



St Peter's C.E. Primary School

Attendance Policy

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Success Starts by Being at School

1.0. Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to set out clearly the Local Authority (LA) Policy in relation to school attendance by working in partnership working with schools, and on ensuring a whole-school approach to both promoting regular attendance and reducing persistent absence.

Throughout this document 'schools' refers to the responsibilities of the school and in particular to an identified person in the school who has delegated responsibility for managing school attendance and exploring all strategies for improving attendance and reducing persistent absence. This person could be the Senior Attendance Lead, the Nominated Attendance Person (NAP), the Headteacher or other designated member of staff.

Attendance at school is underpinned by a range of statutory requirements. Parents/Carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring those children of compulsory school age receive a suitable education, either by compulsory attendance at school or otherwise. (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996)

These requirements place duties on the LA, who are required, by law, to ensure parents fulfil their responsibility of ensuring that their child receives an education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. This LA duty is delegated to the Attendance Support Team (AST) who work with schools to ensure that all legal interventions relating to school attendance can be accessed.

This LA policy is to support and guide a *School Attendance Policy* which requires commitment from all staff employed within the school, together with governors, parents, pupils and the community in which the school is located to work together and take a shared responsibility for good school attendance for all their pupils

The Local Authority fully supports this commitment.

Section 2.0 - describes the role of the Nominated Attendance Person (NAP) in school and the support of the Attendance Support Team. It should be read in conjunction with the DfE guidance 'School Attendance — Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities — August 2020 (please be aware of 'Addendum- Recording Attendance in relation to COVID19') and 'School Behaviour & Attendance — parental responsibility measures' Jan 2017.

Sections 3.0 to 7.0 - cite examples of good practice that schools should consider implementing to improve attendance and raise standards.

Section 8.0 - reflects the LA's view of what a school attendance policy should include.

Sections 9.0 to 11.0 - give some ideas for good practice

1.1 The Importance of Regular School Attendance

The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is a prerequisite to a good education and securing it must therefore be a high priority for school, governors, LAS, parents and the pupils themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils diminish the value of the education provided for them; they may also damage the learning of others because fluctuations in the size of pupil group may restrict the scope for effective teaching.

Attendance is now increasingly regarded as a measure of the quality of the education offered by a school and the government has indicated that all schools should be aiming for a target of at least 95%. The Government threshold for Persistent Absence is set at an attendance rate of 90% (and below).

Schools should endeavour to encourage and promote good attendance in as many ways and for as many pupils as possible, but they will need to balance this with measures to address the needs of those children who do, for whatever reason, find it difficult to attend. A whole-school approach to attendance will focus primarily on promoting attendance but should also address the issue of truancy and condoned absence where it occurs. In addition, schools should ensure that pupils who fall into the 'persistent absentee' category should be closely monitored and appropriate support offered.

The whole-school approach to attendance relates to a wide range of other school issues including punctuality, rewards and incentives, re-integration of long-term absentees, curricular differentiation, home-school links, etc.

School Policies should include contingency plans for supporting pupils in unprecedented situations, e.g. the coronavirus pandemic and associated closure of schools. In circumstances such as those experienced during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the LA will work in partnership with the Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health England regarding any decisions at a local (and national) level affecting a geographical area, and will support schools and individual settings following the appropriate advice and guidance.

1.2 Legal Responsibilities

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:-

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Section 444 further states that: - "The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law. An offence is **NOT** committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence),
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause,
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/parents belong,
- the school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child's home and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the LA. 'Walking distance' is defined as two miles for pupils under eight and three miles for all other pupils. Telford & Wrekin Council have, however, chosen to define these distances as two miles for infant, junior and primary pupils and three miles for other pupils. Distances will be measured by shortest available walking route.
- A limited defence is available to the parents of travelling children (see appendix 3).

The Act also places a legal obligation on:-

- The LA to provide support to enforce regular school attendance with legal intervention relating to non attendance offences.
- Schools to register attendance and notify the Nominated Attendance Person within school of a child who is absent from school without authorisation for 10 or more days. The LA should be notified of any episodes of absence of 10 days or more under the 'Child Missing Education/Children Not Receiving Education (CME/CNRE)' protocol.
- The Headteacher and the governing body to ensure that two school registers are kept, one for attendance and one for admissions (under the Pupil Regulations Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)

2.0 Guidance for School in Developing a Framework for a Whole-School Attendance Policy

Telford & Wrekin Council recommend that every school should have a framework for a whole-school attendance policy. The policy should promote regular attendance, aim to reduce persistent absence and improve standards. This is an example for your consideration.

A Framework for a Whole-School Attendance Policy

The framework for a whole-school attendance policy is based on the 5 'P'S' - namely, Philosophy, Principles, Procedures, Performance & Practice.

2.1 Philosophy

St Peter's C.E. (Controlled) school is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that, if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance is crucial. As a school, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at the pupil resuming and consistent punctuality.

2.2 Principles

The school will:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive in-service training on registration regulations and associated education law,
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session,
- stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence,

- display attendance rates around the school and reward good and improved attendance of all pupils,
- promote positive staff attitudes and support to pupils returning after absence,
- consult with all members of the school community and the Attendance Support Team in developing and maintaining the whole-school attendance policy,
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior managers and the school governors,
- send newsletters each term to parents and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues, additionally update school website with any attendance related issues.
- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed.
- have in place procedures which allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of other class members, consider remote learning opportunities where necessary
- monitor and regularly review those pupils subject to a modified timetable, ensuring it is a short term intervention and have a clear plan for reintegration back into full time attendance at school.

2.3 Procedures

if no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence we will:

- follow 'St Peter's First day contact' procedures and contact the parent by telephone/text message, if there is no response by 11am we will do a 'safe and well' check at home. If there is still no answer, school will leave a letter through the letterbox requesting they contact school. Upon return to school, if there still no response consider each individual case and any information regarding the absence. Further action may be taken if there are any concerns. (eg consider a referral to 'Family Connect' if no contact can be made with the parent) Any actions taken should be recorded on CPOMS.
- Each day the child is not in follow the 'first day contact' procedures unless parents have called in.
- Each half term the attendance is reviewed and decisions made about a child's attendance. If attendance dips below 96% and, unless, it is for one block of illness, a 96% attendance letter will be sent home. This letter just informs parents that their child's attendance has dropped below the national expectation of 96%. If attendance drops below 90%, each case is looked at individually and a SAL1 letter, SAL1Late letter or a SAL2 letter will be sent to parents.
- where there are safeguarding or similar concerns regarding the pupil/family additional services should be contacted immediately if the school is unable to make contact with the family. (e.g social care, strengthening families)
- invite the parents into school for an 'Attendance Concern Meeting' (ACM) after a maximum of 10 days absence, unless other action is planned. This meeting should include a senior member of staff,

parent, pupil (if appropriate) and the NAP/EWO. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance.

- help the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks. In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence then a 'Reintegration Plan' can be implemented. The plan should include all members of the school staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupils needs as possible.
- Contact Family Connect 01952385385 for further guidance on available support. Notes, records of telephone calls, and medical certificates should be dated, named and initialled by the registration teacher/year tutor. These notes should be placed in the pupil's file on CPOMS.
- provide Early Help advice and support to the family, undertaking an Early Help Assessment if appropriate and make a referral to Strengthening Families if it is felt the family would benefit from additional support.

In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of the school staff will make attendance a priority and convey to the pupils the importance of their education.

