Linchfield Community Primary School

Attendance and Absence Policy
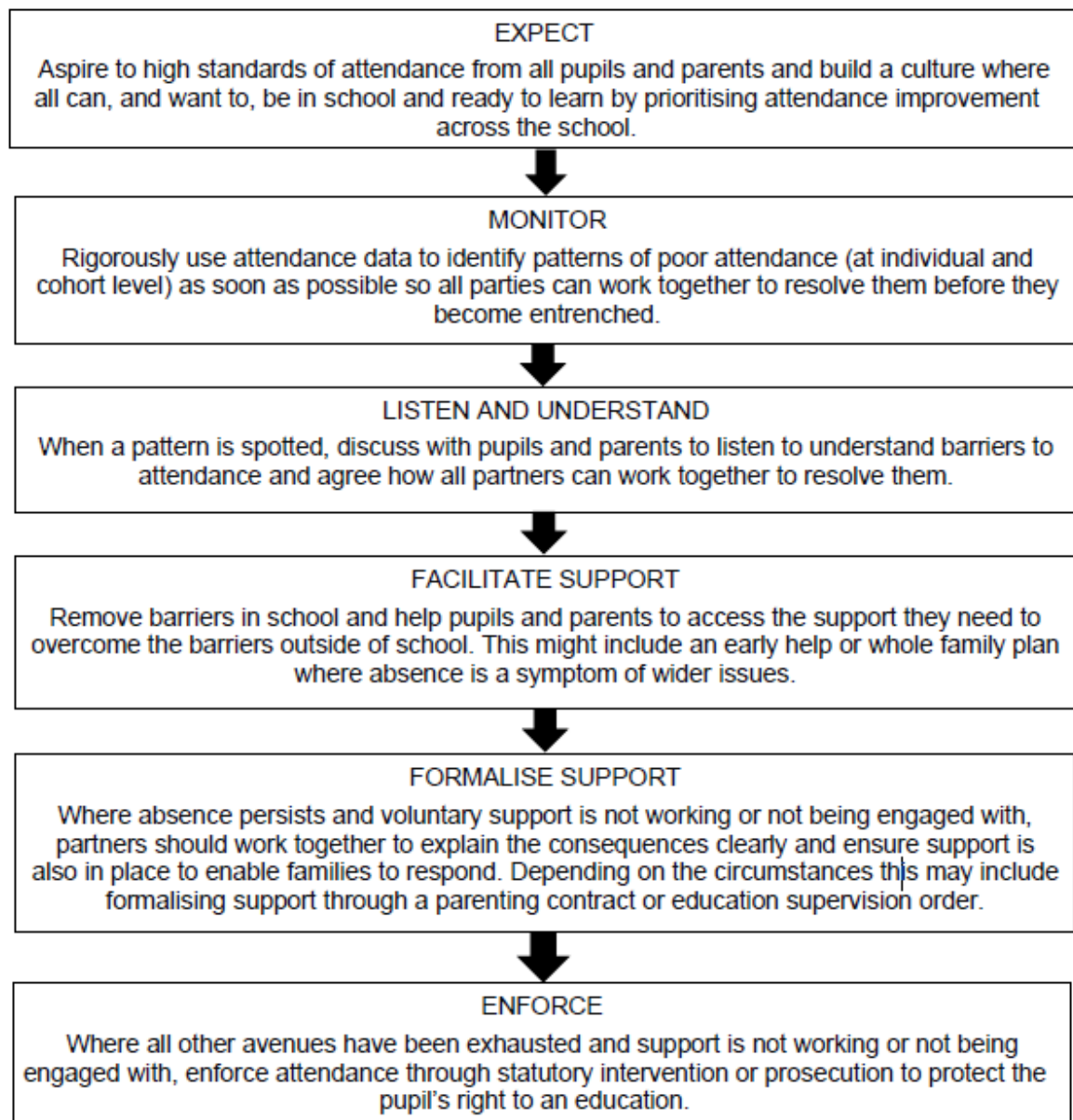
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1. Statement of intent

Linchfield Community Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.

2. Working Together To Improve Attendance

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

⬇

MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

⬇

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

⬇

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

⬇

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

⬇

ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

3. Legal framework

This policy utilises the Department of Education's **Working together to improve school attendance** document published in May 2022.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance

This policy also has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2021) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2021) 'Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Attendance Officer Home Visit Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

4. Roles and responsibilities

The Local Schools Board (LSB) has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The attendance champions at our school are Mr Reeve and Mrs Pilsworth

The headteacher and the attendance champions are responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The attendance officer is responsible for informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Are being educated from home.
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.
- Have been permanently excluded.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.

5. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave

- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children, or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time, which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Persistent absence:

- Missing 10%-20% of schooling across the year for any reason is regarded as persistently absent.
- 91%-94% attendance indicates at risk of persistent absence.

Severe absence:

- Attendance falling below 50% is regarded as severe absence.
- 51%-79% attendance indicates at risk of severe absence.

