



Our school is a beacon of light. A place where every child and adult is encouraged to shine brightly and reach their full potential. Through curiosity, courage, and compassion, we shine like a lamp in our classrooms, like a village on a hill in our community, and like shining stars across the wider world.

**Stelling Minnis CE Primary School**

# **Attendance Policy**

**Ratified: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

**Reviewed Annually**

## **Statement of Intent**

Excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. For every child to gain the greatest benefit from their education, they should be at school on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. We will strive to make our school a place that pupils want to be and where they can individually experience success.

We recognise how important it is that pupils and families feel a sense of belonging to their school, and that it is a place where they can feel safe and listened to. We believe that sharing a belief that everyone is valued and can be positively represented, directly contributes to our shared success as individuals, and as a school. We want everyone to feel accepted and respected.

Attendance at school isn't just about academic success, although this is important. There is also key evidence that being at school helps with social skills, friendships, life-skills, managing routines, successfully negotiating change, and also with developing a sense of responsibility. Academic research has long held that such things are deeply protective factors for wellbeing and positive mental health, that extends well beyond school years and into later life. These are also factors supporting why we believe it is so important that children attend school regularly.

We appreciate that the barriers to accessing education can be wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Improving attendance is everyone's business: effective communication and joined-up working are paramount. We want to help our families and children if there are barriers that are making it harder to come to school.

This policy considers our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child. It is also aligned with the new DFE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance Statutory Guidance, effective from 19th August 2024.

## **Our School Commitment**

Our School strives for 100% attendance for all pupils, however we appreciate that children can be ill or have rare unavoidable absences for other reasons. All staff are made aware of how each of their roles impacts on attendance and punctuality and that every member of staff, regardless of their role, can make a difference. All staff will receive training commensurate with their roles. The school will listen to and support pupils and parents/carers to achieve good attendance and punctuality and will work closely with them where absence is a cause for concern. We will report to parents/carers at least three times per year on how your child is performing in school, including attendance and punctuality. We will celebrate and reward good and improving attendance through school communication.

Mrs Rachel Buss, Headteacher, is the school's Senior Attendance Champion and can be contacted by phone 01227 709218 and email [office@stelling-minnis.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@stelling-minnis.kent.sch.uk).

The School Governing Body will:

- Ensure that strategies are in place to promote and implement the Attendance Policy throughout the school
- Ensure the school has a culture that supports positive attendance and pupil wellbeing
- Ensure that leaders fulfil their statutory duties and responsibilities in regard to attendance
- Ensure that the Attendance Policy is accessible to parents/carers
- Review the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy in light of the school's termly reports
- Ask questions about the barriers to attendance faced by the school community and how the school plans to address these

The Headteacher (Attendance Champion) will:

- Be a role model in promoting attendance and punctuality
- Ensure accurate admission processes and effective follow-up of absence
- Lead initiatives to promote attendance across the school
- Monitor and analyse attendance data regularly and report findings
- Lead staff in implementing strategies to remove barriers to attendance
- Work with families to understand and address barriers to engagement
- Quality assure attendance action plans
- Authorise or decline absence requests
- Comply with statutory guidance on Children Missing in Education (CME)
- Oversee admission and removal from roll in line with DfE guidance
- Work with Local Authority and other partners on attendance issues
- Refer cases where necessary to attendance services
- Ensure support for pupils with health or SEND needs
- Maintain strong communication with safeguarding and SEND teams

The Office Team will:

- Promote attendance and punctuality as part of their role
- Ensure registers are completed twice daily using SIMS
- Record lateness accurately and challenge poor punctuality
- Close registers on time
- Communicate absence information to relevant staff
- Contact and build relationships with parents
- Inform the Headteacher of concerning patterns of absence
- Complete statutory attendance returns

Class Teachers will:

- Promote attendance and punctuality
- Take registers twice daily
- Challenge lateness and encourage routines

- Identify and report attendance concerns
- Support pupils returning after absence
- Help pupils catch up on missed learning
- Report missing pupils immediately
- Communicate impact of absence to parents/carers

Parents/Carers will:

- Ensure regular attendance and punctuality
- Inform school of absence and reasons
- Arrange appointments outside school hours where possible
- Avoid term-time holidays unless exceptional
- Submit leave requests in advance
- Work with the school to address attendance barriers

Pupils will:

- Aim for excellent attendance and punctuality
- Arrive prepared and on time each day
- Take pride in good attendance

## **1. Attendance Procedures**

Your child should always attend school regularly during term times. There are only two real exceptions to this:

- When your child is too ill to go to school
- When the school has authorised your child to be absent

The school's current opening hours are:

8.00-8.45 Breakfast Club

8.45 school gates open

9.00 Register

1.15pm register

3.20pm end of school day

3.20-6.00 After School Club

Schools are required to take a register twice a day, once in the morning and a further register at the start of the second session in the afternoon. Register will close at 9.15am and 1.30pm in the afternoon.

