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1. Introduction

1.1 This policy applies to all schools which are part of the Focus-Trust.

1.2 Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure the best possible learning outcomes and life chances for all our children. To this end, we will do all we can to encourage parents to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any barriers that prevent attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

Our schools must follow the most recent government guidance For the purpose of this guidance, a parent means: • all natural parents, whether they are married or not; • any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and, • any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

2 Expectations

We expect that all parents pupils and all members of school staff will	• Promote regular attendance • Help to create a pattern of regular attendance and good punctuality
We expect that all pupils will	• Attend every day they are well enough to attend • Attend punctually • Attend appropriately prepared for the day • Tell someone if there are any concerns or barriers to them attending
We expect that all parents/ carers who have day to day responsibility for children will	• Ensure their child attends every day they are well enough to attend • Be aware of their legal responsibilities • Ensure that the child in their care arrives punctually, prepared for learning • Ensure that they contact school whenever the child is unable to attend school • Contact school on the first day of the child's absence • Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school • Inform school of any barriers to attendance that exist outside school

We expect that school staff will	• Provide a safe learning environment • Encourage excellent attendance • Keep accurate records of attendance for all pupils, twice daily • Monitor every pupil's attendance, analyse data and identify patterns • Contact parents by 9:30am on the day of absence if a child fails to attend school and where no message has been received • Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes authorising the absence • Build strong relationships with families and children, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them. • Make initial enquiries of parents of pupils who are not attending well, express their concern and clarify the school's and the Trust's expectations with regard to excellent school attendance • Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) • Apply the Attendance Policy fairly and consider school's obligations to The Equality Act 2010 and the requirements of the UN convention – The Rights of the Child, by ensuring that children are consulted in all decisions that relate to them

3 Term Dates

3.1 Each school's Term Dates are published at least one year in advance direct to families and on the school website).

4 Encouraging attendance

4.1 We encourage attendance in the following ways:

- By providing a welcoming and safe environment
- By building strong relationships with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working with families to remove them
- By providing an interesting and ambitious curriculum
- Involving pupils in attendance
- By responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- By marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration. If a child arrives at school after the close of register, without an explanation, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the pupil's

name recorded in the late book in case of a fire drill
- By publishing and displaying attendance statistics and school attendance targets
- By celebrating good and improved attendance
- By monitoring pupils, informing parents in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the EWO if the irregular attendance continues.

5 Attendance procedures

5.1 Each school publishes their attendance procedure on their website. This will include the following information:

- Start and end of term dates
- Start and end time of the school day
- Time that children can enter school and the time the register closes
- Information and contact details of the school staff with responsibility for attendance
- Reasons for needing good attendance
- Consequences of poor attendance
- Procedures if late
- Procedures if absent from school, including methods of contact
- Procedures for returning after absence
- School procedures when pupil is absent
- How school is promoting and incentivising good attendance and punctuality
- School's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most
- School's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority. The point at which Fixed Penalty Notices for absence and other sanctions will be sought if support is not appropriate (e.g. for an unauthorised holiday in term time), not successful, or not engaged with.

6 Understanding types of absence

6.1 Every half day from school is classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED OR UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required and preferably in writing.

6.2 Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a valid and permissible reason such as illness, emergencies and other unavoidable causes, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time - Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school. Absences for religious observance will also be authorised.

6.3 Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carer's keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been authorised by the head teacher.
- **If a child's attendance should fall below 96%, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence of a child's illness before authorising absence for illness.

7. Leave of absence in term time

7.1 There is an expectation that pupils will attend every day that school is open. The Principal/Head Teacher will not routinely authorise absence in term time. Any unauthorised absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised' in the attendance register.

8 Exceptional absence

8.1 On very rare occasions, the Principal/Head Teacher may grant authorised leave of absence where there are exceptional and extenuating circumstances. ***Holidays in term time and extended leave are not classified as exceptional circumstances.***

8.2 The Principal/Head Teacher will decide whether to authorise any application for absence. No parent can demand leave of absence for their child as a right. No person other than the Principal/Head Teacher/Head of School can authorise term time absence.