2.4 Performance

It is important to set realistic targets for both attendance and persistent absence; these targets will be set during the Autumn term of each academic year, in consultation with the Governing Body. The Governing Body must approve the school target for attendance to be set for the following academic year and will be recorded in the governing body minutes. Ideally, the target should be sent to the Attendance Support Team by the end of the autumn term at the latest. In compiling an 'Action Plan', the school will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

When evaluating success the school will consider the impact of the work on school attendance by whether or not:

- Attendance has improved
- Persistent absence has reduced
- Punctuality has improved
- Parental response to absences has improved
- Re-integration plans, where implemented, have been successful
- There are specific key groups where a targeted approach is appropriate to raise attendance, e.g. children in receipt of pupil premium.

- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school] governing body and the local community
- Pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within school
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal and Social Education (PHSE) lessons, or as a theme for any other lessons

2.5 Practice

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- Regularly analysing attendance data and comparing it against both the local and national average, and considering the performance of key groups in comparison to the national data for that particular group.
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- Liaising closely with the school's NAP/EWQ if appropriate
- Recording (and retaining) carefully, all telephone messages/email or contact from parents
- A signed copy of any correspondence to parents is retained by the school
- A referral is made to AST (the Attendance Support Team) for intervention using the electronic ASTR form

3.0 Good Practice

The LA recommends that schools observe the following good practice:

3.1 Keeping the Registers

The status of the register

The register is a legal document which can be maintained in paper or electronic format. Registers, attendance and absence codes must be recorded accurately, and any paper copies must be marked in ink. The register, or content recorded within it, may be requested in a Court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute data to pupils' end-of-term reports, to records of achievement and to leavers references.

An accurate, timely and consistent registration system is crucial if poor attendance and punctuality within a school are to be addressed. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day.

Registration may be perceived as a task to be completed as quickly as possible. All staff involved with the registration process should be aware that the law is very specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping the register is of the utmost importance. The class teacher should not relegate it to the bottom of the list of priorities.

Every entry on the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date in which the entry was made, N.B every amendment to the admissions register and attendance register must include: the original entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

3.2 Marking the Register

(See also DFE guidance 'School Attendance- Guidance for maintained school, academies, independent schools and local authorities-August 2020 (plus the addendum to this guidance)and DFE guidance 'School attendance parental responsibility measures')

- a) **No pupil should be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is taken** or unless he or she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher.
- b) Spaces must not be left in the register,
- c) Registers should be closed at an agreed time each day. At St Peter's this will be 9:10am. AST have circulated LA guidance in line with DfE guidelines. These suggest that registers are closed 30 minutes after the start of the morning session:
- d) Where a pupil arrives late but the register is still open, the pupil should be marked as late 'L' — code 'L' but counted as present for that session.
- e) Where a pupil misses registration (arrives after registration has closed) absence must be marked as an unauthorised absence — 'U' code.
- f) Where a pupil misses registration but provides an adequate explanation, s/he should be recorded as late if arriving before the register closes, but coded as an authorised absence for the session e.g. M for dental or medical appointment if arriving after the register closes.
- g) Pupils must not mark the register under any circumstances.

- h) Attendance data from registers should be monitored as appropriate.
- i) The decision to authorise an absence should be made within a maximum of ten school days from the date of the absence. If no reason has been provided during this time the absence should be recorded as unauthorised.

3.3 Computerised Registration:

Schools use a variety of management Information systems (MIS) to record attendance. Using an MIS system will not, by itself, improve attendance. It does, however, provide an accessible, accurate and easy to use record of information relating to the individual pupil or whole school attendance in the form of data reports, these may include:

- a daily report of all absentees
- a register over any given time which codes all absences allowing the reader to quickly identify patterns and trends in authorised and unauthorised absences,
- an individual registration certificate which can be produced at any time in the school year and includes information on total percentage attendance and absence and punctuality,
- an absence-mapping facility which can be used to check a pupil's attendance against another pupil, or a group of pupils' attendance if there is a suspicion of multiple truancy,
- a record of attendance for each class over any given period of time which will provide a percentage attendance figure for each session and data which could identify patterns of absence for individuals as well as the whole class.
- Individual reports for vulnerable pupils.

A list of all pupils who are persistent absentees (90% or below)

The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason,
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken,
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

3.4 Removal from Roll

(See also DFE guidance 'School Attendance- Guidance for maintained school, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (August 2020) and 'Children Missing Education- Statutory Guidance for local authorities' September 2016 and Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Schools should inform their LA of any intended deletion from roll using the A/D 1 form. Pupils should only be removed from the school roll and class registers under the following circumstances:

- a) Where a parent informs the school that they are moving out of the area and give a new address and school where they intend to register the child. Following the date given for the re-location the school will contact the new school/LA to ascertain that the child is, in fact, living in the area and has been registered at a school. If confirmed, the headteacher can remove the pupil from school roll and registers, retrospectively from the date given for the move. If the pupils cannot be located in the area the parents has given the school should complete a CME/CNRE referral form and submit the form to the childrenmissingfromeducation@telford.gov.uk inbox
- b) Where a parent informs the school that they will be pursuing a place in another school in the area the parent should complete the online in-year transfer request section of their 'My Telford' account and the Admissions Team at Telford and Wrekin Council will process the application and inform both schools of the transfer. The Admissions Team who will inform the parent that a place is available to them at the new school. Once admission is confirmed at the new school the original school can remove the child from roll and submit an A/D1 form (with in 5 days).
- C) Where a parent informs the school that they wish their child's name be removed from the school roll as they intend to teach the child ***otherwise than at school***, the school must inform the LA by completing the 'Pupil Passport' and submitting it to the accessandinclusion@telford.gov.uk inbox. Once the child's name is removed from the school roll the LA Advisory Teacher for Elective Home Education will write to the parent and monitor the educational provision from that point.
- d) Where a pupil has been continuously absent for not less than 4 weeks and the school has made reasonable enquiries which have failed to locate the pupil. In such cases a school representative or, once a referral from the school has been received, an attendance & pupil tracking officer will make home visits and other enquiries to ascertain that the family are no longer living at their last known address. Removal of a pupil from the class register should only be undertaken when authorised by the Headteacher after these enquiries have taken place. **The school must notify the LA in all cases of a pupil being removed from the school roll where a family has moved and cannot be traced in line with DfE guidance 'Children Missing Education' — September 2016'. This information should be submitted via an A/D1 form. The school should also complete a CME/CNRE referral form and forward it to childrenmissingeducation@telford.gov.uk the Attendance & Pupil Tracking Officer will then ensure the pupil is tracked.** Schools may be contacted and asked to keep the pupil on roll whilst further investigations are made. Schools can liaise directly with the Attendance and Pupil tracking officer.

- e) Where a pupil is registered in accordance with a school attendance order and the LA substitutes another school.
- f) Where a pupil has been granted leave of absence e.g. for the purpose of a holiday but has failed to attend school within the twenty school days immediately following the expiry of the leave (except by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause). Reasonable enquires must by the school must be made in these circumstances to trace the pupil, prior to removal from the school roll. **The school must notify the LA in all cases of a pupil being removed from the school roll owing to non-return from leave of absence e.g. for a holiday.**
- g) Where a pupil is certified by the School Medical Officer as unlikely to be in a state of health to attend before ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
- h) Where the pupil has died.
- i) Where the pupil has been permanently excluded. The Pupil Discipline Committee must have met. 15 school days will then be allowed for a possible independent appeal panel hearing before the pupil is removed from the school roll.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 currently do not provide for a school to delete a pupil from the admission register where the pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age and has failed to meet the academic requirements for entry to their sixth-form.

