



ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS POLICY

Compliance statement

Every policy is reviewed at regular intervals and where applicable, as stipulated by law. Each policy is also available in additional formats including Braille and in additional languages upon request, within reasonable timescales as stipulated by the school.

Reviewed and adopted by:	March 2025
Next review due by:	March 2027

Introduction

St Joseph's Catholic Federation is a place of excellence and we pride ourselves on ensuring that all our children succeed. We believe that good attendance plays a key part in ensuring personal development, learning and achievement in all areas. Parents, carers, and teachers and all staff have a duty to encourage maximum attendance at school.

This policy represents our commitment to maintaining high levels of attendance at St. Joseph's RC Federation and applies to all children in attendance from Nursery through to Year 6. The policy sets out the principles, procedures, and practices the schools will undertake. Also detailed are the strategies, sanctions, and possible legal consequences of unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality, as well as the rewards and benefits of good attendance. This policy is available on our website and will be reviewed annually and amended as necessary. Under the Education Act, and throughout this policy, the term "Parent" shall refer to each adult considered responsible for the day-to-day care of the child.

Evidence suggests that the more a child is in school the better their life chances and earning power. Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils fulfil their potential, is an understanding that pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind as much of the work missed is never made up; these gaps in their learning leave children at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. Statistics show a direct link between poor attendance and under achievement. That's why attendance and punctuality are at the key focuses at St. Joseph's RC Federation.

The Federation of St. Joseph's Catholic Junior, Infant and Junior Schools will implement all DfE policies and guidelines relating to attendance Improvement. The Working Together to Improve attendance 2024 guidance outlines the importance of attendance being 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. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn. The expectation is that all pupils will attend school and the Pupil Attendance Policy will support this expectation. The Federation's risk assessment refers to attendance and the steps that the Federation will take to promote attendance at the current time.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our federation ethos to:
promote children's welfare and safeguarding

- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at the Federation
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave the Federation

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is a rule of this Federation that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the Executive Headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same

class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers, local Headteacher Associations, the Local Authority and parents and carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in the Federation and to outline the Federation's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of the Federation staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters

Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.

Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the Federation's target for attendance.

Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements

Reward good or improving attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the Federation, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse, The Local Authority or a Child and Family Support Worker.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the Federation (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the Federation does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings which may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If you are found guilty in court you will receive a criminal conviction.

Unauthorised absence includes, however is not exhaustive:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have never been properly explained.
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes however is recorded as an absence for the session.
- shopping trips.
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- their own or family birthdays.
- holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Executive Headteacher- may result in school applying to the local authority to issue a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the local authority.
- day trips.
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

School Attendance and the Law

By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education. Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is, "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances", and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this Federation that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Executive Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Executive Headteacher or her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed form provided by the Federation. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the Federation, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by this school in accordance with the Croydon Council Penalty Notice code of Conduct.

A Penalty Notice may be issued where there have been at least 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence for the purpose of a holiday, however, due to the importance of pupils settling into school at the commencement of the school year, Penalty Notices may also be issued if there have been at least 6 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence during the first two weeks of September due to a term-time holiday.

At The Federation of St. Joseph's Catholic Junior, Infant and Junior Schools 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

Being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the Executive Headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining

'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- at any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- during assessment and test periods in the Federation's calendar affecting your child.
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence, or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.

If leave of absence is authorised, the Federation will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need a parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a school based meeting and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Local Attendance Adviser, Home School Liaison Worker, Local Authority, Family Solutions or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising attendance.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

Contact the school on the first day of absence before *9.20 am*. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or call into school personally and speak to the office staff. You can also use ARBOR.

Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before *9.20am*

Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence if requested to support the absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you however it is your responsibility to contact us.
- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%
- Invite you in to school to discuss the situation with our Head of Attendance or Executive Headteacher if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

First Day Absence Contact:

Parents are expected to notify the school each day if their child is unable to attend for an unavoidable reason, such as illness. The school will follow up on all unexplained absences no later than 10:00 a.m. If a response is not received from the child's family, the absence will be coded as 'O' (Unauthorised absence). A home visit may be made if there are known safeguarding concerns.

