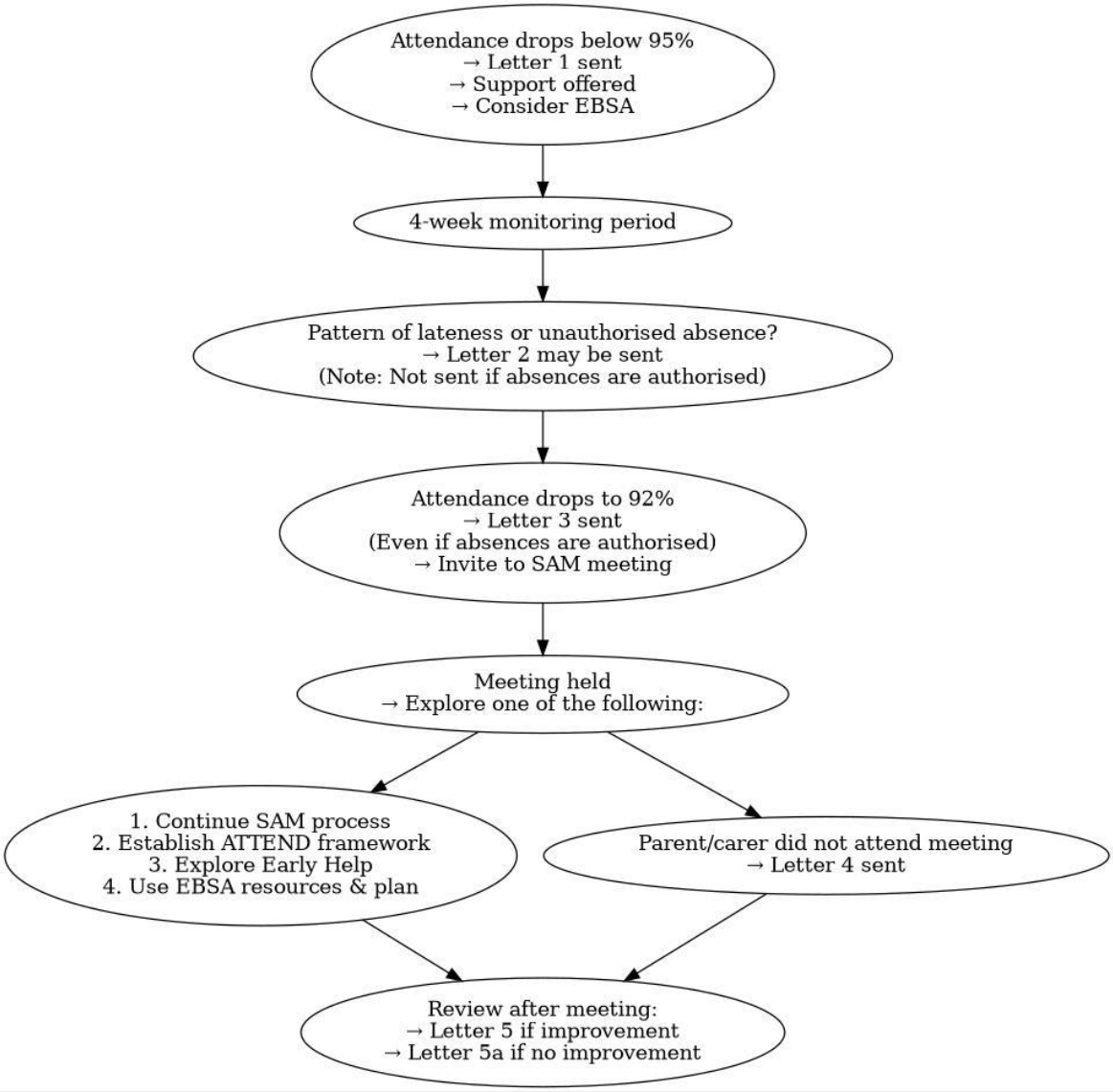
Pupil Moves Out of Area: unreasonable distance to travel. Submit the Statutory Notification as soon as the school finds this out. Continue to track destination and liaise with LA admissions team. They will advise the school when a pupil may be removed from roll if it has been established that the pupil/family have left the last known address and their new location is known. They may allow the school to backdate the leaving date if they or the school receives confirmation of the pupil starting at another school or within the care of a different LA. The school must have written confirmation from the LA to backdate the leaving date. If the school does not receive this and the school has no other confirmation of where the pupil is the school must keep them on roll for 20 days.