Amendments to the 2006 Regulations will allow this, bringing the regulations into line with the new School Admissions Code 2014 which allows schools to set academic requirements for entry into sixth-form.

It is illegal to remove a pupil from a school roll simply because the pupil has a poor behaviour or poor attendance record.

3.5 Expected First Day of Attendance

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year.

If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

All schools must notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register by using the A/D 1 form and must provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil. This duty does not apply to pupils who are added to the admission

register at the start of the school's youngest year – for example pupils who are registered at a secondary school at the start of Year 7 - unless the local authority also requests for such information to be provided.

3.6 **Professional Development Days**

Where schools are proposing to take a PD day, it is good practice for Head teacher to agree these days with the support of the full governing body and to liaise with neighbouring schools. Parents should be given sufficient notice of training days and dates should be published on the school website, enabling parents to make the appropriate child care arrangements. The LA should be informed of all PD days when they are set.

4.0 **Analysis of Attendance Data**

Sampling attendance of specific dates and sessions may show up regular patterns of non-attendance and may reveal, for example, an association with certain subjects, teachers or teaching groups. Such analysis can also draw attention to the deterioration or improvement in the attendance of individual pupils. The analysis can help to target intervention more selectively and help to establish the cause of an absence. All schools can access detailed information from their MIS systems about attendance when this facility is used to its full capacity this information can be of great use in schools for strategic planning and can enable schools to manage attendance issues more effectively.

Whole-school attendance figures produced regularly, weekly, termly etc, based on year groups, can indicate factors such as:

- viruses or illnesses that have an impact on specific groups or the whole school e.g. chickenpox, norovirus, (advice should be sought from Public Health England if an outbreak of a virus is identified).
- the effect of seasonal attendance e.g. attendance may decline in the colder months and preceding school holidays.

Weekly figures may illustrate:

- the effect of staff absenteeism,
- the fall in attendance preceding teacher training days, half terms, study leave or work experience,
- the effect of ending terms on a Monday or Tuesday,
- the effect of activity days, day trips, or residential trips,
- the effect of the timing of the school day
- the effect of pupil holidays in term time.

Continuous analysis of individual pupil's attendance and of the whole school can give scope to strategic planning. By identifying those levels which the school considers are indicators of persistent absenteeism or irregular attendance, it will be possible to identify the extent of the problem.

The school can then target time provided by pastoral staff more effectively by producing: -

- individual attendance records which highlight reasons for absence and the pattern and rate of unauthorised absence,
- quickly obtain lists of all pupils with unexplained absence which can be fed back to the responsible member of staff,
- attendance data for vulnerable groups,
- the pastoral staff will then be able to identify those pupils who give cause for concern
- coded absence, broken down into a class and/or year group format, would allow identification of excessive unauthorised absences.

Schools should also be monitoring the attendance of key groups within the school. In doing so they should be identifying specific groups of pupils whereby a targeted approach may be necessary. These groups will vary according to the schools own pupil characteristic profile, but is likely to include pupil-premium pupils and non pupil-premium pupils, pupils who speak English as an additional language, and those who speak English as a First Language.

In aiming to improve achievement of pupils academically it is appropriate to identify underachieving groups and consider the attendance of these groups.

5.0 Types of Absence

5.1 Authorised Absences

Only a school can authorise an absence, Parents and the LA do not have the power to authorise absences.

The headteacher has ultimate responsibility for the registers.

The key points schools should consider when deciding to authorise absence are:

- it is a legal requirement that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually,
- a satisfactory explanation for every absence is required; if one is not forthcoming the absence should be treated as unauthorised,
- schools are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence where there is doubt as to the validity of that explanation,
- parents should be aware that only the Headteacher has the discretion to agree to any leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances. Each application

for leave of absence should be considered in view of the specific circumstances of the family. (N.B Applications for leave of absence during term time are discussed fully in Section 7.0),

- schools should always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the school is aware of family difficulties,
- minding the house, looking after siblings, shopping or going on a trip will not normally be acceptable reasons for absence,
- where absence is authorised, schools should remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance,
- lateness should be actively discouraged and persistent lateness treated in the same way as irregular attendance,
- schools should develop a close working relationship with the Attendance Support Team (AST) in order to promote regular school attendance and ensure access to all legal interventions where necessary.

5.2 Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absence is absence without approval from an authorised representative of the school and includes all unexplained absences.

If a child is absent with the approval of the school, for whatever reason, no offence is deemed to have been committed. Thus, the decision taken by the school to give, or withhold, authorisation for an absence, is a critical factor in determining the LA's decision to prosecute parents.

Schools need to exercise caution in the authorisation of absence. If they are suspicious of the explanation given by parents, the absence should be further investigated and left unauthorised until the matter has been clarified to the satisfaction of the school. The decision taken by the school to authorise absence or not, is of critical importance in determining the level of involvement of the Attendance Support Team. If the school has authorised a pupil's absence they have, in effect, given leave, **therefore there is no case in law for the parents to answer.**

5.3 Parentally Condoned Absences

Parentally condoned absence is, in many ways more difficult to identify than any other form of pupil absence. This form of absence is equally as damaging to the pupil's educational experience as any other form of absence. The parents, in many cases, perceive that they are keeping their child away from school for legitimate reasons; they may feel that they are protecting their children. It is essential that, when school staff feel that a worrying pattern of non-attendance is emerging, they work closely with the

educational, social and health support services to ensure that the most appropriate and effective intervention is available to the pupil and parents.

Parents of children from different cultures may feel that the school is not a safe, or proper, environment for their child. It is vital that schools investigate and endeavour to recognise cultural issues, which may prevent a pupil from attending school. There is a range of specialist support services, which will assist and advise schools and parents on ways forward when these difficulties arise.

5.4 **Factors which may Contribute to Condoned Absences**

- The parent may not value education, they may have had a negative experience of school themselves and condone their own child's poor attendance at school because of this belief..
- Separation anxiety: The parent and/or child may be frightened of separation from each other.
- The parent may be a victim of domestic violence.
- The child may be illegally contributing to the family income by working either within the home or outside.
- The child may be a victim of child exploitation and involved in gang culture.
- The child may be the only significant carer within the family.
- The parent or child may be experiencing physical or mental health issues.
- There may be social issues which parents may feel are of more importance than educational issues.
- Financial restraint, the parent may be unwilling or unable to provide lunch or appropriate clothing (uniform, shoes, coats).

5.5 **Lateness**

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parents/carers of a pupil who is persistently late after the register closes are guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if excessive late arrival unresolved.

Persistent lateness can be as damaging to a pupil's school career as persistent absence. Pupils who arrive late disrupt not only their own education but that of others and being persistently late may also lead to truancy. Poor punctuality may be an indicator of more complex problems within the pupil's home which the pupil may need help to deal with; chronic lateness may result in a pupil losing his/her attendance mark for the session and the absence will be noted as unauthorised. For some pupils, arriving punctually may be beyond their control. Often lateness is a symptom of another issue such as a disorganised parent and the

child is confused and often left to cope alone at a very young age or a parent where the management of firm boundaries are challenging.

There needs to be a careful balance struck between being too punitive and too accepting of a pupil's lateness. Once the reasons for lateness have been established, the parents, pupil and school need to work in partnership to resolve the difficulties. The dilemma for schools is that, if action is not seen to be taken against latecomers, other pupils may follow suit thereby exacerbating the problem.