Second Day Absence Contact:

If the child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, a telephone call will be made to the child's primary contact(s) to ascertain the reason for absence. If no contact has been made with the family, the absence will be coded as 'O' (Unauthorised absence). A home visit may be made if there are known safeguarding concerns.

Continuing Absence Procedures:

In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit may be made. A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parent/carers by the 10th day of absence, at which point your child will be considered Missing from Education.

When attendance becomes a concern:

Where a child's attendance is highlighted as a cause for concern, the school will follow the following process:

In the first instance, the Attendance Team will send a letter to inform parents of their child's current attendance percentage. Parents will be informed that the child's attendance will continue to be monitored and further absences will be unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided. They will also offer support. Parents are expected to contact the Federation at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If attendance continues to be a concern, The Head of Attendance will refer the child to the EWO and they will become part of their caseload. You will receive a letter, stating your child's current attendance percentage. Contact details for the EWO will be provided in the letter so that parents can make contact if they wish to discuss their child's attendance. The EWO will invite parents to attend a meeting to discuss their child's attendance.

Local Authority attendance support services

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the Federation may refer the child to the Local Authority. The EWO will work with the local authority and one of two courses of action will take place, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice (see Annex A for the Croydon Penalty Notice Code of Conduct), prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of a Parenting Contract, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

Local Authority Attendance Specialists work strategically with schools, families and other professionals to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at *8.50 am* when children can begin to come into school. Registers are taken at *9.00 am* and your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time. Children arriving after *9.00 am* are required to come in to school via the school office if accompanied by a parent or carer, the parent/carers will sign them in and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded. The school may send home 'late letters' in order to keep parents and carers informed. From time to time the Head of Attendance or Executive Headteacher will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school.

At *9.20am* the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site 'U', but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of being issued with a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head of Attendance, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving The Federation of St. Joseph's Catholic Junior, Infant and Junior Schools, other than at the end of year 6, carers are required to complete a 'Pupils moving from school' form which can be obtained from the school office. This provides the Federation with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our pupils.

It is crucial that parents keep the Federation updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are now legally required to notify their Local Authority of every new entry to the admission register within five days of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, every deletion from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