This shows whether a pupil is:

- present
- attending an approved educational activity
- absent
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half day absence has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised.

If an absence is authorised then this means the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be absent, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as the reason for absence.

An unauthorised absence is where no justifiable reason is given. It may also be unauthorised if the attendance level is below target and no supporting information or evidence has been given.

## **2. Parental responsibility**

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time every day the school is open, except when a statutory reason applies.

Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them, in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 9.00am. If pupils arrive after this time, they should report to the school office with the adult dropping them off. If a pupil is persistently late, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will initially discuss this with the parents/carers to see if a solution can be found.

Parents/carers should book any medical appointment around the school day where possible.

Parents/carers should only book leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in writing to the Headteacher, with two weeks' notice.

If your child is absent you must:

- contact the school as soon as possible on the first day their child is absent and every further day of absence until they return by phoning the main office on 01227 709218. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that the child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

If your child is absent we will:

- Contact you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.

- In such cases where the absences are a medical matter, the school may ask for additional medical information in order that we can better understand the needs of your child and support them with possible reasonable adjustments.

### **3. The Role of the School Staff**

At Stelling Minnis CE Primary School, there is a whole-school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility. The Head Teacher (Mrs Buss) has overall responsibility for attendance and is supported by the School Business Manager and Admin Assistant (Mrs Greenwood and Miss Kennett)). Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The Office Manager/class teacher notifies the Headteacher of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of Stelling Minnis CE Primary School to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence with a seven-day reply deadline before the absence is unauthorised
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes)
- Parents/carers are informed regularly throughout the year of children's attendance figures
- Statutory KCC/DFE attendance returns are completed.

For further information on roles and responsibilities, see appendix A.

### **4. Illness**

If your child is too ill to attend school, you should always call the school to let us know by 9:05am stating the reason. If you cannot get through on the line immediately, please continue to try.

The school reserves the right to seek evidence from health professional services of medical illness where the school has a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of an illness or persistent illness. Where the school has safeguarding concerns, the school will follow its Child Protection policy.

### **5. Authorised Absences from School**

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent/carer's explanation. These are some examples of situations the Headteacher might consider good reasons for your child to be out of school:

- Family bereavement
- Medical appointments
- Year 6 pupils visiting prospective secondary schools

The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

It is always the school’s decision whether or not to allow you to take your child out of school during term time. If you do not ask permission, or permission is not granted and you take your child out of school anyway, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. A holiday is not considered an exceptional circumstance.

Any requests must be sought from the Headteacher, preferably in writing, and ideally at least two weeks in advance. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors are not obliged to accept a parent’s explanation. Decisions on whether absence will be authorised will be based on each individual case, but all requests will be dealt with fairly and consistently.

## **6. Tracking**

Pupil attendance is regularly assessed by the Headteacher to monitor, identify and prevent pupils who are vulnerable becoming persistent absentees. Breakdowns of pupil attendance data are monitored by the Governing Body. Vulnerable pupils’ attendance is tracked in detail through regular pupil progress reviews. Pupils with a social worker are tracked through personal educational plans.

Registers will be recorded according to the Department for Education Attendance and Absence Codes and the school’s agreed operating procedures for coding and register management. The school will monitor absence rates regularly and report absence termly through the KCC statutory returns.

### *unauthorised absences*

- Support offered by the school is not successful or engaged in, the school will inform the Local Authority Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS) to investigate what is happening

The school will make a referral to the Local Authority Kent PRU Attendance Service (KPAS). If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority Attendance Officer for advice.

For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may initiate an Early Help Request for Support.

Where there are safeguarding concerns, the school may seek intensive support through statutory children's social care.

## **7. Unauthorised Absences**

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

## **8. Timeline of School Action for Poor Attendance**

Stelling Minnis CE Primary School has a duty to refer to the Local Authority any child of compulsory school age who is:

- continuously absent from school for 20 sessions (2 weeks) without explanation
- has irregular attendance
- persistently arriving late after registers have closed

Procedures for attendance are as follows:

When attendance is 95% – 100%, and there is no justifiable reason for absence, the Office Manager/Teaching staff will investigate and notify the Headteacher of any concerns for further monitoring.