8.3 Any request for absence will be judged on a case by case basis, and Principal/Head Teachers will use their discretion sparingly. When deciding whether to authorise the absence, Principal/Head Teachers may take the

following into consideration:

- the reasons for the requested absence;
- the wishes of the parent(s);
- the age of the child and their educational stage;
- the time of year for the proposed absence (for example, if it is near to any assessment dates); and
- the child's overall attendance record (current academic year and past years);

8.4 Decisions to authorise/not authorise absence will be applied consistently and equitably.

8.5 Parents must apply for exceptional absence by writing to the Principal/Head Teacher/Head of School/School. This application will usually be followed up by a meeting with the Principal/Head Teacher/Head of School.

8.6 The decision as to whether to authorise absence in term time will be communicated in writing.

9 Authorised absence due to religious observance

9.1 Schools will treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance, exclusively set apart by the religious body to which parents belong. Where necessary, schools will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

9.2 For religious observance, **up to two days absence (one per festival) will be authorised**.

9.3 Any pupil who fails to return after the authorised absence will have their absence recorded as 'unauthorised'.

9.4 No more than two occasions (festivals) per academic year will be authorised. If the festival occurs at the weekend or during school holidays, pupils will not be granted a day off in lieu.

10 Absence without authorisation

10.1 Any pupil who is absent from school without authorisation will have their absences recorded as 'unauthorised'.

10.2 Any absence longer than a period of authorised absence will be recorded as

'unauthorised'.

10.3 Pupils whose absence was unauthorised and fail to return within 20 days of the agreed date may be deleted from the roll, unless there is a credible reason for their continued absence.

10.4 Penalty notices may be issued to any parent for a child who meets the National Threshold for absence. This includes any unauthorised absence, e.g. holidays, arriving after the register closes. There is a scaled approach to penalty notices, issued within three years to the same child:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third absence in respect of the same child, within three-years, could result in direct prosecution.

11. **Absence procedures**

11.1 If a child is absent parents must:

• Telephone school as soon as possible on the first day of absence to explain the reason for absence.

11.2 If a child is absent school will:

• Telephone parents on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them.
• Invite parents into school to discuss the situation with our designated staff or Headteacher / Principal if absences persist.
• Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance and Pupil Support Service

11.3 The School may consider undertaking a home visit if there are safeguarding concerns, school can't contact the family or a child is absent from school for a length of time.

12 Telephone numbers

12.1 There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have up to date contact numbers at all times. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

13 Attendance and punctuality monitoring including Persistent and Severe Absence

13.1 Each school has a member of staff responsible for managing and monitoring attendance and punctuality on a daily basis. It is the responsibility of the Principal/Head Teacher to ensure that excellent attendance is a high priority and that attendance and punctuality
monitoring is acted on swiftly.

13.2 The Principal/Head Teacher will decide who liaises with parents and carers re attendance and punctuality issues. The Principal/Head Teacher has a direct role in liaising with parents when there are on-going attendance and/or punctuality issues.

13.3 A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is proven to do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carer's support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly.

13.4 Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark
is given priority and parents/carer's will be informed of this immediately using the following means:

13.5 A letter will be sent to parents if their child's annual attendance falls below 96%, to warn them of the impact poor attendance can have on a child's education. A target of 98% attendance over a 6 week period will be set for that child. Should the child not meet the target, an attendance review meeting will be called with the head teacher and education social worker. It is recognised that there may be circumstances, such as serious illness or hospitalisation, where this is not an appropriate course of action.

13.6 Any child who has an annual attendance of less than 90% will be referred to the Principal/Head Teacher/Head Teacher/Head of School who will lead an attendance panel meeting with the child's parents. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are automatically made known to the Local Authority Attendance and Pupil Support Service.

13.7 There is an expectation that parents will work with school staff to improve the attendance of their child.

13.8 Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent

from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them

13.9 All schools should work with the local communities (including voluntary and community groups) to help remove the barriers to attendance that families experience. In some cases, families will experience the same or similar barriers to attendance for multiple children who attend different schools in the area. As such, it is of mutual benefit for such schools to work together where possible. This will be particularly beneficial in supporting transition between feeder schools.

14 Pupils who have been suspended or excluded

14.1 If a pupil has been suspended or excluded, that pupil may not be in a public place during the period of suspension/exclusion without just cause (such as attending a medical appointment). If that pupil is seen in a public place, a penalty notice is issued to each parent of each child.