Pupil Emigrates: The school must follow the procedure above for moving out of area but also need to have ascertained from the parent the forwarding address, details of destination school and moving date.

Pupil Transfers to a New School: Confirm the pupil's start date at the new school and that the pupil has started there. Submit the Statutory Notification on the day the school has it confirmed that the pupil started at their new school. The school can take the pupil off roll from the confirmed start date or the last school day if it precedes it e.g., a Friday and they started on a Monday. If the start date is the first day of a school term the school can back date the leaving date for the school's pupil to the last day of the previous term. If the school must investigate in the new term to find out why the pupil is 'absent' keep them on roll until the school gets a confirmed start date at the new school. If there is a gap between the leaving date the school has been given by a parent and the start date for a pupil, the pupil should remain on the school's roll, marked absent, until the transfer school confirms the pupil has started there. If after ten days, the pupil has still not started, the school should submit a CME form. The school cannot remove a CME pupil from the school's roll for a further ten days from the initial notification or safeguarding referral (so 20 days in total from the first day of absence) unless the LA confirms where the pupil has gone.

Appendix 7 - Strategy for reducing persistent absence *(See Figure 1 – attendance 90% or lower)*

- Attendance is high profile within the school and is communicated weekly to children and parents/carers
  - Attendance of the whole school is reviewed weekly and is a standing item in Vulnerable Pupil Meetings attended by DSL / SLT
- An initial letter (letter 1) will have been sent to parents/carers explaining that their child's attendance is causing the school concern – when their child's attendance fell below 95%. The attendance champion will ensure that all possible support has been offered. For some young people, poor attendance could be indicative of additional needs including anxiety typically referred to as emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA). Emotionally Based School Avoidance - Children, families and education
- Following letter 1, attendance will have been monitored for 4 weeks.
- If attendance continues to decline and there is a pattern or lateness or unauthorised absence, letter 2 may be issued explaining that a meeting may be offered.
- If attendance reaches 92% letter 3 will be issued, inviting parents/carers to a meeting with the School Attendance Champion and/or commissioned Attendance Improvement Officer to look at proactive strategies to improve attendance. This meeting will follow the SAM (School Attendance Meeting) guidance.
- Following this meeting, attendance support may be offered through either;
  - Continuing the SAM process
  - Establishing the ATTEND framework and associated process
  - Exploring Early Help if there is additional agency involvement
  - Exploring the EBSA resources and establishing an EBSA Support Plan
- If parents/carers do not attend the arranged meeting, Letter 4 will be issued
- Following the meeting, Letter 5 will be issued if improvements have been noted, Letter 5a will be issued if there is a continued decline.
- The local authority is notified of any further decline for consideration of next steps, this may involve legal action.
- Legal proceedings can be triggered after 10 sessions of unauthorised absence


Attendance drops below 95%
→ Letter 1 sent
→ Support offered
→ Consider EBSA
4-week monitoring period
Pattern of lateness or unauthorised absence?
→ Letter 2 may be sent
(Note: Not sent if absences are authorised)
Attendance drops to 92%
→ Letter 3 sent
(Even if absences are authorised)
→ Invite to SAM meeting
Meeting held
→ Explore one of the following:
1. Continue SAM process
2. Establish ATTEND framework
3. Explore Early Help
4. Use EBSA resources & plan
Parent/carer did not attend meeting
→ Letter 4 sent
Review after meeting:
→ Letter 5 if improvement
→ Letter 5a if no improvement