When attendance is 90% – 94.9% attendance, and there is no justifiable reason for absence, the school will:

- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance
- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance
- The school may seek support and advice from the Local Authority Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS)
- The school will monitor the absence rate regularly for improvement

If the school feels that your child isn't attending properly because:

- Their attendance falls below 90% without justifiable reason
- They have persistent unauthorised absences
- Support offered by the school is not successful or engaged in, the school will inform the Local Authority Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS) to investigate what is happening

The school will make a referral to the Local Authority Kent PRU Attendance Service (KPAS). If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority Attendance Officer for advice.

For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may initiate an Early Help Request for Support.

Where there are safeguarding concerns, the school may seek intensive support through statutory children's social care.

### *Persistent Absence (PA)*

In accordance with DFE statutory guidance, your child may be deemed a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year. This means 19 or more days of absence or nearly 4 weeks over the whole year.

We monitor all absences thoroughly. 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/carers will be informed immediately.

In these circumstances we expect parents and carers to:

- Work with us and other agencies to help us understand your child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered which may include more formal support such as an attendance contract and/or a voluntary Early Help plan.

We will:

- Put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers, including working with other partners where necessary.
- Consider adaptations to the curriculum where accessing it presents challenges.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.
- Hold formal conversations with parents and be clear about possible future legal interventions where there is a lack of engagement.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care if we have safeguarding concerns.

### *Severe Absence (SA)*

In accordance with DFE statutory guidance, your child is considered to be a 'severe absentee' if they are absent for more than 50% of their current attendance. This would mean over 95 days of absence over the whole year or 19 weeks. Any pupil at this level may be deemed at serious risk of harm and may constitute neglect. In such cases, the school will always consider if a referral to social care is appropriate.

In these circumstances we expect parents/carers to:

- Work with us and other agencies to help us understand your child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered, including more formal support such as an attendance contract and/or a voluntary Early Help plan.

We will:

- Continue support as for persistently absent pupils.
- Fully consider barriers in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- Agree a joint approach with the local authority and consider a whole family plan, EHCP, or alternative form of education provision.
- Consider a full children's social care assessment and include attendance in any existing plans.
- Work jointly with the Local Authority in line with statutory guidance.

Legal Duties – Section 444 of the Education Act 1996

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents are guilty of an offence if they fail to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove the child was absent:

- with leave (permission granted by the school)
- due to sickness or unavoidable cause (relating to the child)
- for religious observance
- due to failure of the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

## **8. Being Late for School**

At Stelling Minnis CE School pupils should arrive by 9.00am. Pupils arriving after this time must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded (L).

The register will close at 9.15AM AND 1.30PM. Pupils arriving after the register has closed can be marked as late (Code U Unauthorised).

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents as part of overall attendance and could provide grounds for a penalty notice in cases of persistent lateness after registers close.

## **9. Children Missing in Education**

No child should be deleted from the school register without consultation between the Headteacher and the Local Authority Kent PRU and Attendance Service when appropriate.

A Child Missing Education referral will be completed in the following circumstances:

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate them

- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form has been requested by another school

## **10. Reports**

A pupil's attendance will be reported to parents throughout the year through parent consultation evenings and final reports at the end of the academic year.

## **11. Equality and Inclusion**

Whilst the school's policy will be applied fairly and consistently, the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance will be considered, along with the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Some groups of pupils are more vulnerable to poor attendance than others. Pupils with medical needs, SEN, disabilities, young carers, pupils with a social worker or in receipt of the pupil premium should receive targeted support and reasonable adjustments.

Where pupils have been absent for 10 consecutive school days with no contact, they will be classed as Children Missing Education (CME) and reported to the Local Authority.

## **12. Pupils with Medical Conditions, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

If a pupil with a diagnosed medical condition has a period of long-term absence, parents/carers should work alongside the Headteacher and SENDCo.

The class teacher will set and monitor work, maintain contact, and support reintegration into school.

Where appropriate, reintegration support may include:

- Meetings with staff and parents
- Personalised or part-time timetables
- Supported lessons and phased return
- Support with social reintegration

### *Part-Time Timetables*

In exceptional circumstances, a pupil's needs may require less than a full-time timetable allocation usually for a short period of time. A part-time timetable will only be in place for the shortest time necessary and will not be treated as a long-term solution. It will always be with a parent/carer's consent.

Part-time timetables will have regular review meetings. The risks and benefits of a reduced timetable will be fully considered.

There will be a full risk assessment for any pupil on a part-time timetable. If there are concerns that the risks outweigh the benefits to the pupil's wellbeing, or if there are serious safeguarding concerns that adjustments cannot address, the school will not proceed and the pupil will be expected to attend full-time.