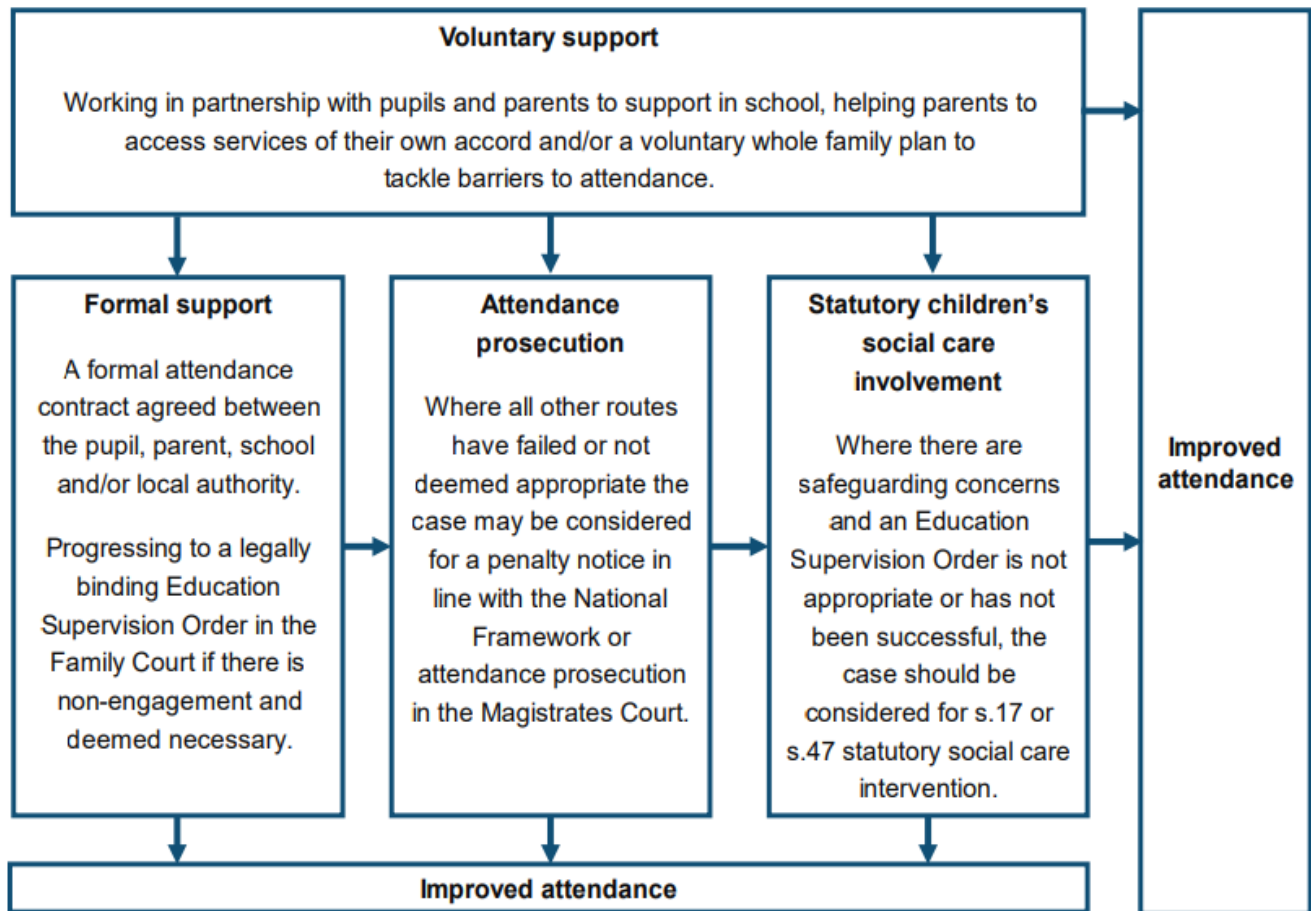
Summary

The Federation has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time, every day.

All Federation staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Annex A

Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



Schools and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family.

Annex B

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION PENALTY NOTICES

The legal framework governing school attendance and the responsibilities of parents of excluded pupils, schools and the LA is set out in a succession of acts, regulations and other guidance.

Education Act 1996

Under Section 7 of the Act: the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that the child may have, this can be by regular attendance at school, or otherwise (the parent can choose to educate their child themselves). If it appears to the LA that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise then they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend the school regularly the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. In addition, if it can be proved that a parent knew of the child's non-attendance and failed to act, then they may be found guilty under Section 444(1 A). This offence (known as the higher or aggravated offence) can lead to a warrant being issued compelling a parent to attend court and conviction may result in a higher level fine and/or a custodial sentence.

AUTHORISATION TO ISSUE PENALTY NOTICES

Primary responsibility for issuing penalty notices rests with the Local Authority (LA). It has been agreed that the Access to Education Team, on behalf of Croydon Local Authority, will usually issue penalty notices. The Service will administer the scheme from any funds obtained as a result of issuing penalty notices.

CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH A PENALTY NOTICE MAY BE ISSUED

Penalty Notices apply to pupils of statutory school age, which commences the term immediately following the child's 5th birthday and finishes on the last Friday in June of school year in which they turn 16.

Penalty notices will only be issued as a conclusion to a series of processes and when all attempts to address school attendance matters have been unsuccessful. If a previous Penalty Notice has been unsuccessful, rationale and justification should be provided as to why issuing another Penalty Notice would improve the attendance of the student. If schools are not aware of any previous or current legal interventions, they must email EducationPenaltyNotices@Croydon.gov.uk. A response will be sent within 3 working days.

Parents cannot be penalised more than once for the same period of absence.

Domestic and European legislation and case law makes it clear that when serving a formal Notice in criminal proceedings, the recipient must be clearly and unambiguously identified. For the Purpose of issuing a Penalty Notice under this Code, the parent's first and last name must be cited on the Notice and any covering letter.

PAYMENT OF PENALTY NOTICE

The penalty for each parent issued with a Penalty Notice is £160 for each child, however if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, it is reduced to £60. (Service by post is deemed to have been effected, unless the contrary is proved, on the second working day after posting the notice by first class post).

All penalties are paid to the LA and revenue generated is retained to administer the system and contribute towards s444 prosecutions following the non-payment of the Penalty Notice.