Many schools operate a system which punishes a pupil who is late three times per term with an after-school detention; for many children this is enough of a deterrent. For pupils who are late for school because of their domestic or family situation other forms of intervention may be more effective. For those pupils who have to catch specific transport, arrangements could be made for detentions to take place during lunchtime. For younger children they have no control over the time they arrive at school and it is important to remember that the pupil may be arriving in school feeling distressed about the potential of being in trouble for something beyond their control

Working with the school community to develop incentive schemes to reward and encourage punctuality could be the focus of one such intervention.

Where a situation at home makes it difficult for the pupil to arrive on time consideration should be given to an appropriate referral to an outside agency or voluntary service. Schools should be considering an Early Help Assessment and providing early help and support to the family.

Where the pupil is late due to family circumstances, for example where a pupil is the main carer in the family, the school may wish to use more supportive interventions. The difficulty with these cases is that children are often reluctant to discuss their home circumstances because they may be afraid that it might get their parents into trouble.

Setting up a support group for persistent latecomers within the school, where pupils can talk about their difficulties, could be one approach; children are more likely to talk to someone whom they perceive has experienced, or is experiencing, similar problems.

6.0 Following up Absence

Every school should have effective and recognised procedures for identifying and following up absences. Schools should adopt first day absence procedures to contact parents but all pupil absence should be followed up as soon as possible. Any action taken and the responses received should always be recorded.

6.1 The Role of the Headteacher in Primary Schools

The Headteacher is responsible for the recording and monitoring of the registers and for following up absences; the task of managing attendance is often delegated to the pastoral lead and a Nominated

Attendance Person (NAP) identified to liaise with the LA. Consistency of practice is helped where there is effective liaison between the class teacher, NAP and the head teacher.

In both primary and secondary sectors the following is recommended:-

- when a child is absent without explanation the person responsible for attendance should contact the parent/carer **on the first morning of absence,**

N.B in cases where there is a concern for the vulnerability of the pupil additional measures should be utilised to ensure the reasons for absence are confirmed and the school should consider contacting any additional services who support the family e.g. social worker, strengthening families worker

- follow 'First day contact' procedures and contact the parent by telephone/text message, if there is no response by 11am we will do a 'safe and well' check at home. If there is still no answer, school will leave a letter through the letterbox requesting they contact school. Upon return to school, if there still no response consider each individual case and any information regarding the absence. Further action may be taken if there are any concerns. (eg consider a referral to 'Family Connect' if no contact can be made with the parent) Any actions taken should be recorded on CPOMS
- Each day the child is not in follow the 'first day contact' procedures unless parents have called in.
- Each half term (or earlier, if necessary) the attendance is reviewed and decisions made about a child's attendance. If attendance dips below 96% and, unless, it is for one block of illness, a 96% attendance letter will be sent home. This letter just informs parents that their child's attendance has dropped below the national expectation of 96%. If attendance drops below 90%, each case is looked at individually and a SAL1 letter, SAL1Late letter or a SAL2 letter will be sent to parents.
- invite the parents into school for an 'Attendance Concern Meeting' (ACM) after a maximum of 10 days absence, unless other action is planned. This meeting should include a senior member of staff, parent, pupil (if appropriate) and the NAP/EWO. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance.
- help the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks. In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence then a 'Reintegration Plan' can be

implemented. The plan should include all members of the school staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupils needs as possible.

- Contact Family Connect 01952385385 for further guidance on available support.
- notes, records of telephone calls, and medical certificates should be dated, named and initialled by the registration teacher/year tutor. These notes should be placed in the pupil's file on CPOMS,
- the Headteacher/Year tutor should contact the parent(s) where there are problems of lateness, either by telephone or by the standard letter. Persistent lateness can be as detrimental to a pupil's education as poor attendance,
- all contact with parents should be recorded in the pupil's school file on CPOMS.

7.0 Leave of Absence during Term Time

See also the LA 'Leave of absence during Term Time Policy' for more information.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulation 2006 previously allows Headteachers the discretion to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "exceptional circumstances."

Amendments to the 2006 Regulations remove references to 'family holiday' and 'extended leave' The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Any leave of absence during term time can be disruptive both to the child's learning and to the school whether for a family holiday or for any other reason. Schools will only consider leave in term time where both:

- the application is made on schools 'Request for leave in term time' form, to the Headteacher in advance of the leave by a parent/carer the child normally lives with. The legislation does not allow for retrospective permission to be granted
- there are exceptional circumstances, as agreed by the Headteacher for the leave and in such circumstances the Headteacher determines the length of any agreed leave in term time.

Applications should be made as far in advance of the leave as possible and parents/carers should seek permission for the leave from the school before they book any holidays. Headteachers will only agree absence in exceptional circumstances.

How do schools consider term time holiday requests?

While absence may be granted for leave during term time, it is entirely the Headteacher/school's decision and is not a parental right.

Penalty notices for unauthorised absence

Parents could be issued with a Penalty Notice if their child is absent from school without permission. In Telford & Wrekin, Holiday Penalty Notices (HPN) are issued by the Attendance Support Team to parents who take their children out of school for a minimum of ten consecutive sessions (5 school days) during term time without getting authorisation from the school. The penalty is £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 21 days, per parent, per child. If parent/carers fail to pay the penalty fine within 28 days they will be prosecuted under section 444 of the education Act 1996.

Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Schools should annually ensure that parents are aware of their policy on leave during term time, preferably in writing, e.g by a summary note in a newsletter, details should be published on the school website .

'Blanket approval" or 'Zero Tolerance' policies are not acceptable. The following factors should be considered when assessing requests - no one factor should be regarded as conclusive. School staff should investigate each request individually and consider:

- the time of year of proposed leave of absence
- the length and purpose of the leave of absence
- the duration of the leave of absence and its impact on continuity of learning
- the circumstances of the family and the wishes of parents
- the overall attendance pattern of the child

Schools should carefully explore with parents why leave of absence is necessary. Where absences are sanctioned, they should be counted as an authorised absence.

Where parents fail to abide by the agreement reached with the school and keep a child away from school in excess of the period agreed or, where parents fail to apply for permission, the extra time taken should be treated as an **unauthorised** absence.

Where schools are experiencing difficulties with leave of absence in term time, they may wish to:

- focus on the issue at parents' meetings
- issue a letter on the subject to parents
- contact the Attendance Support Team for advice and support

All requests for leave of absence should be in writing and the application should be made by a parent with day-to-day care of the child even if they are not actually going on holiday themselves. If the parent with whom the child lives does not give consent to the holiday, leave cannot be given lawfully by the school **except** by a Court order.

Extended Overseas Trips

When making judgements about extended absence for pupils in general, schools should ensure that full account has been taken, not only of the regulations and DfE guidelines, but also of the situation of black and ethnic minority families in general and the particular circumstances relating to each individual case. There is no automatic right to any parent to remove their child from school during term time. Schools should ensure that all parents are aware of the school's policy on absence. In the case of black and ethnic minority parents or where English is an additional language (EAL) special care should be taken to ensure that the regulations are fully explained and understood. Interpreters may be necessary. Where a number of parents are concerned, the school may wish to consider organising a special meeting for these parents taking into account their 'Leave in Term Time' policy.