Times agreed when the child is not required in school will be marked as authorised absence. However, failure to attend agreed sessions will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

### **13. Penalty Notices**

Any period of leave taken without the authorisation of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised. The school reserves the right to refer to the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

Under the Education Regulations 2024 regarding attendance, only two penalty notices can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year period. Any second notice is charged at a higher rate, and a third notice will trigger legal intervention.

#### Legal Interventions

At all times, the school will try to support parents/carers without the use of legal intervention. However, if parents/carers are not supporting good attendance, the school, via the Local Authority, may exercise its legal powers to address poor attendance for those with day-to-day responsibility for the child.

These interventions include:

- Attendance Contract – A voluntary formal written agreement between a parent and the school to support attendance. It provides support and an alternative to prosecution. Non-compliance may lead to further action including fines or prosecution.
- Education Supervision Order (ESO) – Used when an attendance contract fails. The Local Authority can request an ESO as an alternative to prosecution. Targets will be set and monitored by the Court. Failure to comply may result in a fine of up to £1000.
- Prosecution – This is a last resort and rests with the Local Authority. Parents/carers may be prosecuted under Section 443 or Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Fines can range from £1000 to £2500 and may include imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parenting Order – Issued following prosecution. Requires parents/carers to attend counselling or guidance sessions to improve attendance. Breach of the order can result in a fine of up to £1000.

#### Fixed Penalty Notices

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) are used for unauthorised absence and may be issued when there have been 10 sessions of absence within a ten-week period. This could include lateness, absence, or term-time holidays.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 allows these notices to be issued as an alternative to prosecution.

Penalty notices are issued by the Local Authority under the Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct (August 2024). The penalty is:

- £80 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days
- £160 per parent/carer per child if paid between 21 and 28 days

Failure to pay may lead to prosecution. A second notice is charged at a flat £160. Only two penalty notices can be issued within three years for the same child. A third notice will trigger legal intervention.

#### Legal Duties

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure children receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs.

Failure to ensure regular attendance is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

The school has a legal duty to publish absence figures and promote attendance. Parents/carers also have a duty to ensure their children attend regularly.