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the Attendance Compliance Team will either prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice. The prosecution is not for non-payment of the notice but is a prosecution for irregular school attendance – Education Act 1996 Section 4441.

There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a penalty notice.

WITHDRAWAL OF PENALTY NOTICE

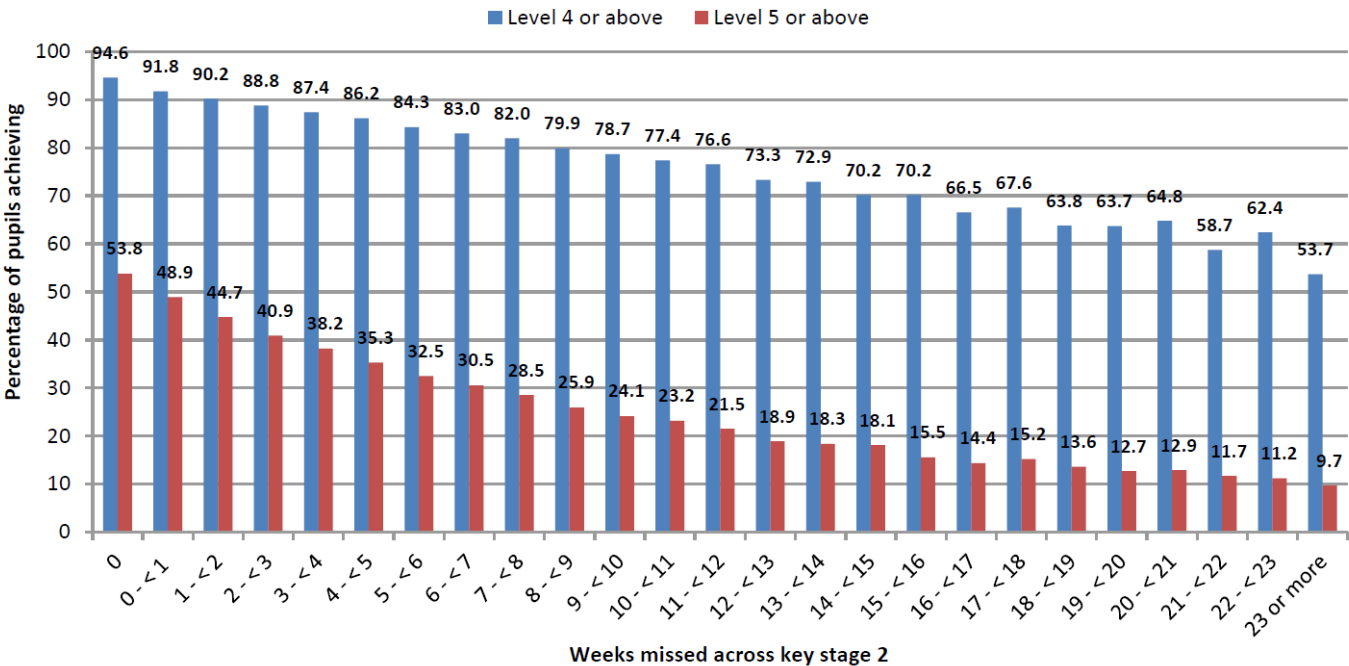
A penalty notice may be withdrawn by the local authority named in the notice under the following circumstances:

- Where the local authority deems it ought not to have been issued i.e. where it has been issued outside the terms of the local code of conduct or where the evidence does not support the issuing of a penalty notice
- It appears to the local authority that the notice contains material errors
- Where it has been issued to the wrong person named as the recipient.

Annex C

DfE “The link between absence and attainment at KS2 - 2013/14 academic year”

The analysis of the link between overall absenceand attainment when taking prior attainment and pupil characteristics into account showed that, for each KS2 and KS4 measure, overall absence had a statistically significant negative link to attainment – i.e. every extra day missed was associated with a lower attainment outcome.