15 Links with child protection and safeguarding

15.1 Where any attendance or non-attendance issue triggers a cause for concern linked to a child protection or safeguarding issue, the Principal/Head Teacher should be informed immediately. The Principal/Head Teacher will then choose the most appropriate course of action taking advice, where necessary, from the Local Authority Safeguarding team/Children's Social Care.

16 Deletions of names from the admissions register

16.1 A pupil's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in

regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended. A pupil's name must not be removed for any other reason and doing so would constitute off-rolling.

16.2 The only reasons where a pupil's name shall be deleted are:

Ground A - a pupil has a School Attendance Order which has been changed to name another school or revoked - regulation 8(1)(a) Where the pupil is registered at the school as a result of a school attendance order, but another school has now been named on that order or the order is revoked because arrangements have been made for the child to receive suitable full-time education for their age, ability and aptitude somewhere other than at a school.

Where a school attendance order remains in force, the pupil's name must

not be deleted for other reasons until the order is revoked or the name of the school amended. This includes a request to electively home educate. If a parent has had their child registered at the school to comply with an order but the pupil does not attend, the school should discuss the case with the local authority and where appropriate take steps to secure the regular attendance of the child as they would with any other case of non-attendance.

16.3 Ground B - a pupil has been registered at another school - regulation 8(1)(b) 158. Where a pupil has been registered at another school, unless: • a school attendance order naming the school is in force in relation to the pupil; • the pupil is a child of no fixed abode and the school is their main school (see further details below); or • the school has agreed that the pupil should be a registered pupil at more than one school.

16.4 Transfer between schools: Where a pupil is transferring to another school, the original school must delete a pupil's name from the admission register on the first day they are entered on the admission register of the new school. The new school must enter the pupil's name on the admission register on the first day that it has agreed the pupil will attend the school.

16.5 Schools must inform their LA of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register.

17 Transfer between schools

17.1 Where a pupil is transferring to another school, the original school must delete a pupil's name from the admission register on the first day they are entered on the admission register of the new school. The new school must enter the pupil's name on the admission register on the first day that it has agreed the pupil will attend the school

18 Retaining and amending registers

18.1 Effective and timely use and sharing of register data is critical to improve attendance. Schools are expected to use an electronic management information system to keep their attendance and admission registers to improve accuracy, speed up the process of sharing and analysing information, and make returns to local authorities and DfE easier.

18.2 Registers are legal records and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 3 years from the date of entry. As the attendance register is a record of the pupils present at the time it was taken, the register should only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are made, all schools must ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on

which the amendment was made, and the name and title of the person who made the amendment.

19 Fixed Penalty Notices

19.1 Principal/Head Teachers will use a range of methods to encourage excellent attendance and improve poor attendance. Where internal systems and partnership working with parents are not effective, they will use a Penalty Notice in accordance with the most recent regulations and Local Code of Conduct

19.2 Fixed penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and can only be issued by a headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police. All schools and the police must send copies of fixed penalty notices issued to the local authority.

19.3 Fixed penalty notices are served on parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

19.4 Fixed penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences, which should usually be the parent or parents with day to day responsibility for the pupil's attendance.

19.5 Failure to comply with the penalty notice could render the parent liable to prosecution. This is not a decision that will be taken lightly as, of course, each school wishes to maintain excellent links with parents. However, our responsibility is to ensure that every child has access to the full provision that is on offer and this cannot take place if the child is away from school. Unauthorised leave of absence during term time may result in a Penalty Notice.

19.6 Fixed Penalty Notices may be issued:

- Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion the days that the child must not be present in a public place.
- A child meets the National Threshold for considering a penalty notice:
    - All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after

the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

19.7 Where parents have been fined for the same child on at least 2 other occasions, schools may request direct prosecution ***but only if it is stated in the school attendance policy and on communications to parents.*** (See 10.4)

19.8 The payment must be paid direct to the local authority regardless of who issued the penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice.

19.9 Parent(s) can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made.

19.10 There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.

19.11 Monies collected through fixed penalty notices can only be used for the administration of the fixed penalty notice system or for prosecuting for the original offence in cases of non-payment. Any surplus at the end of the year must be returned to the Secretary of State. No money is received by school.

20 Regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place

20.1 As poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early intervention is crucial. The key to this is regular data analysis to both identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.