Schools should take account of the following:-

- a visit involving family overseas has an entirely different significance from the normal associations with 'holiday' which is the category recognised by the DfE
- visits may be very important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up
- parents may feel that the planned visit outweighs the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school - maintaining family links may involve greater significance and greater pressure in some societies than it does in many western societies
- the reasons for parents making a visit may be similar to those for indigenous parents, e.g. family illness, bereavement, etc.

However, schools should explain to parents that:-

- leave in term time is disruptive and detrimental to a child's learning and attainment
- advanced permission must be requested and agreed
- the absence should be planned carefully with the school
- wherever possible, extended visits should be made during school holidays
- leave of absence during examination time should be avoided
- children who miss school for six weeks or more fall behind in their school work by a full term
- some children never catch up and will under-perform in their examinations

- their child's name may be removed from the register if he or she has not returned to school within twenty school days of the expected date of return

If absence is agreed, schools should consider:-

- the potential educational value of the visit
- the amount of school work missed and how parents and school can help their child catch up on his/her return to school
- preparing a study pack
- asking pupils to make notes/observations in relation to a current or forthcoming class topic
- going through any work that has been completed by the pupil on return to school
- sharing experience with other pupils - class teacher could ask child to bring into school postage stamps and other memorabilia from country visited.

8.0 The Role of the Attendance Support Team

The Attendance Support Team (AST) form part of the Telford & Wrekin Council's support services to schools and liaise where appropriate with school staff to help secure pupils' good attendance.

Legal action to enforce attendance can only be taken by the LA.

The AST provide a service to schools and support legal intervention to improve school attendance. AST will normally liaise with the appropriate Senior Leader or the Nominated Attendance Person (NAP). However, attendance is the responsibility of the whole school. **Schools should, therefore, consider the most effective ways of giving all staff access to advice and training delivered by AST to ensure an understanding of the LA's responsibilities.**

Education Welfare Officer (EWO) support available through a 'Traded - Service Level Agreement' that schools can benefit from and the service is provided by AST. Some schools employ their own EWO. In these circumstances the EWO's time-table is agreed with the school. It is advisable that schools should, therefore, have a clear policy on how and when a referral to the AST is made and both school and their EWO/NAP understand the procedures. In particular consideration should be given to:-

- the school's own procedures for dealing with absence should have been agreed in discussion with their EWO before a referral is made to the AST,
- legal action can only be taken on unauthorised absences.
- Good communication and partnership working with schools/EWOs and AST

9.0 Children Transferring into and from Schools in Telford & Wrekin and Other Local Authorities

The LA Admissions Team co-ordinate all school transfers and an 'in year' transfer application should be completed by the parent online, The parent will need to use the Telford & Wrekin website/admissions to complete an online application form. This can be found under 'Changing schools — how do I apply'.

The LA Admissions Team should be notified of all pupils transferring to schools outside Telford & Wrekin: using the A/D1 form. The LA will then liaise with the Authority in the area the child is transferring to. Schools should not remove a child from their roll until the deletion is agreed by the admissions team, The Attendance & Pupil Tracking Officers will track children that have not been admitted into an alternative school after four school weeks. Schools will need to complete Child Missing Education form and submit it to childrenmissingeducation@telford.gov.uk

Guidance is available in 'Protocol for Identifying and Maintaining Contact with Children Missing Education'.

These forms should not be completed for those pupils who are subject to whole cohort transfers during normal transition (Reception, between infant and junior school and primary to secondary school). Schools should not delay making a referral if they have a concern for the wellbeing of the child.

10.0 Good Practice — Measures to Encourage and Sustain Good Attendance

10.1 Generally

AST will liaise/support school with the following matters to seek to enhance the climate in which good attendance may flourish:-

- the school's commitment to achieving high levels of attendance should be explicit and clear to pupils, staff and parents,
- the school should try to ensure that the pupil's experience in classrooms is of a positive and enriching quality which will encourage him/her to take responsibility for and show commitment to, their own learning,
- some pupils fail to attend because they are unable to keep up with their peers in class and become discouraged. That may be an indication of a learning difficulty. As part of its policy on special education needs, each school should ensure that children's needs are identified and that action is taken to meet these needs.
- some pupils stay away from school because they are afraid of bullying or of behaviour in the playground which may frighten or alarm them. Schools should be alert to this possibility in investigating individual cases of poor attendance and, in reviewing policy on discipline, they should

keep in mind how the school's attitudes on this matter may influence attendance. Staff should be aware of areas and times in the school where bullying is more likely to occur.

- Analysis of attendance data and identification of specific groups or individuals who may require a bespoke targeted approach.

10.2 Rewards

Schools and AST can play an important role in encouraging attendance by providing rewards for good and improved attendance and punctuality, this applies for individuals and classes or groups or the whole school. Care should be taken to acknowledge individuals who are making an effort to attend but who nonetheless, and for acceptable reasons, may have poor attendance overall. Such rewards may include:-

- letters of congratulations, certificates for good attendance which may be taken home,
- recognition in assembly, maintaining a high profile for good attendance
- the award of badges, merit, group/house points
- the giving of prizes, class rewards such as mascots or a cup for the highest class or tutor group attendance,

10.3 Other Strategies which might be Considered

- Sending letters to parents of new pupils after the first possible 100 attendances with special praise both for those with 100% attendance and for those with no avoidable absences, and recognising & rewarding improved attendance where there is a history of poor attendance.
- recording attendance on reports sent home, with positive comments for effort,
- entering improvements on the school record of a poor attender,
- sending children to senior members of staff for commendation for efforts made towards improvement as well as for full attendance,
- facilitating Attendance Concern Meetings and Attendance Panels in schools to invite parents to attend for a discussion specifically about school attendance. This panel may include the community school nurse or a school governor,
- identifying children 'at risk' before they transfer to another class, group or school and devising ways of supporting such children,
- using older pupils as learning mentors to assist pupils plan and prepare their course work,
- including attendance targets in the induction programme for all new staff and in particular for newly qualified teachers,
- setting attainment targets in the induction programme for all new staff and in particular for newly qualified teachers,

- setting attainment targets for individuals or class or year groups.

Rewards for good attendance are likely to prove more effective than sanctions for non-attendance.

Nevertheless, there will be occasions when a pupil needs to be confronted and challenged on his/her poor attendance. **Schools should consider how this is to be done and what action should be taken to ensure consistent practice among staff. The support of parents should be sought where practicable.** Care should be taken that children who may be struggling to attend regularly and punctually in the face of adverse home circumstances are not unintentionally discouraged by the use of sanctions.

10.4 Reintegration of Long-Term Absentees

A number of pupils miss long periods of school through sickness, exclusion, school refusal, etc. and may feel especially vulnerable when they do eventually return. It is vital to make the transition back to full-time school as smooth as possible.

Ideally, the return of the long-term absentee needs to be carefully planned but this may not always be possible.

To ease the return of the long-term absentee, schools may need to consider an Action Plan, i.e.

- nominate a key person to co-ordinate, monitor and review the child's return, a favourite teacher may be the ideal person,
- ensure that all staff are aware of, and alert to, the situation;
- consider the possible need for a phased or gradual return,
- consider the timetable and determine what is immediately possible and manageable for the child.
- involve parent/pupil with planning & what support is appropriate
- follow the modified timetable protocol with a structured time line and obtain parents agreement and signature

10.5 Effective Primary-Secondary School Liaison

This will involve:-

- clearly identified staff responsible for maintaining links with associate primary schools,
- a clearly defined and regularly reviewed strategy to facilitate secondary transfer,
- systems to monitor and review the progress of all Year 7 pupils
- structured visits from primary schools in the summer terms and follow up meetings with primary staff,
- measures to ensure curricular continuity (purposeful liaison between Year 6 and Year 7 teachers),
- effective liaison with the member of staff attached to associate primary schools,
- a referral to AST following school procedures,

- special induction programmes for those Year 7 pupils who come from primary schools other than the school's usual primary schools (this may often be a small number of pupils - precisely those who may find secondary transfer a lonely and difficult time),
- getting the whole school involved in taking responsibility for assisting new pupils
- involve the parents from the very beginning.