Annex C

New Penalty Notice Guidance and School Application Document

<u>Who will receive a fine?</u>	<u>Types of Fines</u>	<u>How many fines can be issued?</u>
Fines are issued per parent, per child. A parent is defined as the person who has parental responsibility and lives with the child during school time regardless of who applied for the leave.	<i>Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holiday:</i> 5 consecutive days of unauthorised term time leave. <i>Penalty Notices following Notice to Improve:</i> 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10-week period. These days do not have to be consecutive and can include a mixture of G, O and U codes, or non-effective engagement.	Maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period, which can span school academic years and areas.
<i>Where difficulties arise with school attendance, professionals should take a “support first” approach in line with the DfE’s ‘Working to improve school attendance guidance’, only resorting to legal enforcement when necessary. The aim is that the need for legal enforcement is reduced taking a supportive approach to tackle the barriers to attendance and intervening early before absence becomes entrenched.</i>		
Below is the section which relates to the expectations of the school when applying for a first and second offence Penalty Notice or a third offence application within 3 years. Please note: this is to be included with Guidance to Schools / Education Welfare Officer’s only.		
Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holiday (1st Offence) 5 consecutive days of unauthorised term time leave	Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holiday (2nd Offence) 5 consecutive days of unauthorised term time leave	Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holiday (3rd offence within 3 years) 5 consecutive days of unauthorised term time leave
<i>Documents required: In cases of complex attendance, the LA will consider requiring extra interventions before accepting an application.</i>		
PN application	PN application	Referral application

Registration Certificate with comments page	Registration Certificate with comments page	Registration Certificate with comments page
Leave request form	Leave request form	Leave request form
Email communication with or from parent	Email communication with or from parent	Email communication with or from parent
Other documents – flights, funeral etc.	Other documents – flights, funeral etc.	Other documents – flights, funeral etc.
School leave refusal letter	School leave refusal letter	School leave refusal letter
No School Attendance Notice to Improve	No School Attendance Notice to Improve	No School Attendance Notice to Improve
LA to Issue PN	LA to Issue PN	LA to Issue Court Warning Letter (CWL) – decision made depending on parent response – if decision is to proceed – LA to completes Single Justice Procedure (SJP) court paperwork.
Penalty Notices for Poor attendance (1st Offence) 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week rolling period	Penalty Notices for Poor attendance (2nd Offence) 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week rolling period	Penalty Notices for Poor attendance (3rd Offence within 3 years) 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week rolling period
<i>Documents required: In cases of complex attendance, the LA will consider requiring extra interventions before accepting an application.</i>		
PN application	PN application	Certificate of Attendance (1 st exhibit)
		Application following 2 PN's within 3 years
Registration Certificate with comments page regarding telephone calls / texts to or with parent	Registration Certificate with comments page regarding telephone calls / texts to or with parent	Registration Certificate with comments page regarding telephone calls / texts to or with parent
Attendance Overview Letter – Including a warning regarding unauthorised absences and possibility of a fine	Attendance Overview Letter – Including a warning regarding unauthorised absences and possibility of a fine	An Attendance Overview Letter – Including a warning regarding unauthorised absences and possibility of a fine
An Attendance Support Meeting Invite –	An Attendance Support Meeting Invite –	An Attendance Support Meeting Invite –

With warning of the consequences should their child continue to have unauthorised absences and they do not effectively engage	With warning of the consequences should their child continue to have unauthorised absences and they do not effectively engage	With warning of the consequences should their child continue to have unauthorised absences and they do not effectively engage
Other documents relating to the unauthorised absences	Other documents relating to the unauthorised absences	Parent Contract
<i>In cases of complex attendance, the LA will consider requiring extra interventions before accepting an application</i>	<i>In cases of complex attendance, the LA will consider requiring extra interventions before accepting an application</i>	Letter informing parent of referral to LA
		Other documents relating to the period of unauthorised absences
		MG11 & Exhibit documents mentioned above
Action by LA upon receipt of Application		
School Attendance Notice to Improve – 3 weeks to improve	School Attendance Notice to Improve – 3 weeks to improve	No School Attendance Notice to Improve – LA to issue Court Warning Letter (PN n/a)
If penalty notice is issued and remains unpaid, Court Warning Letter issued	If penalty notice is issued and remains unpaid, Court Warning Letter issued	
14 days for parent to respond	14 days for parent to respond	14 days for parent to respond
Decision to proceed or not is made depending on response from the parent		
If decision is made to proceed, LA to complete SJP paperwork	If decision is made to proceed, LA to complete SJP paperwork	If decision is made to proceed, LA to complete SJP paperwork / MG11 (witness statement) / exhibit CWL and include School / EWO paperwork.