20.2 To achieve this all schools are expected to:

• Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families. This should go beyond headline attendance percentages and should look at individual pupils, cohorts and groups (including their punctuality) across the school to help schools achieve their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

- When analysing patterns, schools may wish to look further into patterns of attendance within a session to ensure all pupils are attending all timetabled lessons.
- Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders (including any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases (see paragraphs 34-39)
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This should include 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.

- Benchmark their attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data. This may, for example, include pupils in a year group with higher than average absence or for pupils eligible for free school meals if their attendance falls behind that of their more advantaged peers.
- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented. The findings should then be used to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies.
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the board or governing body

20.3 Schools should decide which cohorts of pupils should be included in their data analysis based on their context and school population. This may include: boys and girls, year groups, pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, pupils with a social worker or who are looked-after by the local authority, pupils eligible for free school meals, and any pupils from backgrounds (including ethnicities, religions or beliefs, or sexual orientations where applicable) in the school community that have, or have historically had, lower attendance than their peers.

21 Pupils with medical conditions or Special educational needs or disabilities

21.1 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.

21.2 That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, schools should be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

21.3 This should include:

• Being mindful of the guidance https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1136965/Summary_of_responsibilities_where_a_mental_health_issue_is_affecting_attendance.pdf

Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

• Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

• Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. In addition, schools should work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.
• Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
• Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
• Ensure data is regularly monitored for these groups including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary. Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education.

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

22 Part-time timetables

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

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

23 Attendance Contracts - Purpose of parenting contracts and when they may be appropriate

23.1 An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. A contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or

is not deemed appropriate. An attendance contract is not a punitive tool it is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. Parents cannot be compelled to enter a contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.

23.2 There is no obligation on the school or local authority to offer a contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but a contract should always be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution.

23.3 The aim from the outset should be for the parent(s), and the pupil where they are old enough, the school and the local authority to work in partnership. Where a school and/or local authority decide to use an attendance contract, a meeting should be arranged with the parent(s). It should include the pupil if they are old enough to understand. The meeting should explain the purpose of an attendance contract and why using one would be beneficial in the family's circumstances. The parent(s) should be asked to outline their views on the pupil's attendance at school, any underlying issues and how they believe these should be addressed. The meeting should also allow them to share their views on the idea of an attendance contract and what type of support they think would be helpful to secure the pupil's regular attendance. Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without good reason or notification, further attempts should be made to contact them and arrange another meeting but all attempts at support should be recorded.

23.4 One attendance contract may be arranged with all parents, or in circumstances where it is desirable to have different requirements for each parent then separate parenting contracts for each parent should be arranged.

23.5 All parenting contracts should contain:
• Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
• A statement from the school and/or local authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
• A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.

23.6 The requirements specified, and the support provided, will depend on the individual case, and should be tailored to the needs of the individual parent and family.

23.7 There is not, therefore, a prescribed list, but requirements may include:
• Measures to ensure the pupil attends school or alternative provision punctually and regularly
• Requiring the parent to attend meetings with the school and/or local authority
• Accessing or partaking in the support or programmes offered
• Working with or accessing other separate support provided to the pupil at school level (e.g. being on report)

23.8 The support provided to help the parent satisfy those requirements may include:
• Provision of a lead practitioner to support the family
• Signposting or referrals to wider local authority or health services that might support the family (e.g. housing needs, drug and alcohol support)
• Signposting or referrals to voluntary and community sector programmes or support (e.g. foodbanks or community support groups)
• Formal interventions such as family group conferencing, peer mentoring or literacy classes

• Support and advisory services (e.g. benefit support)
• Formal parenting programmes (e.g. a course with a specified number of sessions)

23.9 Attendance contracts do not have a minimum or maximum duration. Each individual contract should set out the duration it will be in place, and most are for between 3 and 12 months but can be longer if needed.

23.10 Once the requirements and support elements of the contract have been agreed, the school and/or local authority and the parent should write up the contract together and sign it. The contract should be written in language that the parent can easily understand (including a translation where necessary). All parties, including other partners working with the family, should be given a copy. Non-compliance with an attendance contract

23.11 The school and/or local authority should work with the parent to gain their cooperation and compliance throughout the parenting contract process.

23.12 Where a parent does not comply with the requirements set out in the contract, the lead practitioner should contact the parent and seek an explanation and decide whether it is reasonable, and the contract remains useful. If the explanation shows that the contract is proving difficult to comply with through no fault of the parent, then a meeting should be arranged with the parent to review and amend it. Where no explanation is given, or the lead practitioner is not satisfied with the explanation, they should serve the parent with a warning to explain that the contract is not working and may be terminated, and another course of action pursued, if the parent does not engage. This may be in the form of a letter, and record of it should be kept.