6.Training of staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training.

Teachers and support staff will receive training on this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

7.Pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA)

The school will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary.

The SLT will:

- Establish a range of interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
  - Sending letters to parents.
  - Having a termly attendance review.
  - Using fixed penalty notices.
  - Supporting attendance meetings with the Pastoral Team.

The LSB will engage in attendance panels to reinforce messages and outline relevance in terms of training and employment.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care.

Where a pupil becomes at risk of PA, the school will:

- Welcome pupils back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support where necessary.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups, including:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND

8. Absence procedures

Parents will be required to contact the school office via telephone as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence. Alternatively, parents may call into school and report to the school office.

A telephone call will be made to the parent of any pupil who has not reported their child's absence on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school system.

If a pupil's attendance drops below **96 percent**, the 'Attendance Monitoring Procedures' detailed below will be initiated.

9. Parental involvement

The school will build respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

Parents will be expected to:

- Treat staff with respect.
- Actively support the work of the school.
- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

10. Attendance register

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way.

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

11. Attendance officer

If they are persistently absent, pupils will be referred to the attendance officer who will attempt to resolve the situation through a school/parent agreement. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the Attendance Officer has the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices to parents.

12. Lateness

The school will regard punctuality as of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated.

Pupils should be in their classroom at the start of the school day. Registers are taken twice throughout the school day:

Registers are marked at the start of the school day. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by the time the register closes.

13. Term-time leave

The school will require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed; therefore, the headteacher will be unable to authorise holidays during term-time in most cases. The headteacher will only be allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Applications will be made in advance and the headteacher will be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave. The headteacher will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school during term-time. Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the headteacher. Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.

If parents take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the headteacher, they may be subject to sanctions such as penalty fines.

14. Leave during lunch times

Parents may be permitted to take their child away from the school premises during lunch times with permission from the headteacher – it is at the headteacher's discretion as to whether a pupil will be allowed to leave the premises.

Where permission has been granted, the school office will include the pupil's name on the off-site register.

Parents will be required to meet their child at the school office when taking them off the premises – the pupil will be signed out and back in using the register at the school office.

The headteacher reserves the right to withdraw their permission at any time – this may occur, for example, where there are attendance concerns.

15. Truancy

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of pupils, and understand the importance of continuity in each pupil's learning.

All pupils are expected to be in their classes at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions, where the teacher will record the attendance electronically.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the headteacher is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice.
- A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school.

The DSL will be involved where an instance of truancy may be linked to a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

16.   Missing children

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the headteacher immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the headteacher.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
    - All classrooms
    - All toilets
    - The Hub
    - Any outbuildings
    - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The missing pupil's teacher will complete a CPOMs entry, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.

- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

The headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

The headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

17. Religious observances

Parents will be required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

18. Appointments

As far as possible, parents will be encouraged to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, evidence of medical appointment will be sent to the school office.

If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out at the school office. Pupils will be expected to attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

19. Sport and other performances/activities

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances/activities (whether they, or another person, receives payment or not), which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain permission in writing from the headteacher which authorises the school's absence(s).

The headteacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a pupil's attendance would fall below 96 percent.

20. Young carers

The school understands the difficulties that face young carers, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as through their time at the school. A caring and flexible approach will be taken to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

The school, in conjunction with relevant authorities, will implement support for pupils who are young carers, to encourage their sustained and regular attendance at school in line with the school's expectations.

21.   Rewarding good attendance

The school will acknowledge outstanding attendance through the award of a Certificate of Attendance in the end of year assembly.

22.   Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is 96%.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Appendix A

Attendance Monitoring Procedures

Linchfield Community Primary School has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

1. A spreadsheet is completed by the Attendance Champion, detailing termly and annual attendance to date.
2. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported.
3. Contact is made to the parents of any pupils marked with an absence code.
4. If a pupil's attendance falls below the target level (normally 96 percent), a letter (Letter 1) is sent home explaining that the pupil's attendance is now being monitored, and the attendance officer will be available for parents to discuss this.
5. The pupil's attendance is monitored and, if attendance does not improve after the agreed time a second letter (Letter 2), will be sent home to further highlight the school's concerns around the child's attendance and to repeat the offer of school pastoral support to improve this.
6. After the agreed time (normally a term), a letter (Letter 3) will be sent home informing parents they are required to attend an 'Attendance Panel Meeting,' in school with the Attendance Officer or other members of SLT and Pastoral Team as appropriate. During this meeting, targets will be set for the child's attendance and appropriate support/interventions will be agreed between home and school. If parents are unwilling to cooperate, or are genuinely unable to attend, a referral may be required to the local education welfare officer (EWO), who will then conduct a home visit.
7. Monitoring and communication with the parents continues until attendance stabilises to 96 percent.
8. If targets are not met over the agreed monitoring period, and there are no improvements, a final written warning is issued by the Headteacher to the parents. If there is no improvement after an additional four weeks, a fixed-penalty notice is issued.