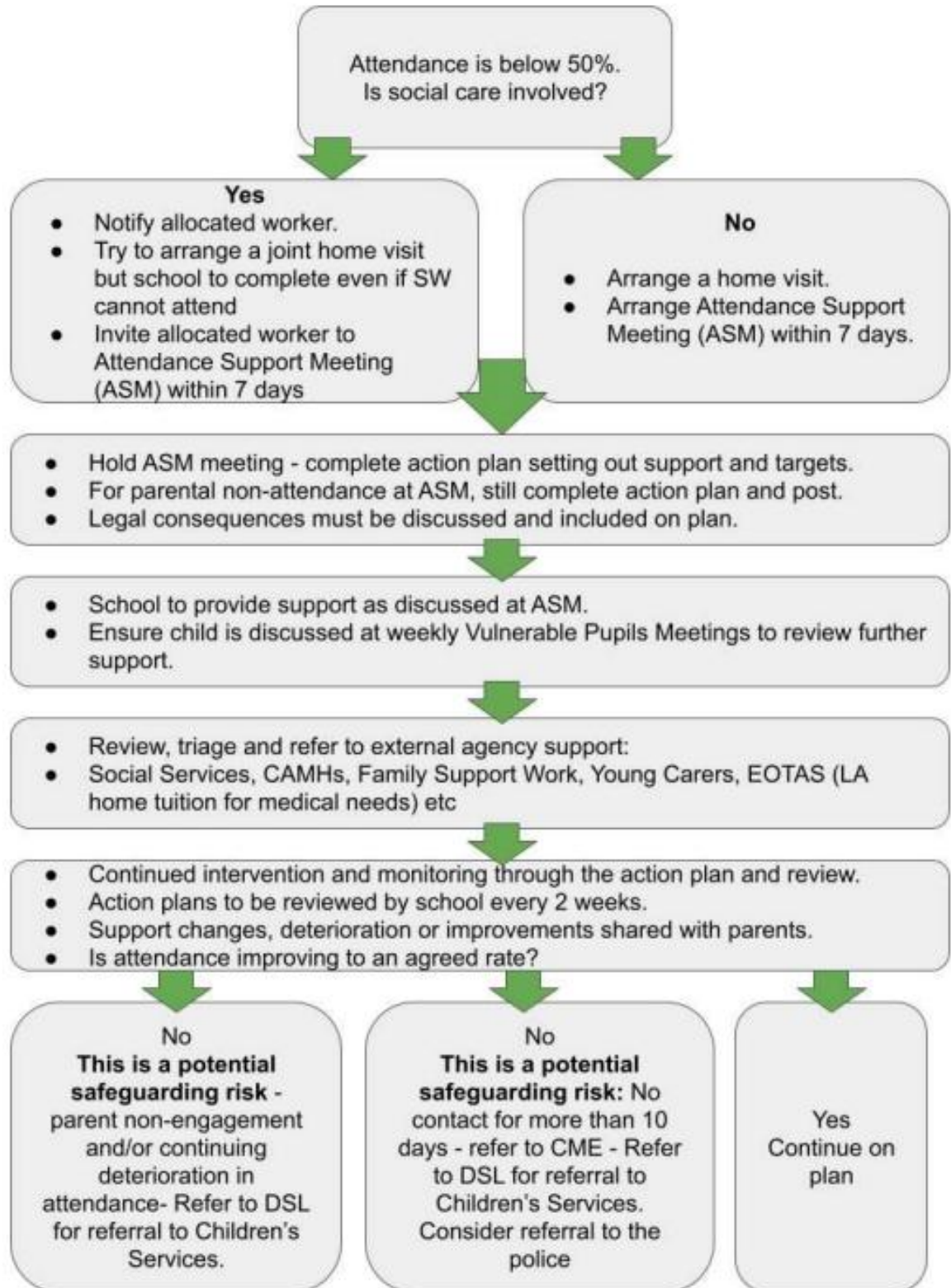
### **14. Monitoring the policy**

The Headteacher and the Governors will review this policy annually. The Headteacher will report attendance figures to the Governing Body at each meeting.

#### Links to other policies

- Behaviour policy
- SEND policy
- Child Protection policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Complaints policy
- Equality statement

Appendix A



## Appendix B

### Stage One Communication to Parents/ carers

#### **Re: Attendance Concern – Attendance Below 95%**

We are writing to inform you that your child's attendance has recently fallen below **95%**. Whilst this may seem a small difference, it is an early indication that attendance is beginning to decline and we would like to work with you to prevent this becoming a longer-term concern.

Regular attendance is essential for children to make good academic progress, develop friendships, build confidence and fully participate in all aspects of school life.

The Department for Education (DfE) advises that children should aim for 96% attendance or above. Children with attendance below this level are at greater risk of missing important learning opportunities and falling behind their peers.

We recognise that there may be genuine reasons for absences, and we want to work in partnership with you to support your child in maintaining good attendance.

We ask that you:

- Ensure your child attends school every day and arrives on time.
- Avoid booking holidays or non-urgent appointments during term time wherever possible.
- Notify the school on the first day of any unavoidable absence.
- Contact us if there are any circumstances affecting your child's attendance so that we can offer support.

We will continue to monitor your child's attendance closely over the coming weeks. Our aim is to work together to improve attendance and prevent it from falling further. Please be aware that if attendance continues to decline, we may need to arrange a meeting to discuss additional support and next steps.

If you are experiencing any difficulties that are affecting your child's attendance, please contact the school office so that we can discuss how we can best support your family.

## Appendix C

### Stage Two Communication to Parents/ Carers

#### **Re: Urgent Attendance Concern – Attendance Below 90%**

We are writing to inform you that your child's attendance has fallen below **90%**, which is a serious concern and requires immediate attention.

Regular attendance is essential for children to make good academic progress, develop friendships, build confidence and fully participate in all aspects of school life.

The Department for Education (DfE) states that children should aim for 96% attendance or above. Attendance below 90% means a child is classed as a persistent absentee, and this level of absence can have a significant impact on their education and wellbeing.

To put this into perspective:

- 96% attendance = approximately 7 days missed per year
- 90% attendance = approximately 19 days missed per year (almost 4 weeks of learning lost)
- 85% attendance = approximately 29 days missed per year (almost 6 weeks of learning lost)

We understand that there may be genuine reasons why attendance has been affected, and we are committed to working in partnership with you to identify and overcome any barriers your child may be experiencing.

We ask that you please:

- Ensure your child attends school every day and arrives on time.
- Avoid booking holidays or non-urgent appointments during term time.
- Notify the school on the first day of any unavoidable absence.
- Contact us if there are circumstances affecting your child's attendance so that we can offer support.

As your child's attendance is currently below 90%, we will be closely monitoring their attendance over the coming weeks. If attendance does not improve, we may need to arrange a formal meeting with you to discuss our concerns and agree an action plan.

Where appropriate, we may also involve the Local Authority Attendance Team or other relevant support services.

If you are experiencing any difficulties that are affecting your child's attendance, please contact the school office directly so that we can discuss how we can support your family.

Thank you for your cooperation and commitment to improving your child's attendance.