10.6 Some Suggestions :-

- ask previous Year 7 pupils what, if anything, they found difficult,
- 'pair' vulnerable pupils with a responsible pupil,
- • initiate a mentor scheme,
- use homework diaries to assist organisation skills,
- send associate primary schools details of the syllabus/curriculum which Year 7 pupils will have to follow,
- try and meet all parents of Year 7 pupils,
- establish who may need additional support at transition days
- communicate with pastoral staff from previous school

Primary schools have a vital role to play in preparing children for life in secondary school. The earlier any attendance difficulties are identified, the sooner support can be offered.

10.7 Children in Care/Looked After Children

There has been growing concern nationally about the attendance and educational achievements of children and young people looked-after by Local Authorities. Children and young people may be looked-after by the local authority for a variety of reasons. Most children are looked-after under voluntary arrangements. A minority are subject to care orders.

Many of the children in care will have been affected by distressing and damaging experiences. They may be living away from home because of family breakdown, abuse or neglect, or social need. Nearly all will have to cope with some sense of loss of family, siblings, and friends, of identity or familiar surroundings. Some will carry guilt feelings and other hidden injuries and many will have very low self-esteem. All or any of these factors will affect the way these children act. Many children will also be behind in their education; it is important, therefore, -that these disadvantages are not compounded and that early entry into local schools is facilitated.

Schools are of course responsible for a large number of pupils and some children in care may display a range of behavioural and discipline problems. However, a good, consistent and caring education can help many children recover from the adversities that have beset them.

10.8 Starting School/Changing School

Starting school or a change of school can be difficult for a child - whether it involves the move from nursery to infants, from infants to junior or primary to secondary. Primary and secondary schools can assist by identifying pupils who may appear likely to experience attendance and other difficulties at their school and sharing such information when appropriate. 'Transition days' and opportunities to familiarise themselves with new surroundings are beneficial for pupils prior to their transfer.

10.9 Infant & Primary Schools — Attendance initiatives

Strategies & initiatives to promote punctuality and attendance are important. An example of one such strategy is the 'Early Bird' scheme.

How the scheme works: -

All pupils and parents are informed that the school will be running an Early Bird Week.

Early Bird certificates are issued to all children at the beginning of the first week of a new term. A sticker is awarded for every day the pupil arrives on time. An assembly is held at the end of each week and a certificate awarded to each child who achieves five stickers.

Pupils told parents how important it was that they were on time for school and parents learned, sometimes for the first time, the need for their children to be punctual. All pupils wanted to be "Early Birds".

Information on the punctuality of each child involved in the scheme continued to be gathered for a further five weeks. The results showed a significant improvement in punctuality. When punctuality deteriorated, the scheme was run again.

The scheme can be adapted to each school; each school could invent an "Early" animal and produce a logo. Stickers can be produced cheaply and quickly.

Spotlight on Attendance Campaign: this scheme is to focus on a target group where there is room for improvement in attendance. Examples are: if school wish to target a whole class, a Year group, pupils who do not reach an agreed overall attendance %

(For more information about utilising this campaign please contact AST)

11.0 The AST Guidance for Referrals and Legal Intervention for Schools (Free training on this guidance and the accompanying manual is available to all schools)

Introduction to AST intervention

The Attendance Support Team exists to help parents and the LA meet the obligations and duties placed upon them by successive Education Acts and Child Care legislation.

AST aims to enable all children to gain maximum benefit from their education, regardless of race, gender, ability, status, culture and religion by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

In the changing world of Education these procedures explain the role and function of the AST in relation to schools, families, children and other agencies. It also provides a framework whereby schools and the AST can negotiate the degree of support appropriate to individual requirements.

Telford & Wrekin Council is committed to maintaining consistently high levels of pupil attendance at school and recognise that improving attendance is a crucial factor in maintaining standards of pupil performance and achievement, and in ensuring equality of educational opportunity for all pupils.

The Attendance Support Team and the School

irregular attendance raises complex issues. Poor at attendance does not exist as an issue of isolation. It is symptomatic of another concern which needs to be identified and addressed. Pupils may be failing to attend school regularly for a variety of reasons. Some reasons may be outside the immediate control of the school, but good practice and appropriate responses within the school to identify needs can help to improve attendance.

It is, therefore, important that there are clearly defined criteria and procedures for referring pupils with attendance concerns to the AST. The importance of early identification, assessment and intervention cannot be over emphasised.

Referrals

Who is responsible for making a referral to the AST?

Regular time-tabled sessions to discuss school attendance with pastoral staff in secondary schools should be arranged and referrals made to AST only after the school has tried and failed to engage the parent to address attendance problems and initiated a series of letters as guided.

Schools should discuss requests for Penalty Notices directly with AST. As much information as possible should be included by the referrer e.g. family circumstances, involvement with other agencies, known health problems.

Some triggering factors could be:-

- pupil is developing a lateness problem
- erratic attendance i.e. broken weeks over a period of time
- poor communication with parent
- no response to 1st day contact procedures or school texts/telephone calls requesting the reason for absence
- family trauma - pupil distressed, mood swings, sudden changes in character
- suspected illegal child employment
- material needs

- concern over the care and control, health or general well-being of a child at home or in the community
- any welfare concerns about the pupil

What action should the school have taken before a referral is made?

It is important that all absence is monitored, and action taken by school staff before serious cases are referred to the AST. (Please refer to the guidance manual). Therefore, before a referral is made the school will have applied all school resources without success e.g.:-

- on first day of absence contact should be made to alert parent/s that pupil is not in school
- SAL 1, 2, or 3 letter should have been sent to parent(s) by school
- pupils will have been interviewed at school to obtain the child's perception of any difficulties, i.e. bullying, curriculum difficulties etc.
- a member of staff will have already tried to contact parent(s) to discuss attendance difficulties
- Ideally, Parents/Carers will have been invited to an Attendance Concern Meeting
- Home visits have been undertaken by the EWO or a member of school staff.

What happens next?

The AST will consider all the circumstances of the referral and may seek further information from school staff (e.g. Social Care, Early Help Support) before issuing warning or penalty notices to the parents. An AST referral form should be completed by the school and sent to attendancesupportteam@telford.gov.uk

What if all attempts to contact the parents or guardians fail?

Appropriate warning or penalty notices will be issued by the Attendance Support Team and this could eventually lead to legal action being taken against the parent.

In complex cases schools may need to consider a referral to support networks. School staff may need to complete appropriate referrals/assessments to access additional support and arrange meetings to discuss support further. In some cases, this may involve working with parents to help them to see the school's view and vice versa. Where ill health is a factor, the school will seek to confirm the medical problems identified by the child/parent (particularly if there have been several referrals and the explanation has been ill health). If it is felt that the parent(s) have not sought appropriate medical help but are merely making excuses, parent(s) will be advised to obtain medical evidence for all future absences from their doctor.

Where learning needs or problems of school refusal/phobia have been raised, the school may need to consult with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to consider a referral to the Learning Support Advisory Teacher, or Educational Psychologist.

The school may have discussed with the family and child a referral to BeeU or Social Care, if appropriate.

Where there is already social work involvement the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for the school will have liaised with the social worker in order to determine separate areas of responsibility and to consider the possibility of a joint visit if appropriate.

The Nominated Attendance Person should liaise with school staff and school EWO and draw up a plan of action to address any issues raised by the child or family regarding difficulties that might mitigate against regular attendance at school. These may include; bullying curriculum problems, teacher/pupil relationships, domestic problems, financial hardship, drug/alcohol abuse etc.

What happens when all avenues have been explored, and the child still does not attend school regularly?

Provided absences are unauthorised, a Warning Notice (AST 1) will be issued, and attendance monitored for a minimum of 15 school days between each intervention. If there is no improvement in attendance a Final Warning Notice (AST 2 or 2A) will be served on the parents.

If no significant improvement in attendance is noted within a minimum of 15 school days of the serving of this warning AST will invite the parent to an Interview Under Caution (IUC) also known as a PACE interview (under Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984).

AST will liaise with school staff in the preparation of any interview and invite the parent to attend. The process will be to present evidence of unauthorised absence to the parent with a view to legal action being taken.

Following the IUC, the case will be sent to the LA Legal team and a decision made whether Court proceedings will be initiated under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act.

The LAs Policy for Prosecution is as follows:-

The parent(s) of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to achieve regular attendance will be considered for Court proceedings unless there are extenuating circumstances. All referrals will be considered and discussion between AST and school staff encouraged.

All parents must be given sufficient notification of their children's attendance via the serving of official warning notices.

After communication with the LA legal team, if it is decided to initiate legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court, the AST officers will work with the school staff to produce the necessary witness statement and appropriate supporting evidence.

Who is responsible for instigating Court procedures?

The LA is responsible for all aspects of the procedure. In Telford & Wrekin this duty is delegated to the Attendance Support Team. A summons will be issued and served in accordance with the requirements of the respective Magistrates Clerks and a representative from the AST will attend court and present the prosecution case on behalf of the Local Authority. In certain circumstances legal services will ensure a

Council Solicitor is made available to present cases on behalf of the Local Authority, e.g. not guilty pleas and contested cases.

A certificate signed by the Headteacher confirming the contents of the child's school attendance register during the period of prosecution referred to in the summons will be required as documentary evidence by the court.

N.B. Only unauthorised absences can be used in evidence

If parents are acting responsibly, but cannot ensure regular attendance of their child/children because of the attitude of the child/children, what can be done?

If it is inappropriate for parents in these situations to be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court, consideration will be given to applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO).

What is an ESO?

An ESO is an Order made by the Family Proceedings Court under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989. The initial Order is for one year but application can be made to extend the Order yearly up to a period of three years. The court must be satisfied that a child of compulsory school age is not being properly educated and that the making of the Order would be better for the child than making no Order at all. In addition the Court shall have regard in particular to:-

- the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned (considered in the light of the child's age and understanding)
- the child's physical, emotional and educational needs
- the likely effect on the child of any changes in circumstances
- the child's age, sex, background and any characteristics that the Court considers relevant
- any harm the child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering
- the capability of each parent in meeting the child's needs together with any other person whom the Court considers appropriate
- the range of powers available to the Court under this Act in the proceedings in question

More information on ESOs is contained in the manual:

'Attendance Support Team Guidance for referrals & Legal interventions'

Under the terms of the Order, the Supervising Officer must "**advise, assist and befriend**" the child and family, whilst the child and family must abide by the "**directions**" that the court lays down and any other reasonable directions of the Supervising Officer. Failure by the parent to follow these directions would mean returning to court when a fine of up to £2,500 could be imposed. In addition, the parent may be imprisoned for up to 3 months. Failure by the child to follow these directions would lead to the statutory involvement of Social Care.

There may be some situations in which an ESO is unlikely to be effective. Where, for example, parents would be hostile to such intervention; it may not be possible to undertake the structured programme of work that is necessary. At all times, the supervising officer will need to operate within a structure that defines clear aims and objectives, This will require a planned and realistic programme of intervention, including directions where necessary, which will specify how the aims and objectives are to be achieved. The active involvement of parents, children and schools will aid success.

Education Supervision Orders, as the name implies, require a great deal of time spent with the pupil supervising them and encouraging them to change patterns of behaviour. They have a limited effectiveness, as many of the strategies that could be applied will have already been tried to no avail.

What other legal sanctions are available?

Unauthorised Absence Penalty Notices

If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent/carer is guilty of an offence under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Schools can request a Penalty Notice Warning when a pupil has accumulated 20 unauthorised sessions within a school term by completing AST Referral Form and sending it to

attendancesupportteam@telford.gov.uk

The AST will issue the warning which notifies parents of a monitoring period of 15 school days. During this period if the pupil has any unauthorised absence a Penalty Notice may be issued.

At the end of the monitoring period AST will request from school an updated attendance record and the reasons given for any absence in the period. Following this AST will issue appropriate penalty notices.

Only one of this type of Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence can be issued per child per academic year. The amounts stated on the Penalty Notices are £60 for those who pay within 21 days and £120 for those who pay within 22-28 days, per parent, per child.

Exclusion Penalty Notices

For a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school and is excluded from that school either for a fixed period or permanently, his/her parent/carer is guilty of an offence **under Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006** if that child is present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion.

The AST Referral form should be sent to request an Exclusion Penalty Notice or Warning.

Holiday Penalty Notice

Schools can request a Holiday Penalty Notice when a pupil has had leave of absence during term time and accumulated 10 consecutive unauthorised sessions (5 days) during term time, not agreed by the school. Schools should complete the AST Referral Form and send it to attendancesupportteam@telford.gov.uk. If appropriate evidence is provided AST will issue a Penalty Notice. N.B. No warning will be issued if a Holiday Penalty Notice is requested by schools and agreed by AST.

Parenting Orders

The 1998 Crime & Disorder Act allows courts to make a Parenting Order for cases of non school attendance brought under sections 443 & 444 of the Education Act 1996. The aim of the order is to increase parenting support and to encourage parent/s to develop better parenting skills,

A Parenting Order can consist of two elements:

- a requirement on the parents or guardian to attend counselling or guidance sessions; these can last up to three months and
- a requirement encouraging the parent or guardian to exercise a measure of control over the child (e.g. that the parent ensures that the child attends school regularly) These Orders can last up to twelve months.

An application can be made for a **School Attendance Order** (Education Act 1996).

This is only for use where parents have failed to register their child at a school or where the LA takes the view that the education being provided "otherwise" is not satisfactory. There is a set procedure for requiring parents to nominate a school to be named in the Order. Most situations are resolved without needing to issue the Order but, once served, it is an offence to ignore it. This power is not therefore, of significance where the child is registered but not attending.

12.0 Child Employment/Children in Entertainment

All children who are employed part-time should have a work permit issued by the LA. **It is illegal to employ a child under school leaving age in any "trade or occupation carried out for profit" without such a permit.** LA's can prohibit the part time employment of a particular child if it takes the view that the work is interfering with his/her education or considers the child is medically unfit. Any work-related injury, which is given as a reason for absence or any child believed to be working in school time or otherwise illegally, should always be reported to the LA for further investigation. Children must not be given leave of absence for shows, film work etc. without a performance licence.

We would ask that schools notify the AST know if they are aware of children who are working or appearing in entertainment so that the necessary checks can be made.

With the introduction of bylaws in January 1999 some forms of employment are prohibited, namely:-

- a) in a cinema, theatre, discotheque, dance hall or nightclub except in connection with a performance given entirely by children

- b) to sell or deliver alcohol
- c) to deliver milk
- d) to deliver fuel oils
- e) to work in a commercial kitchen
- f) to collect or sort refuse
- g) in any work which is more than 3 metres above the ground or in the case of internal work, more than 3 metres above floor level
- h) in employment involving harmful exposure to physical, biological or chemical agents
- i) to collect money or sell or canvass door to door, except under the supervision of an adult
- j) work involving exposure to adult material
- k) in telephone sales
- i) in any slaughterhouse or that part of any butcher's shop or other premises connected with the killing of livestock, butchery or the preparation of carcasses or meat for sale
- m) as an attendant or assistant in a fairground or amusement arcade or in any other premises used for the purpose of public amusement, by means of automatic machines, games of chance or skill or similar devices
- n) in the personal care of residents of any residential care home or nursing home unless under the supervision of a responsible adult

A child MUST be 13 years old to have a part-time job.

No child/young person is permitted to work before 7.00am or after 7.00pm.

N.B

For 'In Year' school transfers please refer to:

Telford & Wrekin website/admissions to complete an online application form. This can be found under 'Changing schools – how do I apply'.

For any other enquiry regarding school attendance please contact the Attendance Support Team on (01952) (3)85220 or email attendancesupportteam@telford.gov.uk

13.0 Appendices attached below:

- 1) Absence & Attendance codes: Guidance on use of Registration Codes**

2) Guidance notes for parents for requesting leave in term time

2). Request for Leave during term time sample form

3). Leave in term time refusal: good example letter (leave requested)

4). Leave in term time refusal: good example letter (Leave not requested)

Appendix 1:

Absence and Attendance Codes

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

Present at School

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Present in school during registration.

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in

place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question

Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

Code W: Work experience

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

Authorised Absence from School

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E.

Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed

period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

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

Code S: Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Legal action for non-school attendance can only be considered in relation to unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Administrative Codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code X: temporary use in relation to COVID-19

In addition to using the X code to record children who are not compulsory school age, the DfE have temporarily utilised the X code for schools to use during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was used during lockdown but the DfE have directed that schools continue to use the X code from September 2020 to record absence due to covid-19. Schools should follow the guidance published in 'Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus during the 2020-21 academic year.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: Pupil not on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

Appendix 2

Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time

1. Parents wishing the school to consider granting leave in term time should read these notes carefully and then complete and send to the Headteacher the request form below. This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered **before** the desired period of absence. (Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any planned absence before receiving the school's decision regarding their request). In any event the request form must be received by the school at least four weeks before the leave in term time requested dates to allow sufficient time for appropriate consideration.
2. The granting of leave of absence in term time is, by law, a matter for consideration and decision by the Headteacher. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time. The Department for Education (DfE) and Telford & Wrekin Local Authority (LA) policy is that leave should not be taken in school term time. Where such requests are made, for the leave to be granted, the Headteacher should decide if there are **exceptional circumstances**.
3. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave in term time the demands of the National and wider School Curriculum especially at the Key Stage assessment stage. In considering a request, the school may also take account of: -
 - the **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request;
 - the age of the child;
 - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements;
 - the overall attendance pattern of the child;
 - the nature of the visit.
 - students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will **not** normally be granted leave of absence
 - whether the same visit could be taken during the 13 weeks school is closed to pupils?
4. Where parents have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The Headteacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. It is possible that because of these factors different decisions may be made. It is hoped that if this situation arises parents will be persuaded to accept the reasons for refusal given and, thereby, withdraw any other requests.
5. Where requests for a grant of leave in term time are received from only one parent the response letter – agreeing or refusing – will be either addressed to both/all parents where they live at the same address or to each where they do not. This is to ensure, particularly in the case of a refusal, that both or all parents are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring a refusal as the refusal letter clearly states that each parent may receive a penalty notice.

6. Should the school decide to grant the leave but, the child **does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave in term time period) and, no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence or, make known the whereabouts of the child, **his/her place at the school could be lost.**
7. Should the School decide **not to grant the leave** and parents still take their child out of school the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per child. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings, which could ultimately result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or imprisonment of up to three months.

Date.....

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

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

(full name)

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

My child will be accompanied during the leave by:

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

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

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

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

.....

.....

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

Current address.....

Mobile No:.....

Name of 2nd Parent/Carer(s) Signed

Current address.....

Mobile No:.....

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

For Office Use Only

Date request for leave in term time received by school

Current Attendance.....%

Last Year's Attendance.....%

Number of school sessions previously taken as leave in term time

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

What action are other schools taking?

.....

Leave in term time Agreed/Not Agreed

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

Signed Job Title.....

Print Name Date

Notification of decision: Date letter sent to parent
.....

Any notes:

Appendix 4

Leave in Term Time Refusal – Good Example Letter

Date

(Parents name and address)

Dear (Parents name)

(Childs Name and Date of Birth)

Thank you for your letter/form dated (date) requesting permission for (pupil's name) to be absent from school for (number of days), (dates).

As you may be aware the government has renewed appeals to parents not to take their children out of school during term time. The Governors of the school support this and have decided that students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances. Having looked at your application, although understanding of your reasons, I do not feel that your request can be supported in this instance because

.....

Therefore, if the absence occurs the dates will be unauthorised.

As a school we are asked to inform you that, in line with Telford and Wrekin Council Policy, unauthorised absence may be subject to a penalty notice fine of £60 payable per parent, per child, increasing to £120 each if not paid within 21 days. If this fine is not paid within 28 days this may lead to court proceedings which could ultimately result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to three months imprisonment.

Our key priority is to ensure that (pupil's name) is as successful as possible and is able to achieve (his/her) full potential. I would hope that, upon reflection you are able to support this decision in line with the Local Authority and Government policy that holidays should be restricted to the 13 weeks school holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

I have attached a copy of (pupil's name) attendance for this academic year.

The Head Teacher has been fully consulted in relation to this holiday request and fully supports the decision made.

Thank you for your understanding; I hope this letter explains the decision that has been made.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

(Job Title)

Appendix 5

School letter sample when leave in term time has not been requested

(Both) Parents name and address

Date:

Dear (both parents names)

Re: (Child's name & date of birth)

Thank you for advising us you were on holiday with (pupil's name) and he would be absent until the ??/??/?? or School are aware that you have taken (pupil's name) on holiday and no request for the leave during term time was made.

As you may be aware the government has renewed appeals to parents not to take their children out of school during term time. The Governors of the school support this and have decided that students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances. On this occasion, as school have not received a request for absence, the associated legislation does not allow for retrospective permission to be granted, therefore, the absence during (the dates) will be unauthorised.

As a school we are asked to inform you that, in line with Telford and Wrekin Council Policy, unauthorised absence may be subject to a penalty notice fine of £60 payable per parent, per child, increasing to £120 each if not paid within 21 days. If this fine is not paid within 28 days this may lead to court proceedings which could ultimately result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to three months imprisonment.

Our key priority is to ensure that (pupil's name) is as successful as possible and is able to achieve his/her full potential. I would hope that upon reflection you are able to support this decision in line with the local authority and government policy that leave should be restricted to the 13 weeks school holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

I have attached a copy of (pupil's name) attendance for this academic year.

Thank you for your understanding; I hope this letter explains the decision that has been made.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

(Job title)