23.13 If there are further instances of non-compliance, they should arrange a meeting with the parent to review the contract and discuss how it can be made to work. Following this meeting, the school and/or local authority should decide whether the noncompliance is undermining the contract to the extent that it is no longer useful in which case an alternative course of action (such as a different legal intervention) would need to be decided upon. The decision and reasons should be recorded.

23.14 Failure by the parent, school, or local authority to keep to the terms of the attendance contract cannot lead to action for breach of contract or for civil damages. There is no criminal sanction for a parent's failure to comply with, or refusal to sign, an attendance contract. If the pupil's irregular attendance continues or escalates to the point where prosecution is deemed appropriate, however, any failure or refusal may be presented as evidence in the case. It is therefore important that any non-compliance with the contract is recorded so that it can be presented in court if necessary.

24 Purpose of Education Supervision Orders (ESOs) and when they may be appropriate

24.1 Where a voluntary early help plan, or formal parenting contract has not been successful, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) can be a useful alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. In deciding whether to progress to an ESO, the school and local authority should have exhausted voluntary support and be clear that making the order would be beneficial for the pupil and parent. Where safeguarding concerns exist, the lead practitioner should also discuss with the school's designated safeguarding lead and children's social care services and agree an ESO

would be a more suitable option than a s.17 (Children in Need) or s.47 (Child Protection) plan.

25 Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance

25.1 Improving attendance requires knowledge of guidance and regulations but also expertise in working with families to remove barriers to attendance and safeguard pupils. Just as those barriers are regularly evolving, so too is the training that school staff require to address them.

25.2 All trusts and governing bodies should therefore ensure that: Training on attendance is included in the school(s)' continued professional development offer for all staff, and that attendance is covered in any trust/federation wide induction packs.

25.3 As a minimum this should include all staff understanding:

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances,
- the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of registers,
- the school/trusts' strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance,
- and the processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it.

25.4 Dedicated attendance training is provided to any staff with a specified attendance function in their role, including administrative, pastoral or family support staff and senior leaders. In addition, this should include:

- the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data,
- and any additional training that would be beneficial to support pupils and pupil cohorts overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance.

26 Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools

26.1 One of the most successful approaches to improving attendance is the sharing of effective practice between schools. Multi-academy trusts and federation governing bodies are, therefore, expected to provide regular opportunities to bring together staff from different schools to learn from each other's attendance expertise and share effective interventions.

26.2 This should be tailored to the needs of their schools and pupils but as a minimum could include, sharing exemplar resources and documents such as communications to pupils and parents, regular networking or Q&A sessions, and topical best practice training or webinars.

26.3 This is in addition to the expectation of local authorities to provide opportunities to schools of all types within a geographical area to come together to share effective practice (see section 4).

26.4 Focus-Trust Attendance Leaders meet half-termly to share documents, resources, strategies and provide networking support

27 Attendance and Pupil Support Service

27.1. 1 Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problem together. This is nearly always successful. If

difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance and Pupil Support Officer from the Local Authority.

27.2 Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the

A.P.S.O themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

28 Summary

28.1The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Parents have a duty to ensure that their children attend regularly. All school staff are committed to working in partnership with parents, children and families to ensure as a high a level of attendance as possible.

29 Additional Information for

families

29.1 Is my child too ill for

school?

Check the link below to see NHS advice:- https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child- too-ill-for-school/ Where can I get help if my child is feeling unwell?

- For less urgent health needs, contact your GP or local pharmacist. Your local pharmacist is an expert in medicines and uses their clinical expertise, together with their practical knowledge, to advise you on minor health concerns, such as cough, colds, aches and pains, as well as healthy eating and others. Pharmacists can also help you decide whether you need to see another medical health professional. You can find your nearest pharmacist online – go to www.nhs.uk and search "pharmacy".
- The NHS 111 service is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by a team of fully trained advisors. The service can connect you to a nurse, emergency dentist, or even a GP and can arrange face to face appointments if they think you need one. If the advisor feels an ambulance is required they can send for one.
- Missing school for just a few days a year can damage children's future chances of gaining good GCSEs